
Biblical Exposition & Sermons
1 Kings
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(IV)
Paul C. Jong



“Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!’”
(1 Kings 18:39)

Mount Carmel was the place where Elijah rebuilt the altar that had been torn down and poured water on the burnt offering. God answered by fire. The ministry of Elijah was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment on the Cross, died, and rose again from death.

God raised up the weary Elijah again with bread and water and a still small voice. He also caused a small number of young men to defeat a great army. The work of the gospel is carried out not by numbers but by faith in God.

Ahab tried to make Naboth’s vineyard into a vegetable garden, but by contrast, Micaiah preached only the word he had received, even while four hundred prophets were prophesying victory. Live by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is life, and keep the church of God and this gospel of truth to the next generation.

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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1 Kings
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(IV)

PAUL C. JONG

Hephzibah Publishing House
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SEOUL, KOREA

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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.

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Preface

Dear readers,

Through this book I wish to share with you the Word of 1 Kings, chapters 18 through 22. These words begin with the event at Mount Carmel in which the hearts of the people of Israel, who had been faltering between God and Baal, turned back to God; they go on to record the course by which Elijah, losing heart before Jezebel's threat, was raised up again by God's still, small Word; the disobedience of Ahab, who followed his own will even after receiving victory from God twice; and the greed that seized Naboth's vineyard, and the death of Ahab, who rejected the Word Micaiah delivered. In all these events is contained the important truth that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true Word of salvation that brings sinners to life, and that we must not use the gospel and the souls God has entrusted to us for our own private desires.

The Faith That Rebuilds the Broken-Down Altar

In 1 Kings chapter 18 the people of Israel were faltering between God and Baal. Ahab and Jezebel had spread the worship of Baal and Asherah throughout the whole nation, and the prophets of Baal were many in number. Yet even in an age full of idol worship, God had kept His own people, beginning with Elijah and Obadiah. Obadiah, at the risk of death, hid and protected a hundred prophets of God, and Elijah proclaimed the word of God before the people at Mount Carmel.

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The prophets of Baal called on their god from morning until evening and cut their own bodies, but they received no answer at all. The number of men, their zeal, and religious acts repeated over long hours could not produce the truth. By human zeal and self-affliction the sin of the heart cannot be washed away. The way for a sinner to be made clean from all sins lies not in acts man has made, but in believing the righteousness God completed through Jesus Christ.

Elijah rebuilt the broken-down altar of God with twelve stones. The twelve stones showed the fact that divided Israel was originally one people belonging to God. Elijah laid the burnt offering on the altar and poured water over it several times, drenching the offering and the wood and even the trench. When it had become a state in which no man could set it on fire, God answered by fire, and He burned up the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and even the water in the trench.

The water and the burnt offering and the fire of judgment at Mount Carmel make us think of the order of salvation within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus bore all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and, carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and then completed salvation by rising again from death. The baptism of Jesus is the work by which all the sins of the world were passed on to Him, and the Cross is the place where the judgment for all those sins was carried out. In the heart of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no sin remains that must be judged again.

After the fire of God fell, the people acknowledged the living God. Then, when Elijah held fast to the promise of God and prayed, the long drought ended and a heavy rain fell. At first nothing could be seen but a small cloud like a man’s hand,

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but soon the sky grew dark and rain poured down to soak the parched ground. In the heart of the person whose judgment for sin has ended, the Holy Spirit also dwells and accomplishes the work of life. The gospel of the water and the Spirit may be preached at first through only a few people, but it is the power of God that can bring the souls of the whole world to life.

In 1 Kings chapter 19 Elijah, immediately after experiencing the great victory at Mount Carmel, was threatened by Jezebel and fled into the wilderness. Under a broom tree he was so worn out and disheartened that he wished his own life would end. Even to a person who has experienced a great work of faith, the weakness and fear of the flesh can come. But the salvation of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit rests not on his own strength and feelings, but on the righteousness of God that Jesus completed.

Before rebuking the exhausted Elijah, God first let him rest and gave him bread and water. By the strength of that food Elijah went as far as Mount Horeb. God met him with a still, small voice after the strong wind and the earthquake and the fire had passed. The standard of faith is not a great and astonishing experience but the word of God. The Holy Spirit feeds and raises up again the weary soul with the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God had kept seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. He also told him to set up Hazael and Jehu, and He called Elisha as the next worker. The work of God does not depend on the ability of one man. God sends the disheartened person back to the place of his mission, and He also prepares the next person to carry on the Word of the gospel.

Elisha slaughtered his oxen, burned his farming implements,

and followed Elijah. From the beginning he did not demand a high position, but stayed close to Elijah, serving and learning. The gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise must not end with one person or one generation. We must deliver accurately to the next generation the Word of life—that Jesus bore all sins by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

The Faith That Keeps God's Vineyard and the True Word

In 1 Kings chapter 20 Ben-Hadad king of Syria led a great army and attacked Samaria. The army of Israel was very small, but God gave Ahab victory twice. The Syrians thought of God as One who shows His power only in the hills, but God drove back the great host of Syria on the plain as well. God is not limited to any particular place; He is the one and only God who rules the whole world.

God's purpose in giving Ahab victory lay in bringing Ahab to know the living God. But Ahab called Ben-Hadad, whom God had delivered into his hand, his brother and spared him, and he made a treaty with him in order to gain political and economic profit. He used the victory he had received from God as though it were his own possession, and he put his own judgment before the will of God.

Jesus completely overcame the power of sin and death. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes the fact that by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist all his sins were passed on to Jesus, and that Jesus, carrying those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross and then justified him by rising again from death. We must not

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reduce this victory of salvation God has given according to our own thinking, nor mix it with other words of salvation.

Ahab's sparing of Ben-Hadad looked outwardly like a generous act, but it was disobedience that cast aside the will God had entrusted to him. Loving people and compromising with false faith are different things. True love is not achieving spiritual union while blurring the Word of life, but plainly preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit and so serving others that they too may be saved from all their sins.

In 1 Kings chapter 21 Ahab had much as a king, yet he sought to take even Naboth's vineyard. Naboth counted keeping the inheritance of his fathers received from God more important than receiving a better vineyard or much money. But when Ahab could not obtain the vineyard he refused even to eat, and Jezebel used the king's power, his seal, and the judicial system to kill Naboth and seize the vineyard.

Jezebel used the religious and legal forms of a fast, of witnesses, and of a trial; but at the center of them were greed and falsehood and murder. Outward form does not make unrighteousness righteous. Ahab did not kill Naboth directly, but by taking possession of the vineyard obtained through his death he took part in that sin. Men could be kept from seeing it, but God knew all the greed and injustice, and He sent Elijah and exposed the sin of Ahab and Jezebel.

Naboth's vineyard makes us think of the preciousness of the inheritance God has entrusted to us. The remission of sin and eternal life received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be exchanged for any profit of the world. Neither can the gospel of God and His community become the possession of any individual. The office, the material things, and the abilities received from God are not to be taken for the sake of one's own name and the profit of one's family, but are

entrusted to us for the service of the gospel and of souls.

Ahab heard the word of judgment and humbled himself. God took note of the way this evil Ahab humbled himself before Him and deferred to the days of his son the calamity that was to come upon his house. The word of judgment did not disappear, but God did not count lightly the attitude of one who humbles himself before the Word. The person who humbles himself before God does not put forward his own deeds and righteousness, but believes the righteousness Jesus has accomplished.

In 1 Kings chapter 22 Ahab sought to go out to war together with Jehoshaphat king of Judah in order to recover Ramoth Gilead. About four hundred prophets all prophesied victory, but Jehoshaphat looked for another prophet who would plainly deliver the will of God. Ahab hated Micaiah for the reason that he did not speak good words concerning him. He wanted to hear words that supported his own plan rather than the will of God itself.

Micaiah did not change the word he had received, even under the pressure of the majority and the threat of the king. He delivered that Ahab would die in the war and that the people of Israel would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Zedekiah struck Micaiah on the cheek, and Ahab shut him up in prison; but the word of God could not be blocked by human violence and power. The fact that many people say the same thing and put on an impressive performance does not make it the truth.

Ahab went out to war even after hearing Micaiah's warning, and he took off his royal robes and disguised himself. But an arrow that a man shot without any particular target entered between the joints of Ahab's armor, and he died on the battlefield shedding his blood. To human eyes it looked like a

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chance arrow, but the word of God was fulfilled precisely. Neither Ahab's disguise nor his armor could make him escape the judgment of God.

A man cannot escape the judgment of sin by his own good deeds and religious efforts. The righteousness God acknowledges is the righteousness Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and His resurrection from death. The person who believes this salvation does not stand before God on the ground of his own deeds, but by believing the righteousness Jesus Christ has completed he comes to stand as a righteous man without sin.

Jehoshaphat was a king who acted rightly before God, but by uniting with Ahab and taking part in the war he went through a crisis of his life. A believer as well, if he acknowledges together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit some other word of salvation, can have his spiritual discernment blurred. Human merit must not be added to the salvation completed by the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and His resurrection from death. In the work of keeping the truth of the gospel, we must put the word of God before our relationships with people.

Even after Ahab died, his son Ahaziah followed the way of his father and his mother and served Baal. The wrong faith of one generation can be carried on to the next. Therefore we must plainly deliver to the next generation the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus bore all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, paid the wages of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Dear readers, the Word of 1 Kings chapters 18 through 22 begins with the victory at Mount Carmel where the fire of God fell, and ends with the death of Ahab, who rejected the word of

God. We must examine ourselves: whether we are faltering between God and idols; whether, like Ahab, we are using the grace received from God for our own will; whether we are making an inheritance of God, like Naboth's vineyard, into our own private possession; and whether we are choosing only the words we want to hear.

Through this book it is my hope that you will firmly believe in your heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by bearing all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising again from death. It is my hope that everyone who believes this gospel will rebuild the broken-down altar, faithfully keep the vineyard of God, follow the word of God rather than the words of many people, and live a life of faith that delivers the gospel of life to the next generation and to the whole world. ✉

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18

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1 Kings Chapter 18

1) Summary of the Entire Content

1 Kings chapter 18 records the process in which, while the long drought continued, Elijah met Ahab, confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and revealed who the true God is, and then a heavy rain fell again. The heart of this chapter lies in the people of Israel abandoning the state in which they had been faltering between God and Baal, and turning their hearts back to the living God.

1. God Commands Elijah to Present Himself to Ahab (Verses 1–2)

In the third year after the drought began, the word of God came to Elijah. God told Elijah to present himself to Ahab, saying that He would send rain on the earth.

It was God who had begun the drought, and it was God who would end it. Rain was not something Baal gave; it fell according to the word of God.

At that time the famine in Samaria was very severe. The drought was not merely a natural phenomenon of lacking water, but God's judgment on Ahab and Jezebel for spreading Baal worship.

2. Obadiah Protects the Prophets of God (Verses 3–4)

Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's palace, was a man who feared God greatly. Although he was working in Ahab's palace, which was full of idolatry, he kept his faith toward God.

When Jezebel killed the prophets of God, Obadiah hid one

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hundred prophets, fifty to a cave, and supplied them with bread and water. He protected the people of God even in a situation where his own position and life could be put in danger.

There were people like Elijah, who went before the king and proclaimed the Word publicly, and there were also people like Obadiah, who guarded the people of God where no one could see. The roles of the two men were different, but both were people God used to preserve His own people.

3. Ahab and Obadiah Go Out in Search of Water and Grass (Verses 5–6)

As the famine grew severe, Ahab went out with Obadiah to search for springs of water and brooks. It was to find grass to feed the horses and mules, so as not to lose the livestock.

Ahab did not realize that the cause of the drought lay in his own idolatry. Rather than turning his heart back to God, he tried to solve the immediate problem by looking for water and grass.

Ahab and Obadiah divided the land and went in different directions. It was precisely in that process that Obadiah came to meet Elijah.

4. Elijah and Obadiah Meet (Verses 7–15)

Obadiah recognized Elijah on the road and fell on his face before him. Elijah told Obadiah to go to Ahab and tell him that Elijah had appeared.

Obadiah was greatly afraid, for Ahab had sent men to many nations and kingdoms to hunt for Elijah. Obadiah was worried that after he reported to Ahab, if God carried Elijah away to another place, he himself would be put to death.

Obadiah spoke of how he had hidden and protected one hundred prophets from Jezebel, and of the fact that he had

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feared God from his youth. At this, Elijah promised clearly that he would surely present himself to Ahab that very day.

Hearing Elijah's assurance, Obadiah overcame his fear, went to Ahab, and delivered the news that Elijah had appeared.

5. Ahab Accuses Elijah of Being the Troubler of Israel (Verses 16–18)

When Ahab met Elijah, he accused him of being the one who troubled Israel. From Ahab's point of view, Elijah, who had proclaimed the drought, was the man who had brought the nation's suffering.

But Elijah made it plain that the one who had troubled Israel was not himself, but Ahab and his father's house. Because Ahab had forsaken the commandments of God and followed the Baals, the drought had come upon the nation.

Getting rid of the person who delivers the Word of God does not solve the problem caused by sin. Ahab pointed to Elijah as the cause, but the real cause lay in his own forsaking of the Word of God.

6. The People and the Prophets of the Idols Gather on Mount Carmel (Verses 19–20)

Elijah asked Ahab to gather all the people of Israel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah to Mount Carmel. These prophets were the ones who were supplied with food at Jezebel's table.

Ahab accepted Elijah's request and gathered the people and the prophets on Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel became the place where it would be publicly revealed who is the true God, between God and Baal.

This confrontation was not a contest of power between Elijah as an individual and the prophets of Baal. It was carried

out to turn back to God the hearts of the people of Israel, who had abandoned God and followed Baal.

7. Elijah Demands That the People Make a Clear Choice (Verses 21–24)

Elijah asked the people how long they would falter between God and Baal. He said that if God is the true God, they should follow God, and if Baal is the true god, they should follow Baal.

The people of Israel, while not saying that they had completely abandoned God, served Baal alongside Him. They tried to obtain blessings from both God and Baal, but Elijah made it plain that they could not serve both objects together.

Elijah proposed that they prepare two bulls and lay each on the wood, but that no one set fire to them. The prophets of Baal would call on the name of Baal and Elijah would call on the name of God, and the one who answered by fire would be confirmed as the true God.

The people accepted that Elijah's proposal was right. Now they would watch to see who is the God who actually answers, not in words only.

8. The Prophets of Baal Cry Out, but There Is No Answer (Verses 25–29)

The prophets of Baal called on the name of Baal from morning until noon. They leaped about around the altar and sought an answer from Baal, but there was no voice, and no one answered.

When noon came, Elijah mocked them, saying that Baal might be meditating, or might have left his place, or might be on a journey, or might be asleep, so they should call out louder.

The prophets of Baal cried out with a louder voice and, according to their custom, cut their bodies with knives and

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lances until the blood flowed. But until the time of the evening sacrifice, there was no answer at all.

The prophets of Baal were many in number and acted zealously, but their zeal was not directed toward a living god. Many people, loud voices, and extreme actions could not turn a false object into the true God.

9. Elijah Repairs the Broken-Down Altar of God (Verses 30–32)

Elijah called the people near to him and then repaired the broken-down altar of God. He took twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes, the sons of Jacob, and built the altar.

At that time the nation was divided into southern Judah and northern Israel, but before God, Israel was still one people made up of twelve tribes. The twelve stones represented the identity of the covenant people God had established.

Israel's problem was not only that altars of Baal had been set up, but that the altar of God had been broken down. Elijah did not make a new altar in his own way; he restored the broken-down altar of God.

He made a large trench around the altar and prepared the altar in reliance on the name of God.

10. Water Is Poured on the Burnt Offering and the Wood (Verses 33–35)

Elijah put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then he had four waterpots filled with water and had the water poured on the burnt offering and the wood.

He had the same thing repeated three times. In all, twelve pots of water were poured on the altar, and the water ran all around the altar and even filled the trench.

In the drought, water was very precious, but Elijah had the burnt offering and the wood completely drenched. He did so to leave no room for suspicion that someone had hidden fire beforehand or that the fire had been kindled naturally.

Now, burning the burnt offering looked impossible by human skill. It became a situation that was possible only if God Himself answered by fire.

11. Elijah Prays for the Glory of God and the Restoration of the People (Verses 36–37)

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah came near to God and prayed. Unlike the long crying out of the prophets of Baal, his prayer was short and clear.

Elijah asked God to make it known that He is the God of Israel and that Elijah himself is His servant. He also asked God to make plain the fact that he had done all these things not according to his own thoughts but according to the word of God.

Elijah's purpose was not to boast of his own power. It was to make the people know that God is the true God and to turn their hearts back to God.

12. The Fire of God Falls and Consumes the Burnt Offering (Verses 38–39)

When Elijah's prayer ended, the fire of God fell. The fire consumed not only the burnt offering and the wood, but also the stones and the dust, and it licked up all the water in the trench.

The prophets of Baal had cried out all day long but received no answer. But God answered Elijah's prayer immediately by fire.

All the people who saw this fell on their faces to the ground

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and acknowledged that the LORD is God. The fire on Mount Carmel revealed that God is the living, true God, and that Baal is an empty idol that cannot give any answer.

Through the fire, God not only accepted the offering but also turned the hearts of the people back to Himself.

13. Judgment Is Executed on the Prophets of Baal (Verse 40)

Elijah told the people to seize the prophets of Baal and not to let even one of them escape. They were brought down to the Brook Kishon and put to death.

The prophets of Baal bore the responsibility for leading the people of Israel into idolatry and making them depart from God. This event was a national and judicial judgment executed to remove idolatry from within Israel, the covenant community of the Old Testament.

The confrontation on Mount Carmel did not end with confirming who the true God is; it went on to the removal of the false prophets who had led the people down the wrong path.

14. Elijah Announces That a Heavy Rain Will Fall (Verses 41–42)

After the prophets of Baal were removed, Elijah told Ahab that a heavy rain would fall. There was not yet a cloud to be seen in the sky, but Elijah believed the word God had spoken, that He would send rain.

Ahab went up to eat and drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed down on the ground. He put his face between his knees and prayed earnestly to God.

God had already promised to send rain, but Elijah did not just wait doing nothing. He prayed, believing that God’s promise would be fulfilled.

15. A Small Cloud Leads to a Heavy Rain (Verses 43–45)

Elijah told his servant to look toward the sea, but at first nothing could be seen. Elijah sent the servant back to look again, up to seven times.

At the seventh time, a small cloud as small as a man's hand began to rise out of the sea. Seeing that small cloud, Elijah had word sent to Ahab to prepare his chariot and go down so as not to be stopped by the rain.

A little later, clouds and wind arose, the sky grew dark, and a heavy rain fell. The small cloud was the beginning of the heavy rain God had promised.

Elijah did not stop praying even when nothing was visible to his eyes. And when the small sign appeared, he was certain that the word of God would be fulfilled.

16. The Power of God Comes upon Elijah (Verse 46)

When the heavy rain fell, Ahab rode his chariot toward Jezreel. When the power of God came upon Elijah, he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah's running ahead of Ahab was not something accomplished by ordinary human stamina. God gave him special strength.

God, who had answered by fire on Mount Carmel and sent rain from heaven, also gave Elijah the strength to run. The chapter closes with this picture of God supplying the strength needed by the one who obeys His word.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 18

First, the fundamental cause that troubled Israel was not Elijah's proclamation of the drought, but Ahab's forsaking the commandments of God and following Baal. Shifting the cause

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of sin onto the person who delivers the Word does not solve the problem.

Second, even in an age full of idolatry, God leaves His own people behind. While Elijah proclaimed the Word publicly, Obadiah hid and protected one hundred prophets.

Third, no one can serve God and idols at the same time. Elijah demanded that the people, who had been faltering between God and Baal, choose clearly whom they would follow.

Fourth, the number and zeal of people do not determine the truth. The prophets of Baal were many and cried out zealously for a long time, but they received no answer at all.

Fifth, the restoration of right faith began with rebuilding the broken-down altar of God. Elijah repaired the altar with twelve stones, showing that divided Israel was originally one people of God.

Sixth, true power comes not from human skill or emotional excitement but from God. It was the fire of God that consumed the completely drenched burnt offering and wood.

Seventh, Elijah's purpose was not to display his own power but to turn the hearts of the people back to God. After God answered by fire, the people acknowledged that the LORD is the true God.

Eighth, God's promise must be waited for with the prayer of faith. Even after receiving the word that rain would fall, Elijah prayed earnestly on Mount Carmel and looked toward the sky up to seven times.

Ninth, a small beginning must not be taken lightly. A small cloud the size of a man's hand soon led to a heavy rain that covered the sky.

Tenth, God gives those who obey His word the strength to carry out the work entrusted to them. By the power of God,

Elijah ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 18 is the account of how Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, revealed the living God, turned the hearts of the people of Israel back to God, and then, through God's promise and prayer, a heavy rain fell that ended the long drought.

2) Chapter 18 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

1 Kings chapter 18 is the event in which God clearly revealed who the true God is to the people of Israel, who had been faltering between God and Baal. Seen from the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it shows that the true gospel is not the number of people or religious zeal but the gospel that actually washes away all the sins of the heart, and that we can return to God when we believe in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death.

1. The Drought Shows a Spiritual Famine (Verses 1–2)

When Ahab and Jezebel served Baal and Asherah, a long drought came upon the land of Israel. Baal, who was believed to give rain and abundance, could not send even a single drop of rain on the parched land.

Spiritually as well, when a person departs from God's Word of salvation, the heart falls into famine. If someone says he believes in Jesus and yet sin remains in his heart as it is, he is in a state of not having eaten the gospel that washes away sin completely.

However many religious activities and however much zeal

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there may be, without the gospel of the water and the Spirit the soul cannot obtain true life. Only when we know how Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for them does the famine of the heart come to an end.

Before ending the long drought and sending rain, God first made the people of Israel abandon the false god and turn their hearts back to the true God.

2. God Leaves a Remnant of Believers Even in a Dark Age (Verses 3–6)

Obadiah was the governor of Ahab's palace, yet he was a man who feared God greatly. When Jezebel killed the prophets of God, he hid one hundred prophets in caves and supplied them with bread and water.

Even when Baal worship seemed to dominate the nation, God left behind those who believed in Him. Elijah proclaimed the Word of God publicly, and Obadiah protected the people of God where no one could see.

Even in an age when the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not widely known, God raises people who believe in this gospel and keep it. Some proclaim the gospel directly, and some serve with their time, talents, and possessions so that the gospel can be spread.

The Holy Spirit leads each person, in the place entrusted to him, to keep the gospel of the water and the Spirit and deliver it to other souls.

3. Obadiah, Who Fell into Fear, and Elijah, Who Went Forward in Faith (Verses 7–15)

Obadiah met Elijah, but he was afraid to report it to Ahab. He thought that if Elijah disappeared after he made the report, Ahab would kill him.

Obadiah was a man who feared God, yet he was afraid before the danger in front of him. Elijah, on the other hand, was certain that he would surely present himself to Ahab that very day.

Even a person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can feel fleshly fear. When we preach the gospel we may face people's opposition and criticism, but the Holy Spirit gives believers strength to overcome fear and deliver the Word of life.

Faith is not a state in which there is no fear at all, but putting the word of God ahead of one's own fear. Obadiah believed Elijah's words and went to Ahab.

4. The Fundamental Cause That Troubled Israel Is Revealed (Verses 16–18)

Ahab accused Elijah of being the one who troubled Israel. But the one who had actually troubled the nation was Ahab and his house, who had forsaken the commandments of God and followed Baal.

A person who points out wrong faith and preaches the true gospel can be regarded as a troublemaker. But the reason sin remains in people's hearts is not the gospel of the water and the Spirit; it is that they have not fully believed in the salvation God has established.

If someone believes only in the blood of the Cross and sin still remains in his heart, he cannot solve the problem of sin by thinking only that his own zeal is lacking. He must come to know the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John.

Because Jesus was judged on the Cross for the sins He had taken upon Himself, His baptism and the Cross are one connected work of salvation.

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5. Two Kinds of Faith Gathered on Mount Carmel (Verses 19–21)

On Mount Carmel there gathered Elijah, the prophets of Baal, and the people of Israel. Elijah made the people, who had been faltering between God and Baal, choose clearly whom they would follow.

The people tried to serve God and also serve Baal together. But they could not follow the true God and idols at the same time.

Neither can anyone believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with any other word of salvation. If we acknowledge as right both the gospel that Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John and the claim that sins are washed away by the blood of the Cross alone, we blur the Word of God concerning the passing of sins.

The salvation God has given is one. We must believe in the salvation Jesus completed by taking all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again from death.

6. The Number of People Does Not Determine the Truth (Verses 22–24)

Elijah stood alone, and the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty. Since the four hundred prophets of Asherah were also summoned to Mount Carmel, the forces serving the idols were very large.

But a faith is not true simply because many people believe it. Truth is not determined by the number of people, by history, or by social influence, but is confirmed by the Word of God.

Elijah proposed that the one who answers by fire is the true God. He did not end the matter with words or claims, but sought to reveal who is the God who actually receives the

offering.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also actually washes away all the sins in a sinner's heart. The one who believes this gospel does not say he is sinless on the basis of his feelings or deeds, but is assured of the remission of sin on the basis of the Word that Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for them.

7. The Zeal of the Prophets of Baal Cannot Bring Down Fire (Verses 25–29)

The prophets of Baal called on Baal from morning until evening. They leaped around the altar and cut their bodies with knives and lances until the blood flowed, but they received no answer at all.

They had zeal, sacrifice, and many people, but they had no living god. However hard human beings try, they cannot receive an answer from Baal, who does not exist.

People, too, may try to wash away the sins of their hearts with fasting, asceticism, good deeds, and tears. But man's fleshly efforts can neither remove the sins already committed nor deal with the sins to be committed in the future.

The remission of sin is not obtained by afflicting one's own body, but by believing in the righteousness Jesus accomplished. Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins completely on the Cross.

8. Elijah and John the Baptist Lead Hearts to God

Elijah's important mission was to turn the hearts of the people of Israel from Baal back to God. He did not begin the confrontation on Mount Carmel to boast of his own power, but followed the word of God so that the people would know and

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believe the true God.

John the Baptist also received the mission of leading people's hearts to Jesus Christ. He came ahead of Jesus and prepared the way of the Lord, and he had Jesus take all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John.

John the Baptist testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who took the sins of the world upon Himself. Through this testimony, people can know when their sins were passed on to Jesus and why Jesus was judged on the Cross.

Just as Elijah led the people of Israel from Baal to God, the ministry of John the Baptist leads sinners to know and believe in Jesus as the true Savior through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

9. The Broken-Down Altar of God Is Repaired (Verses 30–32)

Elijah called the people near to him and repaired the broken-down altar of God. He took twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel, and built the altar.

Even though Israel was divided into north and south, God saw them as one people of twelve tribes. Repairing the broken-down altar meant that the people were returning to the covenant and the place of sacrifice God had established.

Spiritually, repairing the broken-down altar is connected with restoring the whole gospel recorded in the Scriptures. In the sacrifice of the Old Testament, the sinner passed his sins by laying his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, and that offering shed its blood and died, bearing the judgment of sin.

The meaning of this sacrifice was fulfilled by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. We must not fashion a new gospel out of human traditions and

thoughts, but believe the Word of the passing of sins and of judgment that God established from the beginning.

10. The Water-Drenched Burnt Offering and the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (Verses 33–35)

Elijah laid the wood and the burnt offering on the altar and poured twelve pots of water over them in three rounds. The water drenched the burnt offering and the wood and even filled the trench around the altar.

From the perspective of the gospel, the water poured on the offering makes us think of the baptism Jesus received from John. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body.

Jesus, who had taken those sins upon Himself, was hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, receiving God's judgment on those sins. Just as water and fire appeared on one altar, the passing of sins accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the judgment accomplished on the Cross constitute one salvation.

After dying on the Cross, Jesus rose again from death and gave new life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit testifies in the heart of the one who believes in this salvation, completed by the water and the blood, that all his sins have been washed away.

11. The Fire of God That Completely Consumed the Burnt Offering (Verses 36–38)

Elijah prayed that God would make it known that He is the true God and that Elijah had done all these things according to His word. He also asked that the hearts of the people of Israel would return to God.

The fire of God consumed not only the burnt offering and

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the wood but also the stones, the dust, and the water in the trench. Nothing was left before the fire of judgment.

This makes us think of the fact that the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not deal with only some of the believer's sins, but removes all sins completely. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all sins—past, present, and future—and received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

Therefore, in the heart of the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no sin remains to be judged. He has become righteous in Jesus, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and comes to serve God as his Father.

12. The People Acknowledge the True God (Verse 39)

The people who saw the fire fall from heaven fell on their faces to the ground and acknowledged that the LORD is the true God. They had received no answer from Baal, but they saw with their own eyes the power of the living God.

When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we come to know that Jesus is not merely a great man, but the Savior who has removed all our sins, and that He is God.

We can return to God when we believe the fact that our sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John, and that Jesus bore those sins, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death.

The person whose sins have all been washed away does not call on God as a vague being, but knows and believes God as the God who saved him from sin, and gives thanks to Him.

13. The Prophets of Baal Are Removed (Verse 40)

Elijah seized the prophets of Baal and judged them at the Brook Kishon. They bore the responsibility for leading the

people of Israel into idolatry and making them depart from God.

This judgment leads on, today, to the spiritual battle of discerning false faith through the Word of the Scriptures and cutting it off from the heart. It is not hating people, but overcoming with the gospel of the water and the Spirit the wrong teachings that hold people captive in sin.

The person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not keep in his heart the wrong faith he used to have. He abandons the thought of becoming righteous by his own good deeds and the thought that his sins were washed away by the blood of the Cross alone, and believes in the whole salvation God has accomplished.

Moreover, we must not stop at condemning those who hold wrong faith, but deliver the Word of life to them so that they may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin.

14. After the Fire Falls, a Heavy Rain Is Promised (Verses 41–42)

After the prophets of Baal were removed and the hearts of the people turned toward God, Elijah said that a heavy rain would fall. There was no visible cloud yet, but he believed God's promise.

Rain falling on the land parched by drought shows God's life and abundant supply coming again. Spiritually as well, the Holy Spirit comes upon the heart whose problem of sin has been solved, and accomplishes the work of life.

The person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the washing away of all his sins comes to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart. The Holy Spirit gives him the assurance of salvation and leads him to serve the gospel according to the will of God.

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Elijah had received the promise of rain, yet he went up to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed earnestly. The one who believes God's promise prays in faith, hoping for that promise to be fulfilled.

15. The Heavy Rain That Began from a Small Cloud (Verses 43–45)

Elijah's servant saw nothing during the first six times. But Elijah did not give up and had him look toward the sea up to the seventh time.

At the seventh time a small cloud as small as a man's hand appeared, and a little later the sky grew dark and a heavy rain fell. A beginning that looked small led to a heavy rain that soaked the whole land.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit may at first be delivered through a few people and receive no attention from the world. But in this gospel there is the power of God that saves souls from sin.

The work of life that begins from one person who believes the gospel can be delivered to his family, his neighbors, and even other peoples. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not be discouraged even when the visible results look small, but must keep on preaching the gospel.

16. Elijah, Who Ran by the Power of God (Verse 46)

When the heavy rain fell, Ahab rode his chariot toward Jezreel. When the power of God came upon Elijah, he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah did not run by his own stamina alone; he ran the way entrusted to him by the strength God gave. The life of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise cannot be

sustained by human will alone.

The Holy Spirit gives strength to the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that he can keep the gospel and preach it. Even though our own strength is lacking, if we rely on God we can run the way of the gospel entrusted to us to the very end.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 18

First, spiritual famine comes when we depart from God's Word of salvation. In a heart without the gospel of the water and the Spirit, however much religious zeal there may be, there is no food of life that washes away sin.

Second, just as no one can serve God and Baal together, no one can believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with any other word of salvation. The Word of salvation God has established is one.

Third, the number of people and long traditions do not determine the truth. The prophets of Baal were many, but they received no answer at all. The standard of truth is the Word of God recorded in the Scriptures.

Fourth, human zeal and asceticism cannot wash away the sins of the heart. The remission of sin is obtained by believing in the righteousness Jesus accomplished.

Fifth, just as Elijah turned the hearts of the people back to God, John the Baptist prepared the way for people to know and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

Sixth, repairing the broken-down altar is connected with restoring the Word of salvation God has established. The laying on of hands and the blood of the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament were fulfilled by the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross.

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Seventh, just as the fire of God consumed the burnt offering leaving nothing behind, Jesus bore completely the judgment of all the sins of mankind. In the heart of the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no sin remains to be judged.

Eighth, the life of the Holy Spirit comes upon the person whose problem of sin has been solved. Just as the heavy rain soaked the parched land, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the one who has received the washing away of all his sins and accomplishes the work of life.

Ninth, a small beginning must not be taken lightly. Even if the gospel of the water and the Spirit begins through a few people, it is the power of God that can save the souls of the whole world.

Tenth, the strength to serve the gospel comes from God. The Holy Spirit leads the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to overcome people's opposition and hardships and deliver the Word of life to the very end.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 18 shows—through the water on Mount Carmel, the burnt offering, the fire of judgment, and the heavy rain—that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by taking all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and rising again from death, is the true Word of salvation that turns sinners back to God and gives them the life of the Holy Spirit. ✉

1 Kings Chapter 18

Rebuild the Broken-Down Altar and Return to the True God

Introduction

1 Kings chapter 18 is the chapter in which God sets Elijah before Ahab again and turns Israel back to the true God. The long famine was the result of the sin of Ahab and Israel, who had forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed Baal. Baal was believed to give rain and abundance, but God, by shutting up the rain, revealed that this idol was an empty thing without any power. And now He said, *"I will send rain on the earth" (1 Kings 18:1),* opening the time of restoration.

Obadiah also appears in this chapter. He was inside Ahab's palace, yet he feared the LORD, and when Jezebel killed the prophets of God, he hid one hundred prophets and fed them. This shows that even in a dark age there remain people who belong to God. However strong the forces of Baal may look and however many the false prophets may seem, God leaves His own people behind and carries the truth on.

The event on Mount Carmel was not a mere religious contest. It was the place where God revealed before all Israel who the true God is. Elijah asked the people, *"How long will you falter between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21)* The faith that knows the name of the LORD and yet also holds on to Baal cannot stand before God. Today as well, the faith that

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speaks of Jesus while not knowing the way of salvation God has established, holding on to man's religious methods and the idols of the world together, must clearly turn around before God.

Elijah rebuilt the broken-down altar of the LORD and offered the burnt offering. God answered by fire, and the people confessed, *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)* The burnt offering of the Old Testament points to the salvation Jesus Christ would accomplish. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and by rising again from death became the perfect offering of salvation.

Therefore 1 Kings chapter 18 teaches us to rebuild the broken-down altar of faith on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Human zeal, numbers, and religious atmosphere do not determine whether a faith is true. The way of salvation God has established—the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death—is the standard of true faith. When we believe this truth, a true confession comes out of our mouths as well. The LORD God alone is the true God, and Jesus Christ is the true Lord who has saved us from sin.

There Is a Time When God Says He Will Send Rain

"And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.' So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria" (1 Kings 18:1–2).

1 Kings chapter 18 begins with God telling Elijah to present himself to Ahab again. Until then, no rain had fallen on Israel. This was not simply an event of nature drying up; it was the result of Ahab and the people of Israel following the sin of Jeroboam, departing from God and serving Baal. Baal was an idol believed to give abundance and rain, but God, by shutting up the rain, revealed that Baal was an empty idol without any power.

But God did not end it with the famine alone. He said, *"I will send rain on the earth."* This was not God's intention to cast Israel away for good, but His will to turn them around and bring them back to the true God. When God shuts up the rain, there is His intent to make people realize their sin; and when He says He will send rain again, there is His grace opening the way of restoration.

Today as well, when a person's soul departs from the gospel of the water and the Spirit, famine comes upon his heart. If someone says he believes in Jesus and yet does not know the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, then even though he speaks of the blood of the Cross, he cannot know how his sins were passed on to Jesus. Then sin remains in his heart, and his faith cannot but be parched. The true rain God gives us is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Even in the Famine, People Who Fear God Remain

"And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. For so it was,

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while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)" (1 Kings 18:3–4).

Inside Ahab's palace there was a man named Obadiah. He was the governor of Ahab's palace, but the Scriptures say that he was a man who *"feared the LORD greatly" (1 Kings 18:3)*. When Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah hid one hundred prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water. Even in an age when the whole nation was tilting toward Baal worship and the servants of God were being persecuted, God left behind a man who feared Him.

This message reveals that even in the darkest of ages, God's people never fade away. Outwardly, the power of Ahab and Jezebel seems overwhelming, and it appears as though the prophets of Baal have taken control of the land. Yet, God preserved Elijah, He left Obadiah as a remnant, and He protected the prophets hidden in the caves.

It is the same today. Many people may follow a faith fashioned after their own thoughts and hold on only to religious zeal without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But God has left behind, in this age also, people who believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who believe this truth—that Jesus received baptism from John and so took all our sins upon Himself, that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and that He rose again from death—are the very people of faith whom God has left behind.

Ahab Looked for Water, but God Wanted Repentance

"And Ahab had said to Obadiah, 'Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.' So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself" (1 Kings 18:5–6).

As the famine grew severe, Ahab said to Obadiah, let us go and look for springs of water and brooks. His purpose was to keep the horses and mules alive. Of course, trying to keep the animals alive is not wrong in itself. The problem is that Ahab did not see the spiritual cause of the famine. He did not think about why God had shut up the rain, why the nation had become so parched, or with what sin he and his house had provoked God. He looked for water, but he did not seek God.

This is the picture of a person who has fallen into idolatry. When circumstances become hard, he looks for solutions, but he does not see where his own soul stands before God. The cause of the drought was not simply a lack of water but the sin of departing from God. Therefore, the way for Israel to truly live was not to find springs of water but to return to the LORD God.

We too must examine ourselves before this word. When famine comes upon the soul, we must not look only for worldly methods. We must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must believe that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, believe that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and believe that He gave us new life by rising again from death. When we come into this faith, the living water of God flows in our parched souls.

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Therefore 1 Kings 18:1–6 tells us that even in the midst of famine God appoints the time of restoration, leaves behind His servant and the people who fear Him, and seeks to turn the people who have fallen into idols back to the true God. God's saying that He would send rain does not point to a mere recovery of nature; it makes us look to the grace of God who gives life to souls within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Servant of God Appears at the Time God Has Appointed

"Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, 'Is that you, my lord Elijah?' And he answered him, 'It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" (1 Kings 18:7–8).

While Obadiah was on the road looking for water and grass, he met Elijah. Elijah was the servant of God whom Ahab had not been able to find for more than three years, though he searched. When God hid him, even the power of a king could not find him; and when God caused him to appear, He had Obadiah meet him on the road.

When Elijah said, *"Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here'" (1 Kings 18:8)*, it was not simply a word telling Obadiah to report his location. It meant that the time had come for God to speak before Ahab and Israel. God had allowed the drought to reveal that Baal is not the true god, and now He caused Elijah to appear in order to turn the heart of Israel back to the LORD.

Today as well, there is a time when God has the gospel of the water and the Spirit preached. When people are sunk in a faith fashioned by their own thoughts and in religious zeal, God reveals the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon

Himself by receiving baptism from John, that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and that He completed the salvation by rising again from death. The servant of God is not a person who appears by his own will, but a person who stands with the Word when God speaks.

There Is Faith That Fears God Even in the Midst of Fear

"So he said, 'How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you" (1 Kings 18:9–10).

When Obadiah heard Elijah's words, he was afraid. He knew how persistently Ahab had searched for Elijah. Ahab had sent men to many nations and kingdoms to hunt for Elijah, and when they could not find him, he even made them take an oath. So if Obadiah told Ahab, *"Elijah is here" (1 Kings 18:8)*, and then Elijah disappeared, he could be put to death.

Obadiah's fear did not come only from a lack of faith. He was a man who feared the LORD even while working inside Ahab's palace, a man who had hidden one hundred prophets of God in caves and fed them with bread and water when Jezebel was killing them. But he too was a man of flesh, and so he trembled before death. Even a person who fears God can tremble before a present threat. What matters is whether, even in that fear, he stands on God's side.

We too can meet fear on the way of believing and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When the world follows

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the religious current of the majority, and those who do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit look as if they are the orthodox ones, delivering the true truth can feel lonely. But the faith God establishes is not a faith that retreats according to people's opinions, but a faith that holds on to the righteousness Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

The Word of God Transcends Man's Fear

"And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here''! And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth" (1 Kings 18:11–12).

Obadiah was worried that Elijah might be carried by the Spirit of God to some other place. He knew that Elijah's appearing before him was also the work of God, and he knew that God was One who could hide Elijah. So he said that if he reported to Ahab and then Elijah could not be found, he would be put to death.

Here Obadiah says, *"I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth" (1 Kings 18:12)*. This is not so much a word boasting of his own merit as an appeal to Elijah that he is not a man who has abandoned God. He was in Ahab's palace, but his heart did not belong to Baal. Even in a dangerous position, he hid and fed the servants of God.

But what is more important in this scene than Obadiah's fear is the word of God. Since God had told Elijah to present himself to Ahab, Elijah would certainly stand before Ahab. The

word of God is greater than man's worries. Even when our hearts are shaken, what we must hold on to is not the possibilities of our circumstances but the word of God. It is the same with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our faith must stand not on our feelings or circumstances, but on the Word of God: that Jesus received baptism from John and took the sins of the world upon Himself, that He was judged for those sins on the Cross, and that He rose again from death.

What Is Done in the Fear of God Is Not Forgotten before God

"Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD's prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'' He will kill me!'" (1 Kings 18:13–14).

Obadiah speaks again of what he had done before. When Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, he hid one hundred prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water. This was no small thing. In the days of Ahab and Jezebel, hiding the servants of God was something a man had to risk his own life to do.

This word shows that God protects His servants even in a dark age. God preserved not only Elijah but also Obadiah and the hidden prophets. The forces of Baal looked strong, but God did not let His people disappear completely.

Today as well, the gospel of the water and the Spirit may sound unfamiliar to many people, and the religious majority may speak of another way. But God leaves behind the people who believe the truth of salvation accomplished by the baptism

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Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death. And God does not forget the labor of those who join their hearts together for that truth.

Elijah's Boldness Came Not from Self-Confidence but from the Word of God

"Then Elijah said, 'As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.'" (1 Kings 18:15).

Elijah said plainly to Obadiah, *"I will surely present myself to him today."* This boldness did not come from Elijah's personal courage. Because God had already said to him, *"Go, present yourself to Ahab" (1 Kings 18:1),* he could stand before Ahab. The servant of God does not move by his own feelings but by the word of God.

Ahab had tried to kill Elijah, and Israel was deeply sick with idolatry. But God set Elijah before Ahab not because He feared Ahab, but in order to turn Israel around. Through Elijah, God intended to reveal who the true God is.

We too cannot be bold if we look only at people's reactions when we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But the fact remains unchanged that God had Jesus take all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, that He accomplished the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and that He gave us perfect salvation by rising again from death. Because this truth is the Word that has come from God, we must see the Word as greater than our fear.

Therefore 1 Kings 18:7–15 shows, through Obadiah who was full of fear and Elijah who stood boldly, that God raises His servants at His own time and accomplishes the work of

turning the people who have fallen into idols back to the true God. Man may be afraid, but the word of God does not stop. And the gospel of the water and the Spirit is, today also, the true Word of life that brings back to God the souls who are in the famine of sin and false faith.

Ahab, Who Met the Servant of God but Did Not Realize His Sin

"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah" (1 Kings 18:16).

Obadiah heard Elijah's words, went to Ahab, and told him that Elijah had appeared. Then Ahab went to meet Elijah. This scene is not simply a scene of a king and a prophet meeting. At the time when no rain had fallen for more than three years and the whole nation was suffering from famine, God was calling Ahab out to the place where He would expose Israel's sin and make plain who the true God is.

Ahab had tried hard to find Elijah. But while God hid him, he could not be found. Now God set Elijah before Ahab. This was not because of Elijah's personal courage, but because the time had come for God to speak.

When circumstances become hard, people easily look for the cause of the problem outside themselves. But when we come to stand before the Word God has sent, we must see our own sin. Ahab tried to shift the cause of the famine onto Elijah, but what had actually parched Israel was Ahab's idolatry. Today as well, we must not look for the reason for our soul's dryness only in our environment or in other people. When a person departs from the gospel of the water and the Spirit and holds on to a faith fashioned by his own thoughts, true life

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cannot flow in his heart.

True Rebuke Reveals the Cause of Sin Rightly

"Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?'" (1 Kings 18:17).

As soon as Ahab saw Elijah, he said, *"Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17)* In his eyes, Elijah looked like the man who had troubled the nation, for Elijah had said there would be no rain, and indeed no rain had fallen. But Ahab failed to distinguish between the man who delivered the word of God and God who fulfilled that word.

Elijah was not the man who troubled Israel. He was a servant who delivered the word of God. What troubled Israel was not the servant of God but the sin of the king and the people who had abandoned God. Rather than admitting his own sin, Ahab resented the servant of God. This is the picture of a person fallen into idolatry: he sees the judgment that has come upon him, but he does not see the sin that called forth that judgment.

Today as well, some people become uncomfortable when the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached. When we speak the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, they may protest, asking why we say the way they have believed until now is wrong. But the true Word is given not to torment people, but to turn them from sin and false belief. Only when there is a Word that pierces the heart does the soul find the way to live.

What Troubled Israel Was Idolatry

"And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals" (1 Kings 18:18).

Elijah did not accept Ahab's words as they were. He said plainly, *"I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have" (1 Kings 18:18)*. This word states precisely the spiritual cause of the famine. Ahab and his house had forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. As a result, all Israel suffered.

Ahab's sin was not simply a personal fault. As king he should have led the people to God, but instead he dragged Israel into the worship of Baal and Asherah. The current that had begun when Jeroboam replaced God with the golden calves and corrupted God's law of sacrifice deepened, in the days of Ahab, into more blatant Baal worship. That is why Elijah did not attribute the cause of the famine to a natural phenomenon or to his own prophecy, but said, *"you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals" (1 Kings 18:18).*

This word applies to faith today just as it is. If a person says he believes in God and yet abandons the way of salvation God has established, that faith cannot give life. The way God has saved us is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed when Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. If we leave out this truth and try to serve God with religious methods made by man, then even though the name we speak is God's, in reality it becomes a faith that has departed from God.

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False Faith Must Be Exposed Publicly

"Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.'" (1 Kings 18:19).

Elijah told Ahab to gather to Mount Carmel the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah. This was not a mere religious debate. It was a spiritual war to reveal, before all Israel, who the true God is—whether Baal and Asherah are the true gods, or the LORD God is the true God—openly and publicly.

In particular, the words *"who eat at Jezebel's table" (1 Kings 18:19)* mean that those false prophets had grown their forces under the protection and provision of the royal palace. They were not people who served idols privately in hiding, but those who, in league with the power of the nation, were deceiving the people of Israel. Therefore God had Elijah expose that false faith publicly.

Today as well, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit every false faith is exposed. If a person speaks only of the Cross of Jesus and does not know that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, he cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. Then the problem of sin in the heart is not solved. The gospel of the water and the Spirit distinguishes between human religious zeal and true faith. The way of salvation God has established to save sinners is not human emotion or tradition, but the righteousness of God completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Therefore 1 Kings 18:16–19 shows that the cause of Israel's suffering did not lie with the servant of God, but with the sin of

Ahab and his house, who had abandoned God and followed idols. At the same time it shows that God raised up Elijah to expose false faith and to turn Israel back to the true God. Today we also must not look only at people's resentment or the hardness of our circumstances, but examine before the gospel of the water and the Spirit whether our faith stands on the way of salvation God has established.

The Gathering on Mount Carmel Was Not a Mere Contest

"So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel" (1 Kings 18:20).

Ahab did as Elijah said and gathered all the children of Israel and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel was not simply a place where Elijah and the prophets of Baal would hold a debate. It was the place where God would reveal before all Israel who the true God is.

For a long time Israel had known the name of the LORD and yet followed Baal as well. The wrong faith that began with the sin of Jeroboam changed the law of sacrifice God had established, made the people serve the golden calves as if they were God, and by the days of Ahab had deepened into the worship of Baal and Asherah. Therefore God, through Elijah, publicly exposed Israel's blurred faith.

Today as well, faith cannot be left vague in the heart. If a person says he believes in Jesus and yet does not know the way of salvation God has established, holding on together to man's religious methods and the idol of material things, that is a faith faltering between two opinions, like Israel on Mount Carmel. The way of salvation God has made plain to us is clear: it is the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us completely by rising again from death.

Faith That Falters between Two Opinions Cannot Stand before God

"And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word" (1 Kings 18:21).

Elijah came near to the people and asked, *"How long will you falter between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21)* This word pierced precisely the spiritual state of Israel. They did not say that they had completely abandoned the LORD, but in their actual lives they were following Baal. The faith that serves the LORD God and also holds on to Baal cannot stand before God.

The people could not answer a word. Their silence was not mere embarrassment. It was because they could not deny that their faith was wrong. Faith that belongs to God must be clear. Elijah's word—if the LORD is God, follow Him, and if Baal is god, follow him—shows that faith cannot remain in a middle ground.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the same. The faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John, the faith that tries to wash away sins with prayers of repentance and one's own efforts, and the faith that holds on to worldly possessions and success as if they were God—these do not stand on the way of salvation God has established. The gospel of the water and the Spirit asks us plainly:

Do we believe in the righteousness God has accomplished, or are we holding on to religious methods made by man?

The Truth Is Not Decided by Numbers

"Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men" (1 Kings 18:22).

Elijah said, *"I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men" (1 Kings 18:22).* Judged only by visible numbers, Elijah looked utterly weak. It was a confrontation of one man against four hundred and fifty. Moreover, the prophets of Baal were men supported by the palace and by Jezebel. But the truth that belongs to God is not decided by the number of people.

This word gives us an important spiritual standard. A faith does not become true because the majority believes it, nor does it become false because few believe it. In the days of Ahab there were many who followed Baal, but that majority could not create a true god. If the word delivered by the one servant God has raised is true, then before that word every false faith is exposed.

Today as well, the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be judged by the number of people or the size of traditions. The truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, that He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment of those sins, and that He completed the salvation by rising again from death—this is the righteousness of God to which the Scriptures testify. Whether those who believe this truth are many or few, the Word of salvation God has established does not change.

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Only the God Who Answers by Fire Is the True God

"Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.' So all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'" (1 Kings 18:23–24).

Elijah had two bulls brought. The prophets of Baal were to choose one bull, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and Elijah would prepare the other, but no one was to set fire under them. Then each side would call on the name of its god, and the God who answered by fire would be the true God.

This proposal was a method that could not be proven by human skill or trickery. Man must not light the fire. Only the One who answers by fire from heaven is the true God. This was to reveal that the LORD God is the living God, who cannot be compared with idols made by man.

The form of the burnt offering is also important here. The offering being cut in pieces, laid on the wood, and burned with fire makes us think of the judgment of sin and the sacrifice offered to God. The sacrifices of the Old Testament prefigure the salvation of Jesus Christ who was to come. Jesus took the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, and He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. And by rising again from death, He became the perfect offering of salvation whom God accepted. Therefore the true God is not a god who answers man-made zeal, but the One who Himself accomplished the righteous way of salvation He had established.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit Is the Word That Brings Us Back to the True God

In 1 Kings 18:20–24, Elijah demanded a decision from the people of Israel: *"If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21)*. This word must be heard by us today just as it is. We cannot falter between God and the world, between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, between the gospel of the water and the Spirit and man-made religion.

Baal was believed to give rain and abundance, but in reality it was an idol that could give no life at all. The Baals in people's hearts today are the same. Material things, success, religious fame, self-righteousness, and human traditions cannot wash away the sins of the soul. What saves the sinner is only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Therefore this passage tells us to return to the true God. We must leave vague faith. We must not be dragged along by the number of people or by religious atmosphere. Just as God is the One who answers by fire, so today also God is the One who justifies sinners and gives life to souls within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

However Great Its Numbers, False Faith Cannot Prevail against the True God

"Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.'" (1 Kings 18:25).

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Elijah told the prophets of Baal to offer their sacrifice first. They were many in number. They were the ones who ate at Jezebel's table and were protected by the palace. In human eyes they looked far more favored. But Elijah was not afraid, because this battle was not one decided by the number and forces of people, but a battle of faith that would reveal whether the true God is alive.

Elijah said, "Do not light the fire." This is important. If man lights the fire, it becomes a trick or a human method. But this was the place where it would be revealed who the God is who answers from heaven, not something made by human zeal. The true God is not proven by the atmosphere people create or by religious enthusiasm. When God Himself answers, true faith is revealed.

Today as well, whether a faith is true is not decided by the number of people or by religious forces. A thing does not become the truth because many believe it, nor does it become the faith God accepts because it has been handed down for a long time. The way of salvation God has established is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed it by rising again from death. A faith that has left this righteousness of God, however great its forces, cannot save a soul.

They Called on the Name of Baal, but There Was No Answer

"So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even

till noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made" (1 Kings 18:26).

The prophets of Baal called on the name of Baal from morning until noon. They cried out, *"O Baal, hear us!" (1 Kings 18:26)* But the Scriptures say, *"But there was no voice; no one answered" (1 Kings 18:26)*. They even leaped about the altar, but nothing happened in heaven.

This scene shows the essence of false faith. False faith too can have zeal. It can cry out with a loud voice, and many people can gather together and create a powerful atmosphere. But if the object of that faith is not the true truth God has revealed, that zeal cannot save the soul. Baal was believed to give rain and abundance, but in fact it was a phantom that could not answer by fire, could not speak, and could not pay attention.

It is the same today when a person does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and holds on only to religious zeal. Even if he offers many prayers of repentance, sheds tears, and strives to correct his own conduct, if he does not know the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, he cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. Then, even though he speaks of the Cross, the problem of sin in his heart is not solved. The true answer comes not from human zeal, but from believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has accomplished.

False Faith Cannot Prove Itself Even in the Face of Mockery

"And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said,

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'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.'" (1 Kings 18:27).

Noon came, but Baal did not answer. Then Elijah mocked them: *"Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27)*. This mockery was not a mere sneer. It was a word exposing before the people the fact that Baal is not a god.

The true God is not one whom man must awaken. Nor is the true God one who is moved by the volume of man's voice. God is the One who exists of Himself and who fulfills what He has spoken. But an idol is a thing man makes and then must call upon—and even so, it can give no answer.

We must also examine our own faith clearly before this word. If we say we believe in God while in reality relying more on human emotion, worldly success, self-righteousness, and religious tradition, these can become the Baal within our hearts. Such things cannot wash away our sins. The One who saves sinners is Jesus Christ alone. Because Jesus took over all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death, we can stand boldly before God.

Even If You Cut Your Own Body, Sin Does Not Disappear

"So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no

voice; no one answered, no one paid attention" (1 Kings 18:28–29).

The prophets of Baal cried out with a louder voice. And according to their custom, they cut their bodies with knives and lances until the blood gushed out. But until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. Their zeal grew more and more violent, but the result was nothing.

This word shows that man's asceticism and self-sacrifice cannot remove sin. A person cannot be counted righteous before God by tormenting his own body. Shedding many tears, fasting often, and enduring pain do not make the sins of the heart disappear. Sin is not removed by a man injuring his own body; it is removed only by the righteous way God has established.

That righteous way is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, yet by receiving baptism from John He took the sins of the world upon His own body. And He shed His blood on the Cross, receiving the judgment of those sins, and by rising again from death He gave us perfect salvation. Therefore we must not try to wash away our sins by cutting our own bodies or by our own efforts, but believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has accomplished in Jesus Christ.

We Must Turn Away from Faith That Receives No Answer

1 Kings 18:25–29 shows the end of false faith very clearly. The prophets of Baal were many, their voices were loud, and they were zealous enough to cut their own bodies. But there

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was no answer from heaven, because Baal, whom they served, was not a living god.

Faith today is the same. However zealously a person believes, if he does not know the fact that Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, he cannot arrive at the assurance of the remission of sin. If, while speaking of the blood of the Cross, he leaves out the truth that sins were passed on to Jesus through His baptism, sin still remains in his heart. Then his life of faith becomes parched, like the sacrifice to Baal that keeps crying out but receives no answer.

What God wants from us is not false zeal but true faith—the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is to believe the work of salvation God has already accomplished in Jesus and to humble our hearts before that righteousness. Then our souls no longer stand before an idol that gives no answer, but obtain the true remission of sin and life before the living God.

The Broken-Down Altar Must Be Repaired

"Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down" (1 Kings 18:30).

The prophets of Baal cried out from morning until the time of the evening sacrifice, but they received no answer. Their zeal was great, but the Baal they called on was not a living god. Now Elijah said to all the people, *"Come near to me" (1 Kings 18:30).* And the first thing he did was to repair the broken-down altar of the LORD.

This scene is very important. Israel's problem did not lie

simply in the fact that no rain was falling. The altar of God had been torn down. That is, in the hearts of the people of Israel, true worship and faith toward God had collapsed. After Jeroboam changed God's law of sacrifice and made the people serve the golden calves as if they were God, Israel spoke of God and yet departed from the way God had established. In the days of Ahab, that sin deepened into the worship of Baal and Asherah.

Today as well, the altar of faith can be broken down. If a person says he believes in Jesus and yet does not know the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, the altar of salvation has not been built whole. If we speak only of the blood of the Cross and leave out the baptism of Jesus, we cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. Therefore, repairing the broken-down altar is not returning to human religious zeal; it is setting our faith again on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

God Made Israel Remember Again That He Had Called Them

"And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed" (1 Kings 18:31–32).

Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob. Northern Israel was divided

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politically, and its faith had also deeply collapsed. But Elijah built the altar with twelve stones. This was an act showing again the fact that God had called Israel as His covenant people.

The Scriptures mention here the event in which Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Jacob was originally a weak man and a deceiver, but God held on to him and gave him the name Israel. Therefore, building the altar with twelve stones shows God's will to call Israel again and turn them around, even though they had collapsed through their own sin and idolatry.

We too were not originally righteous before God. We were people who deserved to be judged because of sin. But God sent Jesus Christ and saved us. Jesus took all our sins upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and by rising again from death made us the people of God. Therefore the true people of God are established not by bloodline or religious name, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

He Made It Impossible for Human Hands to Light the Fire

"And he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, 'Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.' Then he said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it a second time; and he said, 'Do it a third time,' and they did it a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water" (1 Kings 18:32–35).

Elijah made a trench around the altar, put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then he had four

waterpots filled with water and had the water poured on the burnt offering and the wood. When this was repeated three times, the water ran all around the altar and the trench too was filled. This was to make it impossible for anyone to light the fire secretly. He created a situation in which nothing could happen unless God Himself answered.

True faith is not built up by human tricks or atmosphere. The prophets of Baal leaped about, cried out with loud voices, and cut their own bodies, but there was no answer. Elijah, however, did not add any human method. Rather, in a place where human methods could not work at all, he prayed to God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is also not something made by human methods. However hard a person tries to wash away his own sins, sin does not disappear. Even if he repeats prayers of repentance, afflicts his own body, and piles up religious zeal, the problem of sin before God is not solved. Sin disappears only through the way of salvation God has established. That way is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished by receiving baptism from John and taking the sins of the world upon Himself, shedding His blood on the Cross to receive the judgment of those sins, and rising again from death.

Elijah's Prayer Was Not a Prayer to Exalt His Own Name

"And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD,

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hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.'" (1 Kings 18:36–37).

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed to God. He called, *"LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" (1 Kings 18:36).* This is a prayer confessing that God is the God of the covenant. Elijah did not pray for his own power to be proven. He prayed that it would be known "that *You are God in Israel"* (1 Kings 18:36), that "I am Your servant," and that *"I have done all these things at Your word" (1 Kings 18:36).*

Moreover, the most important purpose in Elijah's prayer is in the words *"that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:37).* The purpose of God's answering by fire was not to make Elijah famous. It was to turn back to God the hearts of the people of Israel who had fallen into idolatry.

Today as well, preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a work that exalts man. It is not a matter of showing who has greater power. It is the work of revealing the righteousness God has accomplished in Jesus, so that people in sin may return to the true God. When a person comes to know the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death, he abandons his own zeal and his idols and believes in the salvation God has accomplished.

The Fire of God Consumed the Burnt Offering

"Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:38).

When Elijah's prayer ended, the fire of the LORD fell. That fire consumed not only the burnt offering and the wood but also the stones and the dust, and licked up even the water in the trench. This was the event that revealed plainly that the LORD God alone is the living, true God. Baal gave no answer though he was called on from morning till evening, but God answered Elijah's prayer by fire.

Here we must see the meaning of the burnt offering. The burnt offering is the sacrifice offered before God in the place of the person who must be judged for his sin. The person who comes before God must acknowledge that he himself is a being who deserves judgment because of sin. And he must rely on the offering God accepts. The faith of the burnt offering is explained as the faith of laying oneself before God and acknowledging that one is a being who can only die because of sin.

The true fulfillment of this burnt offering was accomplished in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, yet by receiving baptism from John He took the sins of the world upon His own body. And He received the righteous judgment of God on the Cross. By rising again from death, Jesus gave us the perfect remission of sin and new life. Therefore the faith God accepts is not the faith that puts forward one's own deeds, but the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed.

The People's Confession Is the Confession of Those Who Have Met the True God

"Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!'"

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(1 Kings 18:39).

All the people fell on their faces when they saw the fire of the LORD fall. And they confessed, *"The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)* This confession was not a word that came out of mere astonishment. They had long faltered between Baal and the LORD, and now they had come to see who the true God is.

The people of Israel had not sinned because they did not know the name of the LORD. They said they knew God, and yet they followed Baal. But when God answered by fire, they could no longer falter between the two. They could not but acknowledge that the LORD alone is the true God.

We too must have this confession today: "Jesus Christ is my God and my Savior." But this confession must not be a vague religious confession. It must be a confession that comes out upon the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took all my sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, that He received the judgment of my sins on the Cross, and that He saved me completely by rising again from death. When we have this faith, we can truly fall down before God.

If False Prophets Are Left Alone, They Deceive the People Again

"And Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!' So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there" (1 Kings 18:40).

Elijah told the people to seize the prophets of Baal and not to let even one of them escape, and he brought them down to the Brook Kishon and put them to death there. This word does

not mean that we should harm people physically today. It is the event in which, in the history of the Old Testament, God judged the root of idolatry. The prophets of Baal were not simply people of another religion; they were the ones who had cut the people of Israel off from God and dragged them into false faith.

False faith, if left alone, deceives the hearts of people again. Because Israel had tolerated Baal and Asherah, the whole nation went down the road of famine and death. Therefore God had Elijah judge those false prophets. This shows that faith in the true God and false faith cannot go together.

We do not live today in an age of judging people with the sword. But the false faith within the heart must certainly be thrown away. The incomplete faith that holds only to the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, the faith that tries to obtain the remission of sin by building up its own righteousness, and the faith that serves material things and success as if they were God—these must be cut off from our hearts. The true salvation God has given us is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we believe this truth, we escape from false faith and return to the living God.

Therefore 1 Kings 18:30–40 is the event in which God rebuilt the broken-down altar, answered by fire upon the burnt offering, and turned the heart of Israel back to the true God. This is the Word telling us today to rebuild our broken-down faith on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we believe the truth of salvation completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death, a true confession comes out of our mouths as well: *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)* That is, Jesus Christ is the true God who has saved us from sin.

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The Sound of Abundance of Rain Comes from the Faith That Has Heard God's Promise

"Then Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.'" (1 Kings 18:41).

After the prophets of Baal were judged at the Brook Kishon, Elijah said to Ahab, *"Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain."* The heavy rain was not yet visible in the sky. But Elijah believed what God had already said: *"I will send rain on the earth" (1 Kings 18:1)*. So he heard the word of God before he saw any visible cloud.

Israel's famine was not a mere natural disaster. The whole land had dried up because of the sin of Ahab and Israel, who had forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed Baal. Therefore, the rain coming again does not mean only that the weather would recover. It means that God was turning Israel from idolatry and beginning to show His grace again.

The famine of the soul today is the same. When a person departs from the gospel of the water and the Spirit, his heart dries up. If someone says he believes in Jesus and yet does not know the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, then even though he speaks of the blood of the Cross, he cannot know how his sins were passed on to Jesus. But when he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit, his soul hears the sound of abundance of rain. The Word of salvation that Jesus completed by His baptism, the Cross, and His rising again from death is the grace of God that gives life to parched souls.

Prayer Is the Place Where We Hold On to God's Promise

"So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees" (1 Kings 18:42).

Ahab went up to eat and drink, but Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed down on the ground and prayed with his face between his knees. Elijah had already spoken of the sound of abundance of rain, yet his word did not end as a mere declaration. He prayed earnestly that the rain God had promised would actually come.

Here we must see the order of faith. God's promise is certainly fulfilled. But the servant of God believes that promise and prays. Elijah's prayer was not a prayer to push through his own will; it was a prayer asking God to accomplish what God had spoken.

Our faith must be the same. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the Word of salvation God has already completed in Jesus Christ. Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified us by rising again from death. We believe this completed Word and come to God upon it. True prayer is not moving God by our own zeal, but believing the righteousness God has accomplished and standing in that grace.

Even When Nothing Is Visible, the Word Does Not Change

"And said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.' So he went up and looked, and said, 'There is nothing.' And

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seven times he said, 'Go again.'" (1 Kings 18:43).

Elijah told his servant to look toward the sea. But the servant said, *"There is nothing" (1 Kings 18:43)*. There was no visible evidence. The sky was still clear, and there was no sign of rain. But Elijah did not give up. "*And seven times he said, 'Go again'" (1 Kings 18:43).*

This word shows what faith looks at. Faith is not holding on to visible results from the start. It is holding on to the word of God. Elijah did not believe because he saw a cloud; he believed the word God had spoken, that He would send rain. So even after hearing the report that nothing was visible, he said to go and look again.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also be shaken at times by the circumstances before his eyes. Weakness shows in his heart, the world still looks strong, and the way of believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit can feel lonely. But the ground of salvation does not lie in our feelings or circumstances. It lies in the Word of God: that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, that He was judged for those sins on the Cross, and that He rose again from death. Even at the time when nothing is visible, this Word does not change.

One Small Cloud Became the Beginning of the Heavy Rain

"Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, 'There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!' So he said, 'Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'" (1 Kings 18:44).

At the seventh time, the servant said that a cloud as small as

a man's hand was rising out of the sea. It was a very small sign. But Elijah saw that small cloud and knew that a heavy rain would come. So he had word sent to Ahab to prepare his chariot and go down.

The eyes of faith see the work of God even in a small beginning. To human eyes, a cloud the size of a man's hand may look like nothing. But to the person who believes the word of God, it is the beginning of the heavy rain. Elijah did not look at the size of the cloud; he looked at the promise of God behind that cloud.

The work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also seem to start small. That one person hears the truth, that one soul comes to believe in the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death—this may look small in the eyes of the world. But when God gives life to a soul through that Word, it is the beginning of great grace. Just as the cloud as small as a man's hand led to the heavy rain, the change of one soul who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is never a small thing in the kingdom of God.

The Heavy Rain Was Grace That Came after They Returned to God

"Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel" (1 Kings 18:45).

A little later, clouds and wind arose, the sky grew black, and a heavy rain fell. The heaven that had been shut for more than three years was opened. It was not Baal who gave the rain; it was the LORD God who gave it. This rain came after it had been revealed on Mount Carmel that the LORD is the true God.

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Here we see an important spiritual principle. The grace of God does not come mixed together with false faith. While Israel faltered between Baal and the LORD, the land was parched. But after God exposed the falsehood of Baal and the people confessed, *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)*, the heavy rain fell. Restoration begins with returning to the true God.

Today as well, the heavy rain of the soul comes within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If a person serves God in his own way, holds only to the Cross without knowing the baptism of Jesus, and lives his life of faith with sin remaining in his heart, his soul cannot escape the famine. But when he believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death—God pours into his heart the grace of the remission of sin and the life of the Holy Spirit.

The Servant on Whom the Power of the LORD Has Come Runs the Way of the Word

"Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (1 Kings 18:46).

Finally, the Scriptures say, *"the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah" (1 Kings 18:46)*. Elijah did not run by his own strength. God gave him power. Elijah girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to Jezreel. This shows the servant of God moving by the power of God.

Elijah did not end as merely the man who confronted the prophets of Baal. He delivered the word that God would send

rain, he prayed, and he ran by the power of God. Through Elijah, God showed Israel the true God, turned the hearts of the people, and opened the shut heaven.

Today as well, the person who serves the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot run by his own strength. Human will and zeal alone cannot give life to souls. When we believe the righteousness God has accomplished in Jesus Christ and are held by that Word, God gives us power. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death, is the power that still today makes the servants of God and believers run.

Therefore 1 Kings 18:41–46 shows the rain of grace that came after the judgment on Mount Carmel. After God exposed the falsehood of the idols and turned the hearts of the people, He gave a heavy rain to the parched land. Our souls also obtain true restoration when we return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even when what is visible is still small, the word of God is certainly fulfilled. Just as the cloud as small as a man's hand became a heavy rain, the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given comes as great grace that gives life to parched souls. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Elijah, Who Made It Possible to Meet the True God

< 1 Kings 18:1-41 >

"And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.' So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab had said to Obadiah, 'Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.' So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, 'Is that you, my lord Elijah?' And he answered him, 'It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'' So he said, 'How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the

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kingdom or nation that they could not find you. And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here''! And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD's prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'' He will kill me!' Then Elijah said, 'As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.' So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?' And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.' So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other

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bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.' So all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.' Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.' So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.' So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, 'Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.' Then he said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it a second time; and he said,

‘Do it a third time,’ and they did it a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.’ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!’ And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!’ So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’”

When Israel had set up countless idols before God and sinned greatly, God raised up Elijah as His servant. He also gave a heart that feared God to Obadiah, who was serving under Ahab as the governor of his palace. When Jezebel seized and killed the prophets of God, Obadiah hid one hundred prophets, fifty to a cave, and kept them alive by feeding them with bread and water. In this way Elijah and Obadiah lived through that dark age.

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Elijah, Who Went to Ahab with the Word That God Would Send Rain

When the famine in Israel was severe, God said to Elijah, *"I will send rain on the earth" (1 Kings 18:1)*. Earlier, Elijah had prophesied to King Ahab that there would be no rain for years, and then hidden himself; now God said that He would again send rain on this land. So Elijah was on his way to meet Ahab to deliver that word.

On the way, Elijah met Obadiah, Ahab's servant. When Elijah told him to go and tell his master that Elijah was here, Obadiah was afraid. He thought that if, while he went and delivered the message, the Spirit of the LORD carried Elijah away to some other place, he himself would be put to death at Ahab's hand. But when Elijah swore that he would surely present himself to Ahab that day, Obadiah went and told Ahab.

To Ahab, Elijah was an enemy, for Ahab regarded Elijah as the one who had made it so that no rain fell for three and a half years, so that the people starved and the animals were dying. So Ahab had to meet Elijah and either kill him or have him bring the rain again.

Who Is the One That Troubled Israel?

When Ahab met Elijah, he at once rebuked him, saying, *"Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17)* Then Elijah answered, *"I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals" (1 Kings 18:18)*. The true reason Israel was troubled lay in the fact that the king had abandoned the LORD and served Baal.

And Elijah made a proposal: gather to Mount Carmel all Israel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah. Let it be determined before all the people who the true God is. He said that if the LORD is God they should follow Him, and if Baal is god they should follow him, but the people could not answer a single word.

Let Us Determine by Fire Who the True God Is

Elijah said to the people that only he, Elijah, was left as a prophet of the LORD, while the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty—and with the prophets of Asherah added, they were eight hundred and fifty. Since Elijah was no match for them in terms of strength, he proposed this: bring two bulls, cut them in pieces and lay them on the wood, but set no fire; then let each side call on the name of its god, and the God who answers by fire is the true God. All the people said that this word was right.

The prophets of Baal, who were many, went first. They piled up the wood and laid the pieces of the bull on it, and from morning until noon they cried out, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice and no answer. Though the four hundred and fifty went around the altar leaping, all remained silent.

Vain Crying and the Silence of the True God

As the day wore on, Elijah mocked them: perhaps your god is meditating, or has stepped out for a moment, or is on a journey, or is asleep and must be awakened—so call out louder.

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Then they cried out with a louder voice and, according to their custom, cut their bodies with knives and lances until the blood flowed. In serving Baal and Asherah, it was their appointed custom to injure their own bodies and draw blood like this. But until the time of the evening sacrifice there was no voice, no answer, and no one who paid attention.

Even today, in some places there are people who pierce and injure their own bodies in worship, saying that blood must be shed. They regard it as great worship, but it is no different from what the prophets of Baal did long ago. It is the pitiful sight of being bound to a vain thing that has no foundation.

Elijah, Who Rebuilt the Broken-Down Altar

When the prophets of Baal received no answer, Elijah called the people near. And he rebuilt the broken-down altar of the LORD, taking twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob and setting up the altar. He made a trench around the altar, put the wood in order, laid the pieces of the bull on it, and then had four waterpots filled with water and poured out three times. The water ran all around the altar and filled even the trench, so that the ground, the wood, and the flesh were all drenched.

Then Elijah prayed: *"LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:36–37).* Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up even the water in the trench.

All the people saw it and fell on their faces, crying out, *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).*

The Representative Prophet Who Led the Whole Nation to God

In this way the people of Israel, who had been serving idols, all returned and served the LORD as the true God. The Scriptures count Elijah as a representative among the prophets. Isaiah cried out greatly, and so did Ezekiel and Daniel, but the Scriptures record that the people did not listen to their words. Yet Elijah led all the people of Israel back to God. And God promised that He would send a prophet like him again.

John the Baptist, Prefigured by Elijah

God promised in the Old Testament, and when the time was fulfilled, He sent that prophet. He is none other than John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the servant of God who is like Elijah. Jesus Himself said so: *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:11–14).* The Elijah who was to come is none other than John the Baptist.

In the Old Testament there was Elijah, the representative prophet who led the whole nation to God; and in the New

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Testament there is John the Baptist, the servant who would lead all mankind to Jesus Christ. When northern Israel was full of sin, serving countless idols, they did not regard the LORD as God; they set up stones and trees and bowed to them, injured their own bodies, and even offered up their children as sacrifices. Even when Elijah appeared and prophesied that there would be no rain for three and a half years, the people did not turn back. But when at last God answered by fire on Mount Carmel, the whole nation returned.

Returning to the True God through John the Baptist

John the Baptist in the New Testament is like this as well. His father Zacharias was a priest. While he was serving inside the sanctuary, an angel appeared and said that a son would be given to him; but when Zacharias could not believe it, God made him unable to speak—saying that what was spoken would be fulfilled, and that when he believed, his mouth would be opened again. When the time came, Elizabeth bore a son, and on the eighth day, when they came to circumcise him, the people wanted to name him Zacharias after his father, but Zacharias wrote on a tablet, "John." Then at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he praised God.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zacharias prophesied: *"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:76–77).* This child is John the Baptist. God sent the Messiah to this earth, and He also sent along with Him this servant of His who is like Elijah. He is the representative of

mankind and the greatest among the prophets, John the Baptist.

The Way of Salvation Opened by the Testimony of John the Baptist

God sent John the Baptist Himself, and through him He caused all mankind to return before the living God. Apart from John the Baptist there is no way to return to God. Just as all Israel abandoned Baal and Asherah and returned to the LORD through Elijah, so all mankind has been enabled to return through John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus.

When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, he passed the sins of all mankind on to Jesus the Messiah. John the Baptist testified that through this baptism your sins were all passed on to Jesus. Jesus bore those sins and received the judgment in our place on the Cross, paying the wages of sin, and so delivered us completely from sin. Because John the Baptist testified in this way, we could know that Jesus is our Savior and return to the true God. All those who believe the testimony of John the Baptist have received the remission of sin and come to meet the true God.

The Role of John the Baptist, Who Turned Us from Idols

There is only one way for us mankind to return to God: we return through what John the Baptist did. If it had not been for John the Baptist, all of us could only have served idols. We would have set a bowl of rice on a shelf and prayed to it, bowed before stones and mountains and wells and the moon

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and the stars and the sea, and served as gods countless vain things such as the Dragon King or mountain spirits. But all these are not the true God; they are merely creatures God has made.

Just as, when we set out on a journey, we need a guide who knows the way in order to arrive safely at our destination, so for all of us to return to the true God, the role of the guide called John the Baptist is absolutely necessary. Without that guidance we cannot go to the true God but go to Baal, mistaking a false god for the true God, serving it, and perishing. Just as Elijah delivered the people of Israel from idols, curse, famine, and destruction, John the Baptist is the servant who delivered us from idols and turned us to the true God. Just as there is no one greater than Elijah, there is no one greater than John the Baptist.

They say that in a certain region there is someone who calls himself Elijah and stands before people. But he is not Elijah. Neither I, nor you, nor anyone else is Elijah. The true Elijah is one person only: John the Baptist.

The Servant Who Came before Jesus and Prepared the Way

John the Baptist was born on this earth six months ahead of Jesus. In the flesh, he was of the same age as Jesus. He came before Jesus and testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Savior. And by baptizing Jesus, he carried out the work of passing on to Him all the sins of mankind. Afterward, he rebuked the sin of King Herod, was hated for it, was beheaded and martyred, and went before God ahead of Jesus. His life was short, but through what he did we

were able to turn from idols, serve the true God, and be saved from curse and destruction.

Therefore everyone must rightly know the role of John the Baptist and believe in Jesus Christ. If we know John the Baptist, we can know Jesus fully. He is the representative of mankind and the servant of God who delivered us from idols. We must never go back to the place where we served idols, to the place where we followed the world. Having met the LORD God, we must bring our desires before God and follow His will. Then God, who has not only redeemed us from our sins, will also comfort and protect us, and at last give us the kingdom of heaven.

The Kingdom of God That the Righteous Will Enjoy

In an article someone introduced, I once saw an account of the city of the kingdom of heaven that appears in the Book of Revelation. That city, built with twelve precious stones, is unimaginably large when you reckon its size. Its height and breadth are so vast that they are beyond description, beyond comparison with any house on this earth. The place where the righteous will go and live is that kind of place.

This is not my own story; it is the Word of God. Apart from a few words I say as a joke, all that I deliver is the Word of God. So do not fret or feel your pride wounded because you do not live in a fine house in this world. Though we may live in a shabby place, the place where we will go and live is that glorious.

Moreover, the Millennial Kingdom will also come upon this earth. Jesus Christ will come, subdue and rule the whole

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earth, and give the righteous the authority to rule over ten cities and over five cities. Among those who are alive when Jesus comes, those who have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and those who have not will be divided. Those who to the end deny the truth that all our sins were passed on to Jesus when He was baptized—those who deny what John the Baptist did—will not reach salvation even though they plead for mercy. To those who have received this gospel by faith, the Lord will entrust the authority to rule cities.

The Lord will make all things new, make this desolate earth fertile, and have us reign like that for a thousand years. If I enjoy that kingdom, you will enjoy it together with me. Some among you may be entrusted with greater authority than mine. As the Lord judges rightly and entrusts to each, we will gladly fulfill that office and live.

We must not go back to the place where we served idols, that is, to the place where we followed the world. Let us follow the will of the Lord. Let us believe the Word of the Lord with bright eyes and follow it. In a little while, He who is to come will come. Let us live following the will of the Lord until that day, and then meet the Lord. And if He gives us authority to rule cities, we will rule; and if He takes us to the kingdom of heaven, we will go there and enjoy unimaginable riches and glory forever and ever.

Shall we human beings be like the beasts that perish? We are beings so precious. This is not my own story, so live with faith. However confusing the world becomes, do not be overly anxious about how to live on this earth, and do not pursue only such things. Live with a heart that asks how to live as the Lord delights, following the righteousness of the Lord. In a little while, He who is to come will come and accomplish all things for us. I have finished the message. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Faith of the Burnt Offering and the True Gospel

< 1 Kings 18:16-40 >

"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?' And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.' So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.' So all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.' Now Elijah

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said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.' So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.' So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, 'Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.' Then he said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it a second time; and he said, 'Do it a third time,' and they did it a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'LORD God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.' Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!' And Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!' So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there."

A great famine came upon the nation of Israel. When the prophet Elijah prayed to the LORD that it would not rain, no rain fell for three years and six months. Because of this, the whole land of Israel suffered from the drought; the crops withered, and the people groaned in famine. Even drinking water was very hard to find, and the whole nation was gripped by the worry that it might perish through this famine.

The Three-and-a-Half-Year Famine and the Confrontation on Mount Carmel

When that great famine came, the king of Israel was Ahab. King Ahab's wife was a Gentile woman named Jezebel, and Jezebel brought the god of her native land into Israel and served it instead of the LORD God. She did not serve it alone;

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she made countless people of Israel serve that idol. Meanwhile the whole nation fell into a severe famine. King Ahab thought this disaster had come because of Elijah, and searched everywhere to kill him, but he could not catch him. Because God had hidden Elijah, he could not be found at all.

In the third year of the famine, the word of God came to Elijah: go and stand before King Ahab, and I will now send rain. When Elijah set out to obey that word and go to Ahab, there was among Ahab's servants a man named Obadiah. This Obadiah was a man who feared God. When Elijah told Obadiah to report that he was going to meet King Ahab, Obadiah was afraid and said he could not go.

His reason was that if, while he went to report to King Ahab, God carried Elijah away and hid him somewhere else, he himself would not escape death before the king. Still, Elijah swore by the living LORD that he would surely stand before King Ahab that day, and told him to go and report. So Obadiah delivered the message, and King Ahab came out to meet Elijah. Since no rain had fallen for three years and the people of the whole nation were dying, how distressed King Ahab's heart must have been!

As soon as Ahab saw Elijah, he rebuked him, calling him the troubler of Israel. Then Elijah answered that it was not he who had troubled Israel, but Ahab and his father's house, because they had forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed Baal. The king who was Ahab's forefather had also lived wrongly before God, and by Ahab's time that sin had reached its height, so that he had brought idols even into the royal palace and was serving them.

Into Israel had come the god called Baal and the god called Asherah, which the Gentiles served. These idols were believed to make the crops prosper and to give many children—

something like going out to the water's edge in our country and praying to the Dragon King for prosperity. There were four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and as many as four hundred prophets of Asherah.

The Burnt Offering That Determines Which God Is the True God

Elijah said to King Ahab: gather to me on Mount Carmel the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table and the four hundred prophets of Asherah. Let us determine who is truly God. The king granted that request and summoned them all up to Mount Carmel.

Before all the assembled people of Israel, Elijah made a proposal. If Baal and Asherah are the true god, that god will send down fire from heaven and burn up the offering on the altar; and if the LORD God is the true God, fire will come down from heaven and consume the flesh and the wood on the altar of burnt offering. Let us determine in this way which god is the true God. The people were delighted and agreed. In fact it was 450 to 1—by any reckoning no match at all—so the people, full of confidence, said, let us contend.

It was all the more so because the one who proposed this contest was Elijah. Let us test whether the God you believe in is truly God, or whether Baal and Asherah are the true god—that was the proposal. So they agreed with one another, and each side built its altar, laid the wood, slaughtered a bull, cut it in pieces, and laid the pieces on it. The idolaters prepared theirs that way, and Elijah prepared his on the other side.

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The Prophets of Baal Who Cried Out in Vain

Elijah said: you are many, and the vested rights are yours, so you go first. So the four hundred and fifty who served Baal began first. Those who served Asherah joined them as well; they piled the wood, laid the pieces of the bull on it, and went around it crying out, “O Baal! O Baal!”

They cried out from the morning, but there was no answer. When noon came, Elijah mocked them: your god must have gone out somewhere; he may be on a journey, or he may be asleep—call him with a louder voice. Then, until the time of the evening sacrifice, they cried out, cutting their own bodies with knives and lances according to their custom until the blood flowed, but there was no voice and no one who answered.

The Fire of the LORD That Consumed the Water-Soaked Burnt Offering

Now Elijah steps forward. He told the people to come near, and he rebuilt the broken-down altar of the LORD, taking twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the twelve sons of Jacob and building the altar. Then he dug a trench around the altar, put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood.

We can look closely at the appearance of the burnt offering Elijah prepared, unlike those who served Baal. From verse 33 of the text it reads: *“And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, ‘Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.’ Then he said, ‘Do it a second time,’ and they did it a second time; and he said, ‘Do it a third time,’ and they did it*

a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water" (1 Kings 18:33–35). He dug the ground deep and filled it with water, so that the wood and the flesh of the bull were completely soaked in the water.

And Elijah prayed: *"LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:36–37)*. Then the fire of the LORD came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up even the water in the trench. All the people saw it and fell down, crying, *"The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)* Elijah had won this confrontation.

Through the Word we see that Elijah built the altar of burnt offering, received God's answer, and brought all the people of Israel back to the LORD God. Truly, if we too would come before God, we must build this altar of burnt offering.

What the Sacrifice of the Burnt Offering Reveals about Ourselves

The sacrifice of the altar of burnt offering is a sacrifice of confessing, "This is what I am." It is admitting before God how lacking and weak our flesh is—that we are beings who can only die, like the bull, the goat, or the sheep on that altar. The sacrificial offering of the sin offering receives a person's sins passed on to it by the laying on of hands; it is slaughtered, and its blood is taken into the sanctuary and sprinkled seven times and put on the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest is

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poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering; then its body is carried outside the camp and burned with fire on the wood and offered to God. This is the sacrifice of the burnt offering.

When Elijah came before God, he came offering this sacrifice of the burnt offering. So did Noah. After spending one hundred and fifty days in the ark, when the waters had receded and he set foot on the ground, the first thing he did was to offer the sacrifice of the burnt offering. To offer the sacrifice of the burnt offering is to confess: God, I am a being as wretched as this sacrificial offering, deserving destruction, one who can only be put to death. To lay before God, just as they are, one's weakness and all one's sinful parts—this is the heart of the burnt offering.

When you and I come before God, we too must come with this faith of the burnt offering. When we lay ourselves wholly before God, do we really have anything to boast of? To admit honestly and lay down the fact that we are the very ones who can only die because of sin, like the sacrificial offering on the altar of burnt offering—that is the faith of the one who offers the sacrifice of the burnt offering.

The Apostle Paul also lamented in Romans chapter 7, *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24)* Looking at his own flesh, he felt deeply that he had nothing to lay before God, nothing but what was ugly and lacking. He acknowledged that this was the only self he could offer as a burnt offering.

The Lord Who Washed Us with the Water and the Blood

It is the same with us who have received the remission of sin. Though we were such beings, our Lord received us wholly, washed away all our sins, and made us God's children. We were like the burnt offering, having nothing but sin, able only to die; yet the Lord washed us clean with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood He shed on the Cross, and gave us the remission of sin. He made us righteous.

And so we come before God and call on the Lord; though weak and lacking, we love God, praise Him, pray, give thanks, and live as the righteous—all of this is the benefit of our Lord's salvation. By the Lord's salvation we became righteous, and because He washed away all our sins, we became the children of God.

Everyone who offers the sacrifice of the burnt offering confesses, "This is what I am." But because our Lord has washed away our sins with His baptism and the blood of the Cross, we come to God confessing: I have received the remission of sin before God; therefore I praise the Lord's salvation, give thanks, love Him, and believe. This is the very heart of the one who offers the sacrifice of the burnt offering, and the posture of faith.

The Faith That Stands by Relying on the Lord

It is so with me first of all. In the flesh, I can never stand on my own. I cannot stand before God saying, "I am a rather decent person." Because I cannot stand alone, I stand only by believing in the Lord. By relying on the Lord I confess that I

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am righteous, and I can say that I have become God's people and God's servant. Not in word only—by faith it has actually become so.

You also have received the remission of sin, yet you cannot stand on your own without relying on the Lord. That is why we end every prayer by saying, "I pray in the name of Jesus Christ." Because we received the remission of sin by relying on the Lord, and became righteous and God's people by relying on the Lord, we call God our Father and pray.

We must always keep in mind that we ourselves are beings like the sacrificial offering on that altar of burnt offering. We must know that there is nothing great about us, nothing righteous in us, and that apart from relying on the Lord we are nothing. That is the faith of the one who offers the sacrifice of the burnt offering. Whether it is the burnt offering, the sin offering, or the peace offering, only the methods differ slightly; in every case, passing one's sins by the laying on of hands is the same.

Each of us must acknowledge before God, "This is what I am," and stand by believing in the Lord. We must praise by believing in the Lord, become God's workers by believing in the Lord, and live in this world by relying on the Lord. Do you believe? —Yes—

Which Gospel Is the True Gospel?

Who is the true God? There is no need even to ask: the LORD God, who exists of Himself, is the true God. The God of power, who sent down fire from heaven and burned up the water-soaked burnt offering, the wet wood, and even the water in the trench—He is the true God. Baal and Asherah are false

gods. Though they cried out from morning till evening, injuring their bodies with knives and lances, there was no answer at all.

Then in this age, which is the true gospel? Is it the gospel that believes in Jesus and receives the remission of the original sin only? Is it the gospel of receiving remission by repenting daily of one's actual sins? Or is it the gospel of the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross? The true gospel must have power. If a person rightly hears the Word of the true gospel, sin must disappear on the spot. Just as the LORD God is the true God, the true gospel God has given mankind is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel of the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross. If a person hears this gospel properly even once and believes it in his heart, any sin whatsoever is removed.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit That Removes All Sins Once and for All

The gospel that believes only in the blood of the Cross, however much one believes it, can remove nothing more than the original sin. People speak of the original sin, but in fact they do not even know exactly what it is; the debate over what it is has not ceased even now. The gospel of the blood of the Cross removes only the original sin and cannot remove actual sins, so they say actual sins must be repented of again to be removed, and the sins of the future it dare not even deal with. They call such a thing the gospel, but it is not the true gospel.

But the gospel of the water and the Spirit is different. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross, the Lord removed once and for all the original sin,

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actual sins, the sins of the future, the sins of the world, and even eternal sins. Whether sins of the present or sins yet to be committed, He removed all sins once and for all, without exception. This is the true gospel.

I would like to say this part quietly: I would even like to make a test between those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. Like that confrontation on Mount Carmel, even if you bring hundreds of millions of people who believe only in the blood of the Cross and have them preach from morning till evening to remove the sin of one person, that sin is not removed.

However long you explain until evening—that Jesus is God, that He came to this earth to save you, that He died on the Cross in your place, that He rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come again—the sins of the one who does not believe in Jesus are not removed.

And however much you preach to a believer in Jesus with only the gospel of the blood of the Cross, telling him that Jesus has removed all his sins, the sins he commits tomorrow must be repented of again to be removed, the sins of the future are not removed at all, and the sins in his heart at present remain as they are. But if you preach the gospel of the baptism Jesus received and the Cross—the gospel of the water and the Spirit—to a person not yet born again, giving him a full two or three hours, the matter is settled. His sins are completely removed, even the sins he has not yet committed. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true gospel.

Today, too, something like this happened with one elderly man. He had nowhere to go; he had once believed in Jesus, had been in the hospital after a traffic accident, had been forcibly discharged from a large hospital, and had been moved to a small one. Our workers visited him and preached the gospel.

Yesterday they spoke with him about sin, and today they visited again; after preaching the gospel two or three times, he received the remission of sin. If it is preached properly even once, and heard properly, and acknowledged in the heart, at the very moment one acknowledges it all sins are removed. This is the true gospel. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true gospel, and the gospel that holds only to the blood of the Cross is no different from serving Baal and those idols.

Those Who Preach with the Assurance of the True Gospel

As we go about preaching the gospel, we meet many people who hold only to the blood of the Cross, claim to believe in Jesus, and oppose us. As in that battle of 450 to 1, they push with their numbers and try to prevail by force. At such times there must be the assurance of the true gospel in our hearts. Only when we have that assurance can we preach boldly even when they oppose us.

It has been nearly two hundred years since Christianity entered this land. But is there anyone who has received the complete remission of sin by believing only in the blood of the Cross? They say they have no sin, but when you actually ask them whether there is sin in them or not, they cannot answer and evade the question. Asked whether they are righteous or sinners, they say they are righteous; yet asked whether they have sin or not, they shut their mouths. Why is that?

A person can say “I have no sin” and call himself righteous only when the Word of the truth of the water and the Spirit is in his heart—that is, when the Word by which all his sins were passed on by the laying on of hands, as onto the sheep and the

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goat and the bull, dwells within him. Otherwise, holding in his heart only the fact that Jesus was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, he cannot say that he has no sin.

We must have this faith. We must have a definite faith as to whether the gospel of the blood of the Cross alone is the true gospel, or this whole gospel in which the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross are together is the true gospel. It was because Elijah believed that the LORD is the true God that he went up Mount Carmel at odds of 450 to 1 and contended boldly.

We must have the firm assurance that this gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe—the whole gospel in which the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross are one—is the true gospel. This is not to say that you should merely suppose it to be so; it means we must hold an unshakable, definite faith.

What sacrifice did Elijah offer in determining the true God? It was the sacrifice of the burnt offering. In the sacrifice of the burnt offering, one passes his sins onto the head of the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands, slaughters the offering, takes its blood and sprinkles it on all sides of the altar of burnt offering, skins it and cuts it in pieces, washes the entrails and the legs with water, and then burns the whole of it on the altar of burnt offering and offers it to God.

God savored the aroma of the burning flesh and the burning fat of this sacrifice of the burnt offering, and was pleased. In Genesis, when Noah came out of the ark and offered the burnt offering, God smelled the soothing aroma and said: “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, for the thoughts of man’s heart are always evil from his birth; now I will judge man not because of his sin, but because he does not believe in Jesus Christ.”

Just as Elijah determined the true God by the sacrifice of the burnt offering, he acknowledged that he himself was a being who could only die—that if he laid his flesh before God, he was as ugly and wretched as that sacrificial offering which had received all the people's sins, unable to stand alone. And he believed in the LORD who exists of Himself, the God of creation, the God of salvation, who delivers such a one from all his sins—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Almighty God who counts as righteous the one who believes His Word. By that faith he offered the sacrifice of the burnt offering and defeated the prophets of Baal.

We too must have this faith: the faith that we cannot stand alone, and that we stand only by believing in the Lord. Can you stand alone? —No.— Apart from the Lord we are nothing. We stand by believing in and relying on the Lord. Such faith we have received from God. So by believing in the Lord we live, work, praise, worship, give thanks, pray, and receive answers.

Through this Word today, I hope that we will once again become those who rise up by relying on the Lord. I also hope that we will confirm anew which gospel is the true gospel, and, holding that faith, become those who do not yield to false prophets but preach this gospel. In this way we have meditated on the Word together. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Realize the True Gospel and Return

< 1 Kings 18:36-40 >

"And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.' Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!' And Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!' So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there."

The passage we have read today is, as we know well, the Word about Elijah fighting against the eight hundred and fifty priests of a Gentile religion and the god they believed in. Elijah was the prophet who turned the hearts of the people of Israel back to God. But what we must know is this: it was not that Elijah was great, but that God held on to Elijah and, by His

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almighty power, caused the hearts of the people of Israel to return to God.

God, Who Turned the Hearts of the People Back

This event showed plainly that the LORD God is the true God, and that the things called other gods are phantoms without life, evil things belonging to Satan the Devil. Concerning this Elijah, Jesus said in Matthew 11:14, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. Who was the Elijah we are speaking of? He was John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus Christ.

The Lord said that this John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women, and that from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. Therefore He was saying that those who know and believe what John the Baptist did and what Jesus Christ accomplished take the kingdom of heaven by force with that faith.

In Matthew 11:13 He said, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. That is, John is the one who put the period at the end of the Old Testament era. He fulfilled that role until Jesus Christ came; and when Jesus came, as the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus Christ and passed all the sins of mankind on to Him—that far was his part. Jesus Christ is the Savior who, by receiving the sins of mankind passed on to Him through John the Baptist, took all those sins upon Himself, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and so saved us.

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The Battle on Mount Carmel to Determine the True God

The passage we have read today is the scene of the decisive match over which god is the true God, fought with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who actually contended on Mount Carmel from among the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Asherah who had been summoned. Let us contend, he said, over who is the god that is alive, that benefits the people, that keeps and helps the people. The other side, too, accepted, since their forces were great. Before the eyes of the people of Israel, at odds of 450 to 1, the prophet Elijah entered the contest over which God is the true God.

The method was the same as the sacrifice of the burnt offering. They dug a trench around and poured water; they poured water on the wood and on the burnt offering as well; and then, without anyone setting fire by human hands, the god who sent down fire from heaven and burned up the offering, the flesh, and the wood would be the true God—that was the proposal. Thus the spiritual war began.

The prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah labored diligently, but it was all in vain. From morning till evening they cried, “O Baal! O Asherah!” and prayed even to the point of injuring their own bodies, but there was no answer. A god like that gives no answer to begin with. It has no power and is not alive; it seems to benefit people, but in fact it is nothing more than a demon that threatens and torments them.

“God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel”

Now, the LORD God is the God who exists of Himself. In

the evening Elijah offered the sacrifice and prayed: *"LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word" (1 Kings 18:36)*. Truly, God was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Israel.

Among all the nations of the world, the only nation that believed in the LORD God as its own God was Israel. Now Israel refers to Jacob, and it means the nation formed through the twelve sons of Jacob. Interpreted spiritually, this points to those who believe in Jesus. He is the God of those who know and believe Jesus as God, as the Son of God the Father, as the Creator who made heaven and earth and the whole universe, and as the Savior who has saved us.

Jesus Christ is your God and mine. He is, in particular, the God of those who believe in Jesus as their own Savior. To those who do not believe in Jesus as the Savior, He has not become their God—He is God by nature, but it is because they do not acknowledge Him. It means that He becomes God to the one who knows Jesus as his God and as his Savior.

Elijah, the Servant Whom God Held and Used

Elijah prayed that it might be known that he was the servant of the Lord—and truly, Elijah is the servant of God. The people of Israel served so many idols and committed such sin that there was no way to turn them back. They would not listen when rebuked; moreover, the king and the queen together drove the people into the places of idol worship, so that there were almost none left in Israel who knew, called on, and served the LORD God. That is why God gave Elijah power and did

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the work of God through him.

Before this event, there was in Elijah's life the matter of the widow of Zarephath. After living by the Brook Cherith on what the ravens brought him, he was led by God to the place where a widow lived. When he arrived, that widow too was suffering from the drought, with only enough flour left to make bread one last time. She was just about to knead it and make a cake.

Elijah told her to make food and serve him first, and said that then the bin of flour would not be used up and the jar of oil would not run dry. When the widow obeyed and did so, it happened exactly that way. And when the widow's son was at the point of death, Elijah prayed for him and stretched himself out on the child's body, and the child came back to life.

All these things showed that God accomplishes what He intends to do through Elijah. It was not that Elijah had some great power of his own. The Apostle James records that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, yet he prayed earnestly and it did not rain for three years and six months, and he prayed again and it rained. It means that God lifted him up and used him that greatly. All the people of Israel came to know that Elijah is the servant of God.

The Work of God Accomplished through John the Baptist

The Elijah who was to come in the New Testament era is John the Baptist. Elijah did not die, but went up to heaven in a whirlwind—God took him up. God said through the prophet Malachi that in the last days He would send Elijah to turn back to God those who seek Him. Who was that? Jesus said it was John the Baptist.

John the Baptist came into this world, baptized Jesus Christ and so passed on to Him all the sins of mankind, and testified of Jesus, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God,"* bearing witness that He is the Savior of us mankind. Thus, because John the Baptist passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ, we can see through the Word that those who desire to believe in and follow God have come to meet God by following his guidance.

Elijah's asking God to make it known that he had done all these things at His word shows that he was not a man who acted according to his own will, but a man who knew the will of God and acted following that will.

Which Gospel Has the Power to Remove Sins?

Now Elijah offered the sacrifice and prayed, *"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:37)*. Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up even the water in the trench. All the people saw it and fell down, saying, *"The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)*—and they returned to God.

Today as well, there are many people who say they believe in Jesus and yet serve idols. There are many who serve material things as God and follow material things more than God. But just as Elijah brought the people of Israel back to God, we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Is the gospel of the water and the Spirit the true gospel, or is the gospel of the blood of the Cross the true gospel? Just as Elijah contended at 450 to 1, we too fight such a spiritual battle.

People say, because their forces are many, that this is right

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and that is also right. But which is the true gospel? Which gospel has removed all sins, turned wrong faith around, and made a person a whole righteous man who never becomes a sinner again? We fight this spiritual war through the gospel that has power.

The eight hundred and fifty who served Baal and Asherah had great forces, but though they prayed from morning till evening, no fire came down from heaven and the burnt offering remained as it was. But the LORD God, in whom Elijah believed, sent down fire from heaven and burned up the flesh on the altar of burnt offering, the wood, and even the water gathered in the trench. He came in power. Today, though people believe only in the blood of the Cross and cry out and pray so much, have their sins really disappeared? Those who believe only in the blood of the Cross, however much they pray and devote themselves, could only confess that this Jesus of theirs had not removed all their sins.

The Life of the Righteous Whose Sins Have Been Washed as White as Snow

But those who have received the gospel of the water and the Spirit into their hearts are different. The person who receives into his heart this truth—that Jesus Christ received baptism from John the Baptist and took all the sins of mankind upon Himself once and for all—has his heart washed of sin as white as snow the moment he receives it. Our human weakness also died together with the body of Christ through our Lord, and we have been raised again to live a righteous life. However lacking a person may be, if he knows, believes in, and follows Jesus Christ as God, he comes to know and believe that Jesus, who

came by water and the Spirit, has removed all his sins and made him a child of God. Such people come to live as the righteous forever.

Our Lord has perfectly removed our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made us wholly the children of God, caused us to return to God and praise Him, and let us know who God is. This is the core of today's text.

The person who has received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes to know who God is. Ordinary people do not really know who God is. This seems like god and that seems like god; a great boulder, great wealth, great power—they regard them all as gods. But the one who has received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit acknowledges, knows, and believes in his heart, only then for the first time, that the Father of Jesus Christ is God, and that Jesus is God who created the universe and saved us from sin.

The Confession That a Mustard-Seed-Sized Faith Grows to Reach

When we pray, we call, "Lord," "Father God," "Jesus." Yet it is not easy to come to the clear-cut faith that this Lord is really my God. Even after we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sin, and become God's people, the faith that the Lord is my Master, my God, and my Shepherd is at first only the size of a mustard seed.

That small faith grows little by little as we pray aloud together and praise together, as we experience things in life, fall into weakness at times, and rise up again by faith. Through a long time, the faith that Jesus Christ is my God becomes

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definite. The fact that the Lord is really my God, the God of the righteous who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is impressed greatly on the heart.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, because our faith is only the size of a mustard seed, we often cannot pray well for lack of faith, fall often into temptation, and rely only on the strength of the flesh, failing to follow the will of God. Is that so with you? But just as the people of Israel, though they believed in the LORD God, had not really known Him, and only after tasting the power of the LORD who came by fire could not help confessing, “The LORD, He is God,” so I want you and me also to have the confession, “Lord, You are my God.” God gives us this confession and makes our faith grow little by little.

We grow in faith as we praise together, pray aloud together, and serve the Lord. Just as even a tiny seed, hardly visible to the eye, sprouts and grows into a great tree once it is planted, so the faith first planted in our hearts—simply that He has removed our sins—grows more and more as we call on the Lord and experience the answers to prayer. The longer we live, the more we come to know that the Lord is my God, the God of those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, when we pray, we must pray aloud. When alone it may be different, but when we gather and pray together, we must pray with our voices for faith to grow. By expressing with our mouths what is in our hearts, we become conscious that we have now prayed to God, we come to wait for the answer, and when the matter is accomplished, we come to know that God has accomplished it. In this way we learn prayer, learn faith through prayer, and, in our life and in our fellowship together, learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is my God.

Come and Contend before the True Gospel

Christians all over the world know that Jesus is the Savior. But because they believe only in the blood of the Cross, though with their lips they say they serve Jesus Christ as their God, in reality they have fallen into the idolatry of serving the riches, material things, power, pleasures, and honor of this world under the pretext of Jesus. But those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are different. Truly, Jesus is our Savior and our God. Even though our faith is small and weak and we sometimes wander, not knowing which way to go, God has set His Church, His servants, and those who have gone ahead, and through these He makes our faith grow and makes us know that the LORD God is truly our God.

When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, the people of the world stand against it holding the blood of the Cross. So we challenge them. If you are so confident, let us contend over which gospel is the true gospel—not by fleshly strength; read our books and read your books too, and examine your own conscience. Have you not been leading a religious life of serving idols while claiming to believe in Jesus? Would not the gospel of the water and the Spirit be more than enough to remove all your sins? Yet because you believe only in the blood of the Cross, have you not become a sinner again every time you sin daily? That is not the whole gospel but a corrupted gospel—this is what we say.

The whole gospel is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel to which Elijah here testifies. When John the Baptist came to this earth and baptized Jesus Christ, the sins of mankind were passed on to Jesus; because Jesus took over those sins, He could die on the Cross; and He rose again from death and became our true Savior. Those who believe only in

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the blood of the Cross disregard the role of John the Baptist, but the role of John the Baptist was the role of God Himself. Just as God sent Elijah and brought the people of Israel back, so for this mankind He sent John the Baptist and had him baptize Jesus so that all the sins of mankind would be passed on. The very act of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus was the work of God.

Therefore, if your sins have not disappeared though you believe only in the blood of the Cross, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Then you will know which is the true gospel. If you believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit according to the Word, you acknowledge that you are a sinner, acknowledge that when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist He took over all the sins of mankind, and acknowledge that Jesus bore those sins, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, rose again from death, and saved us. When you so acknowledge, you are delivered wholly from all sins. The people of the whole world must now return to Jesus, who came by water and the Spirit.

The Gospel That the Reformation Failed to Recover

I make this proposal to Christians all over the world, and I want to speak about heresy. Since the Reformation took place, Christians have believed and preached as the truth the gospel that preaches only the blood of the Cross. But have the sins of those who believe it disappeared? Because they have not, Christianity collapsed in Europe, and also in Africa and Asia. Believing in the blood of the Cross did not make sin disappear, so people believed for a while, then gave it all up and went

back to the place of serving idols.

The Reformers did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In the 1500s there was a man named Martin Luther, a priest and professor of the Catholic Church. He did not say that the faith he himself believed was wrong; rather, he pointed out that it was wrong to sell to church members a piece of paper called an indulgence in order to build St. Peter's Basilica, telling them that if they bought it they would escape going to hell and their ancestors would go up to heaven. One does not go to heaven by money but by believing in Jesus—how can you do this? Where is purgatory?—that is what he said.

At that time Germany, England, and Europe were pressed down by the great power of the Catholic Church and were looking for a way out; so the nobles, the kings, and the common people united, saying that Luther's words were right and that they should break free from the authority of the pope, and its success was what we call the Reformation. From this came the word Protestant, which, translated, means one who protested against the Catholic Church. But what the Reformers knew was, at best, the gospel of the blood of the Cross. The apostles of the early Church knew and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In A.D. 312, a king of Rome, before going to war, saw in a dream a cross shining with light and heard, in a vision, that if he went out with this cross he would be given victory. So he went out to battle carrying the banner of the cross and won; the next year, in 313, he officially recognized Christianity; and later he unified the eastern and western Roman Empire and became emperor—he is Constantine the Great. He said that since he had won the war by the cross, he would believe in the cross. In Rome, where the persecution had been most severe and the martyrs many, Christianity then blossomed. But Satan

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the Devil worked through that cross in the dream, leading people to drift toward the idea that if they only believe in the cross they obtain salvation. Thus countless people, not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, said they were saved by the blood of the Cross alone, and that flowed on into the Reformation.

When Luther raised the Reformation, he declared that the just shall live by faith, and he knew in theory that one goes to heaven by faith and receives the remission of sin by faith. But he knew only the shell: that one receives the remission of sin by believing only in the blood of the Cross. And so, from the age of the Reformation until now, for about five hundred years, Christianity has hung up the cross wherever it goes and preached only the blood of the Cross. It has preached only that Jesus was crucified and saved us from sin. But sin has not disappeared from the hearts of those who believe in Jesus. At the moment they believe, their sins seem to vanish, but the sins they commit daily still remain in their hearts.

The Half Gospel and the Whole Gospel

So God, in this last age, has taught us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, gathered those who believe it, established the Church of God, and had this gospel preached to the whole world. Is the gospel of the water and the Spirit the true gospel, or is the gospel that believes only in the blood of the Cross the true gospel? God wants us to test this, and to know and believe the true gospel. Once we have come to know the true gospel, we must believe it and reject the other. We must not accept both.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the

Spirit believes in the blood of the Cross as well: he believes that Jesus received baptism and so took our sins upon Himself and washed them away, and he also believes that Jesus received in full the judgment of those sins. But the person who believes only in the blood of the Cross believes that Jesus only received the judgment of our sins. Therefore, in the heart of the one who believes only in the blood of the Cross, sin remains; but in the heart of the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, sin has been washed away and there is no sin; the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart, and he is righteous and a child of God. Thus the matter has been decided.

Strictly speaking, the so-called gospel of the blood of the Cross is a half gospel, not the whole gospel. It looks the same on the outside, but the inside is different. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true one. It is what the apostles believed, and what Jesus Himself accomplished for us. Through John the Baptist and Jesus, He removed your sins and mine. It is not that John the Baptist removed our sins; like Elijah, he was used by God to bring people back to God. By baptizing Jesus and so passing on to Him all the sins of the world, he testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who took the sins of mankind upon Himself. Following the testimony of John the Baptist, we came to know and believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and were saved. The people of the whole world must also be saved in this way.

Realize the True Gospel and Return to Jesus Christ

Think about it. How many Christians all over the world are believing wrongly! That is why we must testify to what heresy

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is and what the true gospel is. Just as Elijah brought countless people back to God, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we now preach brings Christians back to Jesus Christ. Countless people call Jesus their Lord, yet they still have sin in their hearts; they know only in theory that Jesus is their Savior, and before certain problems and events they cannot really believe, so that as time passes they have drifted away from Jesus. That is how the Christianity that once blossomed in Europe disappeared.

The places where the Apostle Paul once preached the gospel have now become Muslim countries, and on the American continent, where the Puritans crossed over, Christianity blossomed and then faded. But those people can never return to Jesus Christ except through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. To Jesus Christ our true Savior, true God and true man, no one can return except through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—that truth alone—brings you and me back to Jesus Christ. Do you believe? —Yes—

The Church of God must testify, within this Christianity, to who is heretical and what the true gospel is. We must not settle down complacently, keeping the life of faith only among ourselves. Though many books have been translated and we lack the strength to publish them all, we believe that God will accomplish great things through us. For that is the will of God. God wants to accomplish His will through us. I hope you also hold fast to the Word, have faith, and know that Jesus is your God.

No one has ever seen God, but He said that whoever knows and believes what Jesus has done is one who has seen God. You and I have not seen Jesus with the eyes of the flesh, but through the Word of the Scriptures in our hearts we know who

Jesus is and believe in Him as our Savior. Do you believe that He has removed all your sins and mine by the gospel of the water and the Spirit? —Yes—

We have met Jesus with our hearts. The person who has not met Him with the heart has not met Him at all. We meet Him with the heart through the Word of the truth, not through doctrines made by man. We who were truly sinners, who could only have gone to hell had it not been for the Lord who came by water and the Spirit, meet with our hearts the fact that the Lord has removed our sins and become our Savior. If anyone has not yet fully met Him, I hope he will set his heart in order and meet the Lord.

Just as Elijah seized and removed the prophets of Baal, we must defeat the false ones of the whole world—not seizing them in the flesh, but spiritually. Countless people are being deceived while claiming to believe in Jesus, and they must escape from that. You and I must carry out this work like little Elijahs. I pray that God will save the Christian believers of the whole world. ✉

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CHAPTER

19

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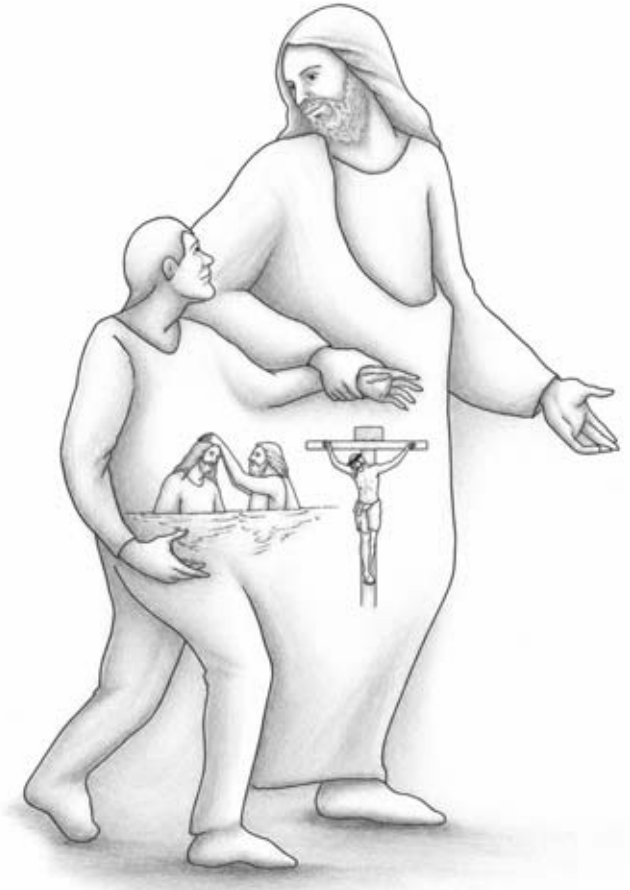

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1 Kings Chapter 19

1) Summary of the Entire Content

1 Kings chapter 19 records the process in which Elijah, who had won a great victory on Mount Carmel, fled in fear before Jezebel's threat and fell into deep discouragement, but God fed him and gave him rest, and then entrusted him with his mission again on Mount Horeb. When Elijah thought he alone was left, God had reserved seven thousand who had not yielded to Baal, and He established Elisha as his successor so that the work of God would continue.

1. Jezebel Threatens to Kill Elijah (Verses 1–2)

Ahab told Jezebel all that had happened on Mount Carmel and the fact that Elijah had put the prophets of Baal to death. Even when Jezebel heard of the event in which the fire of God had fallen, she did not humble her heart before God.

Instead, Jezebel sent a messenger and threatened that she would kill Elijah by the same time the next day. On Mount Carmel the powerlessness of Baal had been exposed and the people had acknowledged God, but Jezebel's heart did not change.

The victory on Mount Carmel did not solve every problem at once. This shows that even when the power of God is clearly revealed, there can be people who reject it and oppose it all the more fiercely.

2. Elijah Flees in Fear (Verses 3–4)

When Elijah saw Jezebel's threat, he fled to save his own

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life. He left northern Israel and went as far as Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and leaving his servant there, he went alone into the wilderness.

After walking a day's journey into the wilderness, Elijah sat down under a broom tree. Feeling that he could endure no longer, he asked God to take his life.

Elijah, who until the day before had stood against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, collapsed before the threat of a single person. This shows that fleshly exhaustion, fear, and discouragement can come even to a person of strong faith.

Elijah thought that he was no better than his fathers. He may have expected all Israel to change after the victory on Mount Carmel, but when Jezebel's threat continued, he felt as if his labor had failed.

3. God Feeds Elijah through an Angel (Verses 5–8)

God did not immediately rebuke the discouraged Elijah. He first let him sleep under the broom tree, and sent an angel to touch him and have him eat.

By Elijah's head were prepared a cake baked on coals and a jar of water. He ate the bread and drank the water, and then lay down and slept again.

The angel of God woke Elijah a second time and told him to eat again, because the journey ahead of him was long. God did not deal only with Elijah's spiritual state; He gave rest and food to his exhausted body.

Strengthened by that food, Elijah went through the wilderness for forty days and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. God gave Elijah, who had wanted to die, the strength to walk again.

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4. Elijah Speaks of His Situation in the Cave on Mount Horeb (Verses 9–10)

When Elijah arrived at Mount Horeb, he went into a cave and stayed there. Mount Horeb was the place where Moses had met God and the people of Israel had received the word of the covenant.

God asked Elijah why he had come there. This was not a question asked because God did not know where Elijah was, but a question that made him look back on his own heart and his present state.

Elijah said that he had worked very zealously for God, but that the people of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, torn down His altars, and killed His prophets. He pleaded that he alone was left, and that people were seeking to take even his life.

There was truth in Elijah's words, but he did not know the whole situation accurately. He thought that he alone was left, but God had reserved in Israel people who had kept their faith.

5. After the Strong Wind, the Earthquake, and the Fire Comes a Still Small Voice (Verses 11–13)

God told Elijah to come out of the cave and stand on the mountain. First, a great and strong wind tore into the mountain and broke the rocks in pieces, but God did not speak to Elijah in that wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire appeared. But this time God did not speak to Elijah in the earthquake or in the fire either.

After the fire had passed, a still small voice was heard. Elijah covered his face with his mantle and stood at the entrance of the cave.

On Mount Carmel God had revealed Himself by fire, but on

Mount Horeb He met Elijah with a still small voice. God is not One who works only through great and astonishing events; He is the One who searches a person's heart through His quiet Word and shows him a new way.

What Elijah needed was not another great and shocking miracle, but to hear the voice of God and confirm the mission that still remained for him.

6. God Entrusts Elijah with His Mission Again (Verses 13–17)

God asked Elijah again why he had come there. Elijah repeated that he had served God zealously, but that he was left alone and his life was being threatened.

After hearing Elijah's plea, God sent him back to the place of his mission. Elijah was to go through the wilderness to Damascus and anoint Hazael as king over Syria.

He was also to anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over northern Israel, and to anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah as the prophet who would succeed him.

Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha were the people who would carry out God's judgment on the house of Ahab and on idolatry. Elijah thought he had accomplished no result at all, but God's plan was already moving on to its next stage.

God did not end the mission of His weary servant Elijah; He divided among several people the work Elijah had been bearing alone.

7. God Leaves Seven Thousand Who Have Not Bowed to Baal (Verse 18)

Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God had reserved in Israel seven thousand who had neither bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed him.

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No faithful people were visible to Elijah's eyes, but God knew His own people precisely. Even though Jezebel's persecution was severe and Baal worship seemed to dominate the whole nation, not everyone had yielded to Baal.

The work of God did not depend on Elijah alone. God was preserving people who kept their faith even in places Elijah did not know.

A person may judge that the work of God has failed, based only on the situation visible to his own eyes. But God accomplishes His will also through people who are not seen.

8. Elijah Calls Elisha (Verses 19–20)

Elijah left Mount Horeb and followed the command of God. He found Elisha the son of Shaphat plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him.

Elijah went over to Elisha and threw his mantle on him. The act of throwing the mantle was the sign of calling Elisha as his successor and as the one who would take up the work of God.

Elisha immediately left the oxen and ran to Elijah. He said that he would follow Elijah after saying farewell to his parents.

Elisha understood the calling of God, but he did not disregard his relationship with his family or leave irresponsibly. He intended to say farewell to his parents, put his former life in order, and then follow his new mission.

9. Elisha Settles His Livelihood and Follows Elijah (Verse 21)

Elisha slaughtered the yoke of oxen he had been using, burned the oxen's equipment to boil their flesh, and gave the food to the people.

Slaughtering the oxen and burning the farming tools was an

act by which he himself closed off the way back to his former livelihood. Elisha did not regard the calling of God as a passing experience; he made the decision to offer his whole life.

Elisha did not step forward from the beginning as the prophet replacing Elijah; he began with following Elijah and serving him. Though called as the successor, he first had to learn and serve at Elijah's side.

Elijah had thought that he alone was left, but by the end of the chapter he gained Elisha, who would be with him and carry on the work of God. God not only raised up the discouraged Elijah again, but also prepared the worker of the next generation.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 19

First, discouragement and fear can come even after experiencing a great victory of faith. Even Elijah, who had been bold on Mount Carmel, fled for his life before Jezebel's threat.

Second, God looks after the fleshly needs of the weary. God first let Elijah rest under the broom tree, gave him bread and water, and then had him go on his way again.

Third, a judgment made in a state of discouragement may not agree with the whole truth. Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God was preserving seven thousand who had not yielded to Baal.

Fourth, God does not speak only through great and astonishing phenomena. On Mount Horeb, after the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire had passed, He met Elijah with a still small voice.

Fifth, God hears a person's plea, yet He does not leave him to remain outside his mission. God commanded Elijah to go back and establish Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha.

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Sixth, the plan of God does not depend on the ability of one person. When Elijah was exhausted, God raised up several people so that the ministry of judgment and of the Word would continue.

Seventh, God leaves His own people even in places that are not seen. Even when the whole world seems to have tilted toward idols, God knows those who keep their faith.

Eighth, the calling of God requires the decision to settle one's former life and follow the new mission. Elisha slaughtered his oxen and burned his farming tools, and then followed Elijah.

Ninth, the one who will carry on the work of God must first learn and serve close at hand. When Elisha was called, he did not demand a high position at once, but followed Elijah and served him.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 19 is the account of how God fed and rested Elijah, who was discouraged by Jezebel's threat, met him with a still small voice and sent him back to the place of his mission, and prepared the seven thousand who remained and his successor Elisha, so that the work of God would go on.

2) Chapter 19 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

1 Kings chapter 19 records how even Elijah, who had won a great victory on Mount Carmel, could collapse before fleshly fear and exhaustion, but God did not abandon him; He restored him with food and with the Word and sent him back to the place of his mission. Seen from the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, salvation does not depend on a

person's strength or perfect conduct but on the righteousness Jesus has accomplished, and the Holy Spirit raises up the discouraged with the Word of the gospel so that they serve souls again.

1. Jezebel's Threat That Came after the Victory on Mount Carmel (Verses 1–2)

Ahab told Jezebel all that had happened on Mount Carmel and the fact that the prophets of Baal had died. Even when Jezebel heard the news that the fire of God had fallen, she did not turn her heart to God but threatened to kill Elijah.

Not everyone believes in God just because they have seen a great miracle. A person whose heart is captured by idols and by his own greed can reject the power of God even when it is revealed.

Jezebel served Baal and Asherah and led the people of Israel down the same road. Spiritually, she represents the false faith that draws people's hearts away from the gospel of the water and the Spirit and makes them put material things and worldly success ahead of God.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must believe in Jesus who saved him and keep the Word of life, even when there are threats and opposition from the world.

2. Elijah Sees His Circumstances and Flees (Verses 3–4)

Elijah had confronted the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, but when he heard Jezebel's threat, he fled for his own life. He left his servant at Beersheba and went alone into the wilderness, asking to die.

Elijah came to look at Jezebel's word that she would kill him as greater than the fact that God had sent down fire on

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Mount Carmel. This shows that when a person of faith looks at his circumstances, he can fall into fear and discouragement.

Fleshly weakness remains even in the person who has been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He may fear, be discouraged, and sink into his own judgment, but such weakness cannot make the salvation Jesus has completed imperfect again.

Salvation is not maintained because the believer is always strong; it is eternally whole because Jesus took all sins upon Himself completely and was judged for them.

3. The Relationship between Elijah's Weakness and Perfect Salvation

Elijah collapsed to the point of asking God to take his life, but God did not abandon him. God had established Elijah as His own even while knowing his weakness, and He continued to use him.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also think, when he looks at his own flesh, that he does not seem like a righteous person. But the standard of salvation is not his feelings or his present conduct, but the Word of salvation Jesus has accomplished.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of believers—past, present, and future. And bearing those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death.

Therefore, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not become a sinner again because of the insufficiency of his flesh. By believing in the righteousness Jesus accomplished, he has become a sinless, righteous person forever, and with the help of the Holy Spirit he can rise again from his weakness.

4. God Feeds Elijah and Gives Him Rest (Verses 5–8)

God did not immediately rebuke Elijah, exhausted under the broom tree. He first let him sleep, and sent an angel to feed him with a cake baked on coals and with water.

When Elijah lay down again, the angel of God woke him once more and had him eat, because he needed the food God gives in order to overcome the journey ahead.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the food of life that souls weary of sin and of the world must eat. Even a saved person, if he does not keep feeding on the Word of the gospel in his heart, can be weighed down by his circumstances and fleshly thoughts.

When we meditate again on the Word—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John and ended the judgment of those sins on the Cross—our hearts receive strength again. The Holy Spirit comforts the discouraged through the Word of the gospel and makes them walk by faith.

5. Walking to Mount Horeb by the Food God Gave (Verse 8)

Elijah ate the food God gave, gained strength, and walked for forty days until he reached Mount Horeb. It was a road he could not travel by his own strength, but he arrived at his destination by the strength of the food God had given.

The life of faith, too, cannot be sustained by human will and resolution alone. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must draw strength from the Word of God rather than from his own zeal.

The Word of salvation is not knowledge that may be heard once and forgotten. The believer must keep remembering the fact that all his sins were passed on to Jesus and the fact that Jesus bore the judgment of those sins completely.

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Through this gospel, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to overcome the hardships of the world and the weakness of the flesh and to walk the way God has entrusted to him.

6. Elijah, Who Entered the Cave on Mount Horeb (Verses 9–10)

Elijah went into the cave on Mount Horeb and stayed there. God asked him why he had come there.

Elijah said that he had worked zealously for God, but that the people of Israel had forsaken the covenant, torn down the altars, and killed the prophets. He also pleaded that he alone was left and that people were seeking to take even his life.

In Elijah's heart there was the thought that he had borne all the work alone, and the discouragement that he had gained no fruit at all. He was looking at his own zeal and at the results that seemed to have failed.

A person who serves the gospel can also be discouraged when the fruit does not appear in proportion to his effort. But the work of saving souls is not accomplished by human zeal; God accomplishes it through the Word of the gospel.

7. The Still Small Voice Heard after the Strong Wind, the Earthquake, and the Fire (Verses 11–13)

When God passed by, a strong wind tore into the mountain and broke the rocks, and an earthquake and a fire also appeared. But this time God did not speak to Elijah in such great and astonishing phenomena.

After the fire a still small voice was heard, and Elijah stood at the entrance of the cave with his face covered by his mantle. God searched Elijah's heart with a quiet Word and told him the way he was to go again.

From the perspective of the gospel, the still small voice is

connected with the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit recorded in the Scriptures. A person must confirm his salvation through the Word of God rather than through great and astonishing experiences or emotional excitement.

The Holy Spirit does not give the assurance of salvation by exciting a person's senses; He causes us to believe the Word that Jesus washed away all sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross.

The standard of faith is not a special experience but the written Word. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make a person realize and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that all the sins of his heart are washed away, and to make the saved live according to the will of God.

8. Elijah's Mission and the Ministry of John the Baptist

Elijah did the work of turning back to God the hearts of the people of Israel that had gone toward idols. In the New Testament, John the Baptist carried out the mission of leading people's hearts to Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist came ahead of Jesus and prepared the way of the Lord, and as the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself once and for all the sins of all the people of the world.

John the Baptist testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who took the sins of the world upon Himself. Through his testimony, people can know why Jesus was baptized by John and why He died on the Cross shedding His blood.

Just as Elijah led the people of Israel from Baal to God, the ministry of John the Baptist leads sinners to Jesus through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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9. Returning to God through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the sinner passed his sins onto the head of the sacrificial offering by laying his hands on it. The offering that had received those sins shed its blood and died, bearing the judgment of sin in his place.

Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John. And bearing those sins, He was hung on the Cross, died shedding His blood, and rose again from death.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is the work of salvation by which all sins were passed on to Jesus, and the blood of the Cross shows that the judgment of those sins was completely carried out. Jesus, who rose again from death, has given new life and eternal salvation to those who believe.

The Holy Spirit testifies in the heart of the one who believes in this salvation, accomplished by the water and the blood, that all his sins have been washed away. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes that he has become a sinless, righteous person not on the basis of his own deeds but on the basis of the salvation Jesus has completed.

10. God Sends Elijah Back to the Place of His Mission (Verses 13–17)

Elijah repeated before God that he alone was left and that his life was being threatened. God heard his words and told him to go back and carry out the work entrusted to him.

Elijah was to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, anoint Jehu as king over northern Israel, and establish Elisha as the prophet who would succeed him.

God did not throw away the discouraged Elijah as a useless man. Knowing his insufficiency, He entrusted him with the mission again and let him take part in God's plan.

A person saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also become discouraged and sit down for a while. But the Holy Spirit raises him up with the Word of the gospel and leads him again to deliver the Word of life to other souls.

God does not use people who have perfect flesh; He uses people who know their own insufficiency and rely on the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

11. God Leaves Seven Thousand Who Have Not Bowed to Baal (Verse 18)

Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal and had not kissed him.

God was preserving His own people even in places Elijah did not know. Even though Baal worship seemed to rule the whole nation, the people who belonged to God had not disappeared.

Even if those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit look few, God raises up souls all over the world who seek and believe this gospel. The number visible to human eyes does not determine the work of God.

Through the people He has left, God causes the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be passed on, unbroken, to the next generation and to other peoples. The one who serves the gospel must abandon the thought that he alone is working, and be united with the people God has prepared.

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12. Not Making Material Things and Worldly Success into God

Baal and Asherah were idols believed to give rain, abundance, and the prosperity of descendants. Jezebel made people put material abundance and fleshly desires ahead of the Word of God.

Today as well, if the purpose of believing in God is set only on wealth, health, and the success of one's children, material things can become the idol of the heart. If we try to obtain only the blessings of the world through Jesus, it produces the same result as replacing God with a golden calf.

The most important purpose for which God sent Jesus is to save sinners from all their sins and make them God's children. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit counts the remission of sin and eternal life as the greatest blessings God has given.

It is not that the saved person has no fleshly needs, but he puts the gospel and the will of God ahead of the desires of the flesh. The Holy Spirit leads him to use the time, talents, and possessions he has received in serving the gospel and souls.

13. Elisha Is Called and Settles His Former Life (Verses 19–21)

Elijah met Elisha, who was plowing a field, and threw his mantle on him. Elisha realized the calling of God, left the oxen, and followed Elijah.

After saying farewell to his parents, Elisha slaughtered a yoke of oxen, burned the farming tools, made food, and shared it with the people. This was his decision to wrap up the way back to his former livelihood and follow the new mission.

The one who has been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot go on living only for the same

purposes as before. He leaves the life lived only for his own desires and moves on to a life of preaching the gospel of life and serving other souls.

Elisha did not try to stand in a high position from the beginning; he started by following Elijah and serving him. The worker of the gospel, too, must first learn the Word and receive the training of faith while serving together with those who have gone before.

14. The Mission of the Gospel Continues to the Next Generation

Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God had prepared Elisha as his successor. Even after Elijah's mission ended, the work of God continued through Elisha.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also must not end with one person or one generation. We must pass on accurately to the next generation the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

The worker of the gospel must not think that he must do everything himself, but must teach the Word and the life of faith to new people. Raising up the next generation to believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also an important mission.

Just as God used Elijah and Elisha together, He causes those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be united and to deliver the Word of life to the world.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 19

First, fleshly fear and discouragement can come even to the person saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But his salvation rests not on his own strength but on the

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righteousness Jesus has completed.

Second, Jesus took all the sins of believers upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. This salvation is not canceled or made imperfect by human weakness.

Third, God raises up the discouraged again by giving them the food of the gospel. Just as the angel gave Elijah bread and water, the Holy Spirit feeds weary souls with the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Fourth, the standard of faith is not great and astonishing experiences but the Word of God. The Holy Spirit causes sinners to know and believe salvation through the still, small Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Fifth, the mission by which Elijah led the heart of Israel to God is carried on in the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist gave Jesus the baptism by which He took all the sins of mankind upon Himself, and testified of Jesus as the Savior.

Sixth, God does not abandon the weak but sends them back to the place of their mission. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must rise from discouragement and deliver the Word of salvation to other souls.

Seventh, God leaves people who will keep the gospel even in a dark age. Like the seven thousand who did not yield to Baal, God raises up all over the world people who will believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Eighth, material things and worldly success must not be put ahead of God. To the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the greatest blessings are the washing away of all sins and eternal life.

Ninth, the mission of the gospel must be passed on to the

next generation. Just as Elisha learned from and served Elijah, new workers must be raised up to learn the gospel of the water and the Spirit and preach it to the world.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 19 shows—through the event in which God restored Elijah, discouraged by fleshly fear, with bread and water and with a still small Word, and sent him back to the place of his mission—that the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death, saves weak people and raises them up to preach the gospel of life. ✉

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1 Kings Chapter 19

God, Who Raises Up His Weary Servant Again with a Still Small Voice

Introduction

1 Kings chapter 19 is the chapter in which, after the great victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah falls into deep discouragement and fear. God had answered by fire on Mount Carmel, the people of Israel had confessed that the LORD is God, and after the long famine a heavy rain had also fallen. But the house of Ahab and Jezebel did not truly turn around. Instead, Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah. When false faith collapses before the truth, it can oppose all the more stubbornly rather than repent.

In the face of that threat, Elijah fled, sat down under a broom tree, and asked to die. This shows that even the servant of God is a weak human being with a body of flesh. Even a person who has experienced a great spiritual victory can grow weary, can be afraid, and can feel that he can go no further by his own strength. But God did not abandon such an Elijah. He did not begin with rebuke; He fed him, gave him rest, and raised him up again.

God led Elijah to Mount Horeb. There a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire passed by, but God was not in them. And after the fire, He met Elijah in a still small voice. This shows that the work of God does not always lie in great outward

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phenomena. God turns a person's heart with His precise and clear Word, and sets His weary servant on the way of his mission again.

Elijah lamented as if he alone were left, but God let him know that there was still work God would do, that there were still people God would establish, and that He had also reserved those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God spoke of establishing Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, showing that Elijah's ministry does not end with one man's feelings or the circumstances of one age. The work of God depends not on man, but on the Word and the sovereignty of God.

We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also grow weary at times. When we deliver the truth and people do not listen but rather oppose it, our hearts can be weighed down. But the strength that raises us up again is not in ourselves. Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us new life by rising again from death. This Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit feeds weary souls today also, and, like the still small voice of God, sets us before God again.

Even after a Spiritual Victory, the Flesh Can Be Weak

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword" (1 Kings 19:1).

1 Kings chapter 19 follows immediately after the great event on Mount Carmel. Through Elijah, God exposed the falsehood of Baal and Asherah, and the people of Israel

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confessed, *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).* And after the long famine, a heavy rain fell. But even after seeing all this, the house of Ahab did not truly turn around. Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah had done.

Here we see the stubbornness of a person held captive by sin. Even though God had answered by fire and the emptiness of Baal had been publicly exposed, Jezebel did not repent. Who the true God is had been revealed, but the heart captured by idolatry tried instead to oppose the servant of God.

Today as well, there are people who do not turn their hearts even when the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached plainly. Even when they hear the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death, they may be unable to lay down their own thoughts and religious traditions. But when God shows the true way of salvation, a person must abandon his stubbornness and fall down before the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jezebel's Threat Reveals the Nature of False Faith

"Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.'" (1 Kings 19:2).

Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah and threatened to kill him. Even after seeing the prophets of Baal exposed as false, she did not admit her sin. Instead she tried to kill the servant of God. This is the nature false faith shows before the truth. False faith does not submit to God; when its idol collapses, it

opposes the truth.

Jezebel said, *"The gods do so unto me, and more also" (1 Kings 19:2).* She was still holding on to the names of the false gods. Holding on to the very idols that had given no answer at all on Mount Carmel, she threatened the servant of the living God. When a person's heart is bound to idols, even when the truth is revealed before his eyes, he may not turn around but oppose it all the more fiercely.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also tears down the idols in a person's heart. Self-righteousness, denominational tradition, the incomplete faith that speaks only of the blood of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, and the heart that holds on to material things and success as if they were God—all these must be thrown away before God. But when a person holds on to such things, he may rather become angry before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore we must look at the truth God has established as greater than people's reactions.

There Are Times When Even the Servant of God Grows Weary and Collapses

"And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there" (1 Kings 19:3).

When Elijah heard Jezebel's threat, he arose and fled for his life. He had seen God answer by fire on Mount Carmel and had won the spiritual war against the prophets of Baal, but he was still a man with a body of flesh. After a great battle, body and heart can be exhausted. Being a servant of God does not mean being without the weakness of the flesh.

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This word does not mean that we should look down on Elijah. Rather, it shows that even a person used by God does not minister by his own strength. Elijah was bold on Mount Carmel not because of his own strength, but because the word of God upheld him. Now the sight of Elijah fleeing in exhaustion shows that even the servant of God cannot stand without God's upholding.

We too can grow weary on the way of believing and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we deliver the truth and people do not listen but rather oppose it, our hearts can be weighed down. But our strength is not in ourselves. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death, upholds us. This truth is the power of God that raises us up again.

The Prayer under the Broom Tree Was a Prayer Entrusting His Life to God in Despair

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" (1 Kings 19:4).

Elijah went into the wilderness about a day's journey and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked to die: *"It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life" (1 Kings 19:4)*. This word does not mean that Elijah had abandoned God. He was still speaking to God. He was simply utterly exhausted. He felt that he could go forward no longer by his own strength.

The confession *"I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4)* is also important. Elijah had experienced a great work on

Mount Carmel, but he did not exalt himself as a special man. He knew that the power was not in himself. He confessed that he too was only a weak man like his fathers.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not exalt himself either. We were saved not because we were outstanding. We were saved because Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. And we can serve not because we have ability, but because God has given us life through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God First Feeds His Weary Servant and Touches Him Tenderly

"Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again" (1 Kings 19:5–6).

God did not begin by rebuking Elijah, collapsed under the broom tree. He sent an angel to touch him tenderly and say, "Arise and eat." By his head were a cake baked on coals and a jar of water. Elijah ate and drank and lay down again.

This scene shows the compassion of God. God knows the weakness of His servant. There are times when what an exhausted person needs first is not rebuke but the food and rest God gives. God did not abandon Elijah. To raise him up again, He fed him and let him rest.

Our souls also come to life by the food God gives. That food is not human comfort or emotional excitement. It is the

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Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we feed on this Word—that Jesus took our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and rose again from death—the weary soul regains strength. God feeds us with His still, small Word and raises us up again.

By the Strength God Gives, We Go the Rest of the Way

"And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.' So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God" (1 Kings 19:7–8).

When Elijah lay down again, the angel of the LORD came again and touched him. And he said, *"Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you" (1 Kings 19:7)*. God knew that Elijah still had a road to travel. Elijah could not go that road by his own strength. So God fed him. In the strength of that food Elijah went forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

This word shows that the servant of God travels his road not by his own strength but by the strength God gives. The victory on Mount Carmel was God's power, and rising again from under the broom tree was also God's grace. God did not end Elijah's mission. He led him to Mount Horeb to speak to him again and to entrust him with the work he was to do.

We also need the strength God gives on the way of believing and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Human resolution alone cannot overcome the road. But when

we eat the Word of salvation God accomplished in Jesus Christ, we can walk again. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us new life by rising again from death—is our true strength.

Therefore 1 Kings 19:1–8 is the Word that tells us that even the servant of God can collapse through the weakness of the flesh, but God does not abandon him; He feeds him again and raises him up. Jezebel's threat revealed the stubbornness of false faith, and Elijah under the broom tree showed that even the servant of God cannot stand without grace. Today also, God feeds weary souls with the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and makes them walk the rest of the way.

God Asks His Weary Servant Again

"And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (1 Kings 19:9).

Elijah came to Horeb, the mountain of God, and entered a cave. On Mount Carmel God had answered by fire, the people of Israel had confessed that the LORD is God, and a heavy rain had fallen. Yet in the face of Jezebel's threat, Elijah had fled, and under the broom tree he had asked to die. God fed him and raised him up again, and brought him all the way to Mount Horeb.

There God asked Elijah, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9).* God did not ask because He did not know where Elijah was. God caused Elijah to lay bare his heart—to

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speak before God about why he was discouraged, what he was afraid of, and how he saw his own mission.

God does not only rebuke the weary. He first feeds them, gives them rest, and then sets them before the Word again. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also grow weary at times on the road of ministry and faith. But God does not abandon us; He calls us again with the Word. The place where we must stand is not the cave of our own feelings, but before the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death.

Elijah's Lament Shows the Collapsed Reality of Israel

"So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.'" (1 Kings 19:10).

Elijah said that he had been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts. He had indeed carried out the work God entrusted to him. He had stood before Ahab and proclaimed the famine, confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and revealed that the LORD God alone is the true God. But in his eyes Israel still looked like a people who had forsaken the covenant of the LORD, torn down His altars, and killed the prophets of God.

Elijah's lament shows the spiritual reality of Israel. To forsake the covenant is to abandon the way of faith God has established. To tear down the altars is to destroy the way of

true worship and sacrifice offered to God. To kill the prophets is to reject the servants who deliver the Word of God. The age of Ahab and Jezebel was exactly such an age.

Today as well, when a person abandons the covenant of salvation God has established, his soul collapses. If someone says he believes in Jesus and yet leaves out the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, he is tearing down the order of salvation God has established. If he speaks only of the blood of the Cross and does not know how sins were passed on to Jesus, sin cannot but remain in his heart. Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the Word that rebuilds the broken-down altar.

The LORD Was Not in the Great and Strong Wind

"Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind" (1 Kings 19:11).

God told Elijah to go out of the cave and stand on the mountain before the LORD. Then a great and strong wind tore into the mountain and broke the rocks in pieces. But the Scriptures say, *"but the LORD was not in the wind" (1 Kings 19:11).*

On Mount Carmel God had answered by fire. But on Mount Horeb God made Himself known to Elijah in a different way. A great and strong wind is impressive to the eyes. It has power enough to tear mountains and break rocks. But the essence of God's working does not lie in outward shock or intense

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phenomena.

Today as well, people can mistake strong experiences, visible phenomena, and an overwhelming atmosphere for the work of God. But the way God saves souls is not such outward shock. God works through the Word. He changes a person's heart through the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Nor Was the LORD in the Earthquake or in the Fire

"And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire" (1 Kings 19:11–12).

After the strong wind there was an earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire. But God was not in the earthquake, nor was He in the fire. This word never means that God lacks power. God is the One who answered by fire on Mount Carmel. But the way God meets a person and raises up a soul is never limited to great outward phenomena.

Elijah had seen the answer of fire on Mount Carmel. But what God was teaching Elijah now is that the work of God does not continue only in experiences of great fire. The true work of God lies in turning a person's heart through the Word. Even the fire of Mount Carmel was, in the end, to bring the people of Israel to confess, *"The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).*

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is also not a Word that excites people outwardly. This Word testifies in detail how

sins were passed on to Jesus, how those sins were judged on the Cross, and how the Lord who rose again from death has given us new life. When a person believes this truth, he no longer depends on outward phenomena but stands on the righteousness of God.

God Works in a Still Small Voice

"And after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

After the fire there was a still small voice. This word is the heart of 1 Kings 19:9–14. God met Elijah not in the great and strong wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a still small voice. This still small voice shows the way of God's Word. God does not work only in ways that overwhelm a person outwardly; He works through the Word that enters the heart precisely.

God's work of saving souls is like this as well. God does not give the remission of sin through outward, mysterious phenomena that astonish people. He makes known the way of the remission of sin through His precise and clear Word. He causes people to hear and believe the Word: that Jesus came to this earth and took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us from sin by rising again from death.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the still, small Word of God. Outwardly it may look like a Word delivered quietly, but within it is contained the righteousness of God that has removed all the sins of man. When a soul hears this Word, it meets the true God, is saved from its sin, and receives into the heart the righteousness God has given.

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The One Who Has Heard the Voice of God Humbles Himself

"So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (1 Kings 19:13).

When Elijah heard the still small voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle. He humbled himself before God. He was the prophet who had experienced the great work on Mount Carmel, but before God he was a servant who could only cover his face. The person who has truly heard the Word of God does not exalt himself. Rather than putting forward his own zeal and his own merits, he comes to acknowledge his weakness before God.

God asked again, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"* The same question was repeated. God set Elijah's heart before the Word again. He was preparing Elijah not to remain in his discouragement and fear, but to hear the work God would entrust to him.

It is the same for the one who has heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This Word is not a Word that exalts us. Rather, it makes us know that we were sinners and could not be saved by our own strength. And it makes us believe that Jesus saved us completely by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death. Before this faith we cannot build up our own righteousness; we can only be humbled, giving thanks to God.

God Hears Even the Lament of His Servant

"And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God

of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.'" (1 Kings 19:14).

Elijah lamented again in the same words. He said that Israel had forsaken the covenant of the LORD, torn down His altars, killed His prophets, and was seeking even his own life. To Elijah's eyes the situation looked finished. He felt as if he alone were left.

But God did not end the story with Elijah's lament. In the words that follow, God lets him know that there is still work He will do, that there are people He will establish, and that He has also reserved those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Elijah was pressed down by the reality his own eyes saw, but God was already carrying on His work.

We too can sometimes feel that the way of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is lonely. The world looks big, false faith looks strong, and those who receive the truth may look few. But God works through His Word. With the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, like a still small voice, He seeks out people's hearts and raises up those who believe in the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Therefore 1 Kings 19:9–14 is the scene in which God meets His weary servant again in a still, small Word. God works through the Word that comes to a person's heart rather than through outward phenomena like wind, earthquake, and fire. Today we also must stand not chasing mysterious experiences or intense atmospheres, but before the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death. That Word is the still small voice of God that raises us up again

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and brings us back to the true God.

God Shows His Discouraged Servant the Way of His Mission Again

"Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria" (1 Kings 19:15).

On Mount Horeb Elijah poured out his heart to God. He said that the children of Israel had forsaken the covenant of the LORD, torn down His altars, and killed His prophets, and that he seemed to be the only one left. But God did not let Elijah remain in his lament. He said, *"Go, return on your way" (1 Kings 19:15).*

This word means that Elijah was to go back. It is the word telling him to leave the place of fear and discouragement and return to the way God had entrusted to him. God told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. This shows that not only what happens within Israel, but even the Gentile nation of Syria, is under the sovereignty of God.

To Elijah's own eyes everything seemed finished. But God was already preparing the next work. God would not leave the evil of Ahab and Jezebel as it was; He was raising up the instruments who would accomplish judgment and set things in order in the flow of history. The work of God does not end with one person's feelings or the circumstances of one age.

We too can become discouraged while serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It may seem that people do not listen to the truth, and false faith may look stronger. But God does not stop His work. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—completed when Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself

by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—is the Word of God that must keep being delivered regardless of man's circumstances.

God Establishes Kings and Servants to Accomplish His Will

"Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:16).

God told Elijah to establish not only Hazael but also Jehu and Elisha. Jehu was the one who would become king of Israel, and Elisha was the one who would become the prophet in Elijah's place. This shows that God governs both the seat of politics and the seat of the Word. God did not leave the evil house of Ahab alone; He established the king who would judge it at His appointed time. And He also prepared the prophet who would carry on the Word after Elijah.

Elijah had felt, *"I alone am left" (1 Kings 19:10)*, but God had not entrusted His work to Elijah alone. God was preparing the next age. Even when Elijah's ministry ended, the Word of God would not end. Elisha would be raised up to carry the Word of God onward.

This is an important lesson in the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well. The work of God is not maintained by the ability of one person. God establishes people, entrusts them with the Word, and turns souls around through that Word. Therefore we must not exalt any person himself, but look at the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has entrusted.

Jesus also did not accomplish salvation through human zeal

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or religious institutions. He came to this earth according to the will God had appointed, took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death. Just as there is an order of salvation God has appointed, there is also an order by which God has His Word delivered.

False Faith Surely Stands before God's Judgment

"It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill" (1 Kings 19:17).

God said that He would accomplish the work of judgment through Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. This word shows that the idolatry and false faith of Ahab's age would not simply pass by. The sin of bowing the knee to Baal, forsaking the covenant of the LORD, tearing down His altars, and killing the prophets of God must surely stand before the judgment of God.

Here, the word that Elisha will kill makes us think not merely of the sword of the flesh, but of the judgment of the Word of God. The Word delivered by the servant of God exposes the falsehood in a person's heart and condemns the faith that does not belong to God. Before the Word God has established, neither idolatry, nor self-righteousness, nor false faith can hide.

Today as well, the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives life to a person's heart, but at the same time it exposes false faith. The faith that speaks only of the Cross of Jesus while leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John makes it impossible to know how sin was passed on to Jesus. Then the

problem of sin in the heart is not solved. The gospel of the water and the Spirit testifies that sin was dealt with completely through the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death. Before this Word, a person must abandon his self-made faith and return to the way of salvation God has established.

There Are People God Has Reserved

"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'" (1 Kings 19:18).

God spoke a very important word to Elijah: *"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel" (1 Kings 19:18)*. Elijah thought that he alone was left. But God had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal and had not kissed him.

This word is God's comfort. At the same time it reveals God's sovereignty. The people of God cannot be judged only by the numbers and circumstances visible to human eyes. To Elijah's eyes everything seemed to have collapsed, but God was keeping His own people. Even in the age of Baal there were people who belonged to God.

Today as well, the way of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can look lonely. Many people may not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and may hold on to religious tradition or their own zeal. But God reserves, in this age also, people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who believe the truth—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified us by

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rising again from death—are the people of faith God has reserved.

The remnant do not remain by their own strength. God has left them. Therefore we cannot boast of ourselves. We can only give thanks for the grace of God, who let us know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and made us stand in this truth.

The Work of God Is Greater Than Man's Despair

1 Kings 19:15–18 is the Word in which God shows His discouraged servant the way of his mission again. Elijah felt that everything was over, but God was establishing Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. Elijah thought he alone was left, but God had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

This Word is a great comfort to us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The work of God is greater than the circumstances visible to our eyes. It is greater than man's discouragement, and greater than the forces of false faith. God is still giving life to sinners through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed when Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Therefore we must not remain in the place of fear and discouragement. When God speaks, we must return. We must walk the way God has entrusted to us. And we must look with the eyes of faith at the people God has reserved. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true Word of God that raises up, today also, people of faith who do not bow the knee to Baal.

God Prepares People for the Next Work

"So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth" (1 Kings 19:19).

Elijah heard the word of God on Mount Horeb and set out on his way again. He had thought that he alone was left, but God had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and He had also prepared Elisha, who would succeed Elijah. What God showed Elijah was not mere comfort, but the fact that the work of God continues.

Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. He was a man working faithfully in the place of his own life. God called such an Elisha. The servant of God is not a person who creates a mission for himself; he is a person whom God calls and establishes at His appointed time.

This word shows that serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also not something carried on by human plans alone. God prepares people for His work. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—completed when Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—is not a Word that ends with one person's generation. God keeps raising up people who will believe and preach this truth.

Throwing the Mantle Signifies God's Calling

"Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him" (1 Kings 19:19).

Elijah went over to Elisha and threw his mantle on him.

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This signifies God's calling, by which Elijah's ministry would be carried on by Elisha. The mantle itself had no mysterious power. It was the sign that God had called Elisha through Elijah.

Elijah was not a man to be exalted as the one who had brought down fire on Mount Carmel. He was a servant held and used by God. Now, through Elijah's mantle, God called Elisha, showing that the ministry of God's Word would continue. The work of God does not end centered on a man. God entrusts His Word and causes that Word to be carried on.

Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today must also know this fact. We have not been called to exalt any person himself. We have been called to testify to the righteousness God has accomplished in Jesus Christ. Delivering the Word of salvation accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death—this is the work entrusted to the servants of God.

The One Who Is Called Lays Down His Old Life

"And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, 'Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.'" (1 Kings 19:20).

When Elijah's mantle was thrown on him, Elisha left the oxen and ran to Elijah. He did not take the calling of God lightly. He had his own work and the foundation of his own livelihood, but he was ready to lay them down before the calling of God.

Elisha's asking to kiss his father and mother and then come was not a word to refuse the calling. He intended to put in order the former place of his life and go forward on the way of

following the servant of God. When God calls, the center of a person's life must change. If before it was his own field and his own oxen that were the center of his life, now the Word of God and the work of God become the center.

Faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is like this as well. That we have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean merely that we have come to know one more doctrine. When we come to believe the fact that Jesus took all my sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified me by rising again from death, the center of life changes. We leave the life of building up our own righteousness and move to the life of believing and serving the righteousness of God.

God's Calling Does Not Hold Anyone by Force

"And he said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?'" (1 Kings 19:20).

Elijah said to Elisha, *"Go back again, for what have I done to you?" (1 Kings 19:20).* This was not a word meaning that he would seize Elisha and drag him along by force. The calling of God is not accomplished by human coercion, but by the Word God causes the heart to realize.

Elijah did not try to bind Elisha by his own authority. The One who called was God. Elisha himself had to know what that calling was and respond to it. The servant God establishes is not a person moved by human pressure, but a person who responds from the heart before the Word of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is also not a Word that drags people in by force. When God, through His precise Word, causes a person to realize the baptism Jesus received,

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the Cross, and His rising again from death, that person comes to believe from the heart. This faith is not a faith dragged along by men, but a faith that knows the righteousness God has accomplished and follows it with thanksgiving.

Elisha Burned the Way Back

"So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant" (1 Kings 19:21).

Elisha went back, took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them, boiled their flesh with the oxen's equipment as fuel, and gave it to the people to eat. Then he arose, followed Elijah, and served him. He put things in order so that he could not take hold of the tools of his former life again. The oxen and the equipment were the foundation of his livelihood, but he laid them down before the calling of God.

This was not a mere emotional decision. Elisha knew that the calling of God was greater than his own life. So he left no way back to his former life. And he did not sit in a high place at once, but began in the place of following Elijah and serving him. The way of being established as a servant of God is first the way of serving.

We too, when we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and follow the work of God, must lay down the old supports we have been holding in our hearts. We cannot fully follow the gospel of the water and the Spirit while continuing to hold on to self-righteousness, worldly security, the desire for people's recognition, and attachment to religious tradition. If

we have believed the Word—that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us completely by rising again from death—then we must now go forward into the life of serving that righteousness of God.

The Work of God Continues in the Place of Serving

Elisha's beginning was not a splendid proclamation but the work of serving. He followed Elijah and served him. God had established him as a prophet, but he first had to learn, to be together, and to follow the way the servant of God walked.

This word shows that the ministry of God continues in order. If Elijah collapsed, the work of God did not end. God had prepared Elisha, and Elisha learned the work of God in the place of serving. The Word of God does not depend on the strength of one person. It continues through the people God establishes.

Today as well, the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit continues in this way. When those who first believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit serve together within the Word, deliver this truth to the next people, and join their hearts within the order God has established, the work of God goes on. The center of this work is not man but the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ has completed.

Therefore 1 Kings 19:19–21 shows that God had already prepared the way that would follow after the discouraged Elijah. Elisha received the calling, laid down the foundation of his former life, and entered the place of following Elijah and serving him. If we have believed in the gospel of the water and

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the Spirit, we too must lay down the center of our own life and go forward into the life of serving the righteousness of God, completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death. God still calls people for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, establishes them, and carries His work on. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

How Does God Save Heretics?

< 1 Kings 19:1-21 >

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.' And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!' Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.' So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of

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hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.' So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, 'Please

let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' And he said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?' So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant."

The Life and Ministry of the Prophet Elijah

The name Elijah is the Hebrew 'Eliyahu (אֵלִיָּהוּ),' meaning "My God is the LORD," and in Greek he is called 'Elias (Ἠλίας).' He was from Tishbe in Gilead around the ninth century B.C., a prophet raised up in Israel. His ministry had a very deep influence not only on his own age but even into the New Testament era.

Just before Elijah began his ministry, the early years of King Ahab were a time when Baal worship raged under the influence of Jezebel (1 Kings 16:29–33). The prophet Elijah proclaimed to King Ahab that there would be a severe drought in the land of Israel (1 Kings 17:1). This was the work of God to make the people realize that Baal, called the god of abundance and rain, was an empty idol, and to bring them back to God. After proclaiming the drought, Elijah hid by a brook and lived on the food the ravens brought him. That drought lasted three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). When even the Brook Cherith dried up, God commanded Elijah to go to the region of Zarephath. In Zarephath Elijah performed two works of power: one was that the widow's bin of flour and jar of oil were always replenished, and the other was that he raised the widow's dead son back to life (1 Kings 17:7–24).

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While northern Israel was suffering from the drought, Elijah appeared before Obadiah, the governor of King Ahab's palace, and had him tell Ahab that he was here. Elijah proposed to King Ahab that he would meet the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah, eight hundred and fifty in all, before the people of Israel to determine who is the true God, and King Ahab granted it. Elijah told the prophets of Baal, the adversaries of God, to pray and ask first, but their entreaty was only in vain. The Baal they served was a phantom made up by human thinking, nothing more than an idol that could give no answer. Then Elijah asked the LORD God, in whom he believed, in faith. It was a prayer asking Him to send down fire from heaven and consume the wood laid on the altar, the altar itself, and the burnt offering, and even the water poured on them (1 Kings 18:20–38). God answered that prayer with fire and power. Through that event, the people of Israel who were there awoke from their deep spiritual sleep and returned to the LORD God. Elijah had the people bring down all the prophets of Baal to the Brook Kishon and kill them there (1 Kings 18:39–40). Then he told King Ahab that rain would now fall, and earnestly asked the LORD God for rain as many as seven times (1 Kings 18:41–45). When the rain finally came, Elijah, with a joyful heart, ran ahead of Ahab's chariot from Mount Carmel to where King Ahab's royal residence was, a distance of about twenty-seven kilometers.

When Jezebel heard the news that the prophets of Baal had all been killed on Mount Carmel, she was enraged and threatened to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:2–3). Elijah, fearing that he would meet the same fate, fled southward and asked the LORD to take his life (1 Kings 19:3–4). But after eating the food the angel brought, Elijah gained strength and walked without ceasing to Mount Horeb, where Moses had received

the Law hundreds of years before, and arrived there (1 Kings 19:5–8). In a cave on Mount Horeb, Elijah told God of the indifference and coldness of the people of Israel toward the LORD, and poured out before Him how zealous he had been and how his life was being threatened (1 Kings 19:9–10). After that, he tasted the presence of the LORD God in 'a still small voice' (1 Kings 19:11–13). The LORD entrusted Elijah with three tasks: to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, to anoint Jehu as king over northern Israel, and to anoint Elisha as the prophet to take his own place (1 Kings 19:15–16). As soon as Elijah came down from the mountain, he anointed Elisha as prophet (1 Kings 19:19–21), and the remaining tasks were accomplished through Elisha, who succeeded him (2 Kings 8:7–15, 9:1–10).

Elijah's Ministry Was Completed in the Ministry of John the Baptist

Elijah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament era, ministered mainly in the northern kingdom, awakening the people to the fact that the LORD God alone is the true and living God, and restoring the faith that gives worship and praise to that God alone. The prophet Malachi spoke in advance of the spiritual ministry of Elijah that would take place in the last days, and Jesus made it plain that this Elijah was John the Baptist. This was a truly amazing blessing, indispensable to the ministry of saving us from sin. The prophet Malachi prophesied that before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD, Elijah would come again to this earth to do the ministry of turning the hearts of the children back to the Father (Malachi 4:5–6).

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To support the promise concerning Elijah's mysterious ascension and his coming again, the Jews are said to have recorded, in the Wisdom of Ben Sira, one of the apocryphal books, in chapter 48, verse 10, that Elijah would one day appease the wrath of God and reunite the twelve tribes of Israel. And in 1 Enoch, chapter 89, verse 12, it is said to be written that at the end Elijah would become a high priest proclaiming the coming of the Messiah who would accomplish peace and salvation.

The Jews' expectation of Elijah's return and his ministry at the end of days kept burning on. The Jews even misinterpreted the suffering cry of Jesus on the Cross as a cry calling for Elijah (Matthew 27:47, 49; Mark 15:35, 36). Some regarded John the Baptist, who cried out for repentance in the wilderness, as one like Elijah, and others saw Jesus as being like Elijah (Matthew 16:14; Mark 6:15). Although John the Baptist himself declined such honor (John 1:21, 25), Jesus Himself told us that the Elijah who was to come was none other than John the Baptist. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit spread this fact widely so that all people would know it (Matthew 11:14, 17:10–13).

In the event on the Mount of Transfiguration recorded in all the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus talked on that mountain with Moses and Elijah about His 'decease'—the suffering, the death on the Cross, and the ascension that were soon to come (Luke 9:31).

The ministry of Elijah, who labored to turn back the rebellious heart of the people of Israel, is seen to be completed in the New Testament era in the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist gave Jesus Christ, once and for all, the baptism that passed the sins of the world on to Him, and having finished his work as the messenger of God, he went before God

(Matthew 3:13–17, 11:14, 17:12; Mark 9:12). We can give great thanks by knowing and believing the ministry Jesus Christ accomplished for the Church and the ministry of John the Baptist who baptized Jesus. The Apostle Paul, quoting the Old Testament, testified that in his age also God had reserved seven thousand servants who had not bowed the knee to Baal; this refers to the servants of God who believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit today. The Old and New Testaments clearly testify that John the Baptist carried out the same ministry as Elijah of the Old Testament. We must know that the servants of God who now believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are also doing a ministry like that of John the Baptist. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist contains the completion of the salvation to be accomplished by the righteousness of God. Even now, the truth of that gospel is being accomplished through the servants of God.

God Intended to Use Elijah Longer

In our own thinking, we might suppose that when Jezebel sought to kill Elijah after he had fought and defeated the eight hundred and fifty prophets who served Baal and Asherah, it would have been more glorious if he had not fled but had rather been martyred. But that is only the thought of our flesh, not the thought of the Spirit of God. Unlike our fleshly thoughts, God intended to use Elijah on this earth for a long time yet.

God, even while knowing Elijah's weakness and insufficiency, was pleased to use him as His worker. Through Elijah, God accomplished His great will of bringing the people of Israel and all mankind back to God, and in the New Testament era He used John the Baptist as a servant like Elijah

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of the Old Testament. The New Testament testifies of this in Matthew chapter 11: *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14).*

John the Baptist was the last servant of God of the Old Testament era, who brought many people back into the arms of God. In the New Testament era, through the ministry of John the Baptist, the way was opened for those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to return to Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sin. John the Baptist alone carried out the same work that Elijah of the Old Testament had carried out. Only, Elijah did that work in the Old Testament era for the people of Israel alone, while John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind who brings all people back to Jesus Christ, passed the sins of the whole world on to Jesus Christ by baptism, so that believers give thanks and praise to God. John the Baptist became the indispensable servant of God who lets all Christians know how the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is related to the baptism Jesus received from John. The baptism John the Baptist gave Jesus in the Jordan River was the work that passed our sins on to Jesus once and for all. The ministry in which Jesus Christ took over all the sins of mankind once and for all, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was accomplished in the Jordan River. And so Jesus was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again from death; now whoever eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Jesus by faith is saved eternally from all his sins. Here lies the reason Jesus Christ was able to save all mankind by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The baptism John the Baptist gave Jesus was God's plan for mankind. God loved and pitied the people of spiritual Israel, and long waited for them to return into His arms. In the New Testament era as well, God wanted everyone to believe in the

gospel of the water and the Spirit and become not people with sin but people without sin. He wanted us to believe that gospel truly and rightly rather than live in confusion, and He was the One who wanted to give all the people of the world not the curse brought by sin but immense blessing.

The people of Israel, passing through the reign of King David, became a nation serving idols from the time of King Solomon, so the suffering and curse they underwent were an entirely fitting result. Even so, God, wanting to clothe the people of spiritual Israel with love and salvation, did not cease to send His servants to exhort them. The servants of God exhorted the people to return into the arms of God: "Abandon your idols and return to God. Then you will obtain everlasting life and live." They were people who were originally to receive not curse but blessing, yet because they did not believe the Word delivered by the servants of God, they were bound by Satan and suffering.

God, Who Comes in a Still Small Voice

Elijah was a precious servant who contended eight hundred and fifty to one with the leaders who served Baal and Asherah, and revealed who the true God is. Yet even he needed a brief rest after fighting that spiritual war. But at that very moment, Jezebel's venomous words reached his ears: "By this time tomorrow I will take your life as well."

When Elijah heard this, he was afraid in the flesh. Weary in body after the great battle and wanting to rest, he sat down under a broom tree and entrusted his body and heart to God, saying, "God, rather than die at the hand of Jezebel, please take my life Yourself." God came to him, sent an angel to give him

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bread and water to eat, and when he still could not rise, had the angel touch him and restore his strength. Having eaten bread and drunk water again, Elijah walked forty days and nights to Mount Horeb by the strength God gave, and at last reached a cave on Mount Horeb, where he came to hear the command of God.

Then what is the work of God like? When He asked, *"What are you doing here?"* Elijah answered, "The servants of God are all dead and I alone am left, and now they seek to kill me as well." God said, "Go out and stand outside the cave," and as He passed by, a great and strong wind tore into the mountain and broke the rocks in pieces, but the LORD was not in that wind.

Last night I played soccer with my coworkers until late. That day one fellow pastor scored several goals in front of the goalpost, and the workers rejoiced, cheering him on. Then suddenly there came a 'whoosh' sound, followed by a 'crack, crack.' Not knowing what it was, they kept on playing and jumping for joy whenever a goal went in—and just then, a pine tree from across the stream toppled over and crashed down as far as the fence of the soccer field. I was watching from a distance, and the tree fell onto that very spot just while the pastor, having scored a goal, had briefly left his place. The force of the falling tree was so great that the sound was like the sound a fly swatter makes when it strikes a fly. If anyone had been standing there at that moment, not a bone in his body would have been left unbroken.

But the LORD was not in that wind; and just as it is written, *"and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice,"* after the fire there was a still small voice. That still small voice came to Elijah and asked, *"What are you doing here?"* And he answered, *"I have*

been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:14).

God asked twice, "*What are you doing here?*" and then told him to go back, and when he arrived at Damascus, to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, and to anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. This was the deposing of King Ahab, for though Ahab was still alive, God told him to anoint Jehu and establish him as king. And He told him to anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat and establish him as the successor to follow after him.

Elijah carried on the ministry of God. After he went up to heaven in a chariot of fire, Elisha succeeded him and carried out the work of God. And that Elijah appears in the New Testament era as John the Baptist. Of course, this does not mean that Elijah came back in the same body or with the same soul as before. It means that someone came in this age charged with the same task as Elijah's ministry.

God was not in the strong wind, nor in the fire; rather, He was in the still small voice, and there He told Elijah what he was to do.

He Works Not through Shaking and Tongues but through His Still, Small Word

What we can learn here is the fact that God was not in the rushing, mighty wind. Today many believers, calling it the work of the Holy Spirit, try to experience burning fire, and try to meet God in intense shaking or in a violent wind. But God was not One who comes in such forms.

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When the spirit of Satan comes upon a person, it makes his body tremble and strange words come out of his mouth. People call it speaking in tongues, call it falling into trances, and regard it as seeing visions, but it is not so. The LORD God was not in such workings; He was in the still small voice. We must realize what the Word of God is saying to us. Only when the Word of God is unfolded and preached quietly and clearly as the gospel of the water and the Spirit do people receive the remission of sin. As we preach that Word, God comes and works, removing our sins, coming into our hearts, and making us the children of God. This is what the work of God is. To deliver the still, small Word of God to people—that is the work of God.

What many believers today wrongly suppose is that God comes in fire, in the wind of astonishing shaking. But in reality it is not so. God has always spoken and worked through His still, small Word. When those who call themselves servants of God stir up shaking in their bodies, that is not the work of God, and the work of God did not appear there.

In a book written by a certain man, he confesses that when he experienced the Spirit, his whole body trembled and shook. But even though he shook, it does not mean he was truly born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I too, at one time, used to see visions of Jesus even with my fleshly eyes open. But all of that was the work of demons, for at that time the sin of not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit remained in my heart. The work of God is receiving the remission of sin in the midst of the preaching of the written Word of truth. Our God accomplishes the work of the remission of sin for us through the written Word of truth.

Therefore, what is called the work of the Holy Spirit in world Christianity today—speaking in tongues and falling into

trances in the Pentecostal line, and the so-called gift of seeing through people that claims to discern what sins others have committed—all these were the work of demons. God did not work that way. God worked in His still, small Word.

Then what does the still small voice of God mean? When our Lord preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth, does He work in fire or in a rushing, mighty wind? No. God works in our hearts with His still, small Word. Our Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist and so took our sins upon Himself, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again from death, saving us from the sins of the world. Through the literature we distribute, quietly and calmly, He speaks to our minds and hearts in this way, visits us in this way, and works in this way—this we have come to know.

In this age God has the gospel of the water and the Spirit preached to all people of the whole world—through literature, and through the Word delivered by His servants—teaching it calmly so that it can be understood, and so He saves out those who were in heresy. God watches over His servants, has them deliver His still, small Word, and through those servants saves people from sin.

We are now preparing to publish books on the heresies of the whole world, and there is truly much to do. Among ourselves we understand these things this easily, but to those who are not born again, the Word about heresy must be proven point by point with the Word of God.

God, Who Wants to Save Heretics with the Still, Small Gospel

God wants to save those among the Christians of the whole

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world who have fallen into heresy from their sins. How does He do this work? He wants to save them from all their sins with the still, small Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God has us teach that gospel calmly, and by it He wants to save people from sin. God is even now accomplishing the work of saving souls through the servants who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Look—did God not take up Elijah and use him?

God Is Still Working through His Servants Today

God accomplishes His work through His servants. He carries out even the history of the world through His servants. In old times, when a king was established, oil was put in a horn and poured on his head. The name ‘Christ’ carries the meaning of the Anointed One, and it also contains the meaning of priest. Jesus is the Savior who holds the offices of King, Prophet, and High Priest. The name ‘Jesus’ means Savior, and the name ‘Christ’ means that He received these three offices from God the Father. By carrying out these three offices on this earth, Jesus became the Savior who saved you and me from all sins.

At that time the king of Israel was Ahab. But God abolished that kingship and judged Ahab. Because Ahab walked in the way of Jeroboam and served idols, his end was gruesome, and Jezebel also fell from the parapet, and the dogs licked her blood and tore her corpse. So greatly was God angered at them. The woman Jezebel looked like a person of great capability, but she was utterly cursed by God. Such also was the end of those who followed the sin of Jeroboam before God. If the people of Israel had served idols out of ignorance, the case would be different; but those who, calling themselves leaders

of the nation, led the people into idol worship received this solemn judgment.

God works through His workers. He does the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. God loves all the people of the world, and He knows that many among Christian believers have fallen into heresy. The work of bringing them back into the arms of God, He accomplishes through His workers, His servants. All the believers in the Church now are workers who serve God.

In this way God works through His servants and accomplishes His will. Why does He work through servants? It is not because of the status of servant itself, but because those who are called the servants of God know the will God intends to accomplish. Because they know that will, they uphold it; and because they uphold it and work, the result is that God works through His servants.

This work of preaching the gospel to the whole world, God is accomplishing through you and me in the Church. God is working throughout the whole world right now. With a very quiet, still small voice, with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He is bringing all the people of the world back into His arms. He is working so that everyone may return to God and be blessed, and the proof is that you and I are being used in that work.

God told Elijah to make Elisha his successor and establish him as prophet. Yet He did not cast Elijah aside, but had him do all the work that was his to do. Later God took him up to heaven in a chariot of fire, so Elijah went up without tasting death, like Enoch. This is a shadow of the Rapture. It shows in advance what will become of those who, among the living, have been born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit when the Lord comes.

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Today's Christianity That Serves the Golden Calf

You and I are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. How many heresies there are within Christianity in this age! What is it that Christian believers today believe, and what is it that their leaders believe? Are they not turning Jesus Christ into a golden calf in their faith? Not a few set the aim of their ministry on drawing money out of their church members, and in the name of Jesus Christ they seek wealth, calling it the gift of divine healing. This is the very evidence of exchanging God for the golden calf and serving it.

What do church members pray for before the Lord when they come to church? Mostly they seek the things of the flesh. For instance, they pray that their children may do well on the examinations and get into a university. Together with their leaders, they are truly fleshly people. They do not seek how to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that the sins of their hearts may be removed, how to become sinless and become children of God and do the work of God; they seek only how to get into a university, become rich, make their business prosper, and live well in the world. That is the very picture of serving the golden calf before God.

Just as Jeroboam exchanged God for golden calves and served them, so today the golden calf has become the god of the Christian leaders and church members of the whole world and is being served. These are the ones who have fallen into heresy. For them, it is not Jesus but the golden calf that has become the savior; Jesus is regarded as merely one among many gods, and in the end their aim has become to believe in Jesus and succeed in the world. What not a few Christians today ask of God is the blessing of material things.

Because what they ask of God is only the things of the flesh, God says that they are serving the golden calf as God. Because they—today's Christians—serve the golden calf as God, God is angered and they are being destroyed. If they had known and served God as God, and, however lacking, had lived by faith and sought to follow the Lord, God would have made the people of Israel the strongest nation in the world and blessed them greatly. But because they replaced God with the golden calf and served it, God was angered.

Everyone, the Golden Calf Is Not God

Everyone, how can a golden calf be your God? Because you serve the golden calf as God, the golden calf has become god. If we look into the content of the prayers church members offer when they come to church today, it is mostly like this. They write on their offering envelopes: I have opened a business, let it prosper; let my children do well; let them enter a good university; let my business go well; keep me healthy. In the end they believe not in Jesus as God but in material things as God. To serve the golden calf means precisely to serve material things as God.

That is why they become heretics—heretics banded together in crowds. I intend to write about the heresies of this age. I intend to make plain why so many within Christianity today have become heretics in a body. You who are now within Christianity—it is not that one or two are heretical, but that the whole has become heretical. The reason is that they are serving not God but the golden calf. With their lips they say they believe in Jesus as the Savior, but in reality, have they not made up false teachings according to their own thoughts and

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put their faith in a golden calf? Have your sins been removed by believing in the golden calf? Have you become the people of God? Failing to become God's people and seeking only the well-being of the flesh, they have ended up becoming heretics before God.

We must pray and preach in order to save the heretics from the sin of serving the golden calf. Whether they get angry or not, I will carry out this work. It is to save people from the sin of serving the golden calf. That is why I am preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Christians of the whole world. We must testify to why they are heretical. If we are servants of God, we must save out of sin the Christians who have fallen into heresy in crowds. The people of Israel—the whole nation—served idols. They served not the LORD God but the golden calf as God. All ten tribes of northern Israel went to the golden calves, bowed down, burned incense, and offered burnt offerings before them. Can we say that they were truly serving the LORD God?

How could they serve idols like that? Because the LORD God was not visible to their eyes, while the golden calf stood set up right before them. They thought they could believe better because it was visible. Today too, we hear far more of such talk: someone believed in Jesus and became rich; someone prayed and got into a university; someone's business prospered greatly; someone was ordained an elder and then became the chairman of a great company.

To the eyes of today's Christians, what is visible is the golden calf, so they follow after that golden calf that gives material things. But the golden calf is not a god, and it is not God. Yet Christianity today has come to serve the golden calf. It does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but chases material things and serves material things as its god.

Today's Christianity Has Become Heretical before God

Where are they not heretical before God? Is it not heresy to live serving the golden calf as God, contrary to the will of God, instead of following and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the truth of God? Furthermore, even one who has been born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—if he forsakes the Lord's desire that the gospel be preached to the whole world, lives only for his own flesh, and does not serve the gospel—he too is not standing rightly before God. Those who serve idols within Christianity are the heretics. People think only the conspicuously deviant groups are heretical, but in reality there are many heretics even within the denominations called orthodox. Those who do not yet believe in Jesus as the Savior are simply people who do not know; they are not heretics before God. But among those who claim to believe in Jesus, there are many heretics.

Seen in this light, there are truly many heretics in this world. I think about what people will say after reading this book. Perhaps they will come with stones in their hands. Be that as it may, if anyone sees this book and senses that he is heretical, he need only turn around, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and return to God; otherwise, anger may well rise up in him. But try to prove that you are not heretical—that you have not been serving the golden calf instead of God.

Everyone, our God works in the Word of the water and the Spirit, in the still small voice. Someone holds a rally where works of shaking and works of tongues break out, bodies are flipped over, and people leap about in ecstasy—but such things are not the work of God. One pastor testifies that while he was in his room a strange energy stirred, and suddenly shaking

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arose in his body and a refreshing scent came to his nose. But that was not the work of the Holy Spirit; it was the work of demons. How could something that happened while he had not received the remission of sin in his heart by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit be the work of God? The work of the Holy Spirit takes place in the midst of God's still, small Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is holy, never works in works of shaking, nor in a sinner.

Then what does it mean that on the day of Pentecost in the early Church the Holy Spirit came, that something like divided tongues of fire rested on people's heads, and that they spoke in the languages of various regions? The apostles of the early Church and the born-again were holy ones who had already believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; it means that God gave them power to preach the gospel—not that He came that way upon those who were not born again. If among those who believe in Jesus someone suddenly cries out and trembles violently, that is surely the work of Satan, not something God has done.

We Must Save Heretics with the Still, Small Word

People must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, return, and be confirmed by the still, small Word of God. The work of God is the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. There are claims like these: someone believed in Jesus and became rich and makes money well; someone received the gift of divine healing; a disease was healed with one laying on of hands; a man whose leg was crippled from birth received the laying on of hands from some pastor and his leg grew longer so

that he walks perfectly. But that is the work of demons. Would a short leg really grow longer by the laying on of hands? No.

Do you know of a man called Uri Geller? There was once a televised event in which it was openly proposed that, if those who claim to perform signs and wonders all over the world could really do so, they should come and demonstrate it for a great prize. I did not watch that broadcast closely and only heard about it, but they say that Uri Geller's spoon-bending was exposed then and there as false. "If you are truly a psychic, come out before the audience and perform. Then we will give you money enough for your descendants to live on for generations. Pastors are welcome too. Did the sick really get healed when you laid on hands? Did a short leg really grow longer? If you truly have such power, we will give you a great prize." But no one came forward, and still less did anyone succeed.

A certain man in our country claimed that if he laid hands on a dead person, the person would come back to life. But among the divine-healing advocates of this land, not one stepped forward before him. Before that challenge to wager on whether all these things were false, their claims were all exposed as empty.

Of course, true miracles do exist. When a person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is gravely ill and relies on the Lord, praying, "This is my condition—please heal me," there are times when the Lord heals him. But He heals very quietly; He does not do it with works of heat and shaking. God never does it that way.

In the history of world Christianity, the servants of the early Church performed signs and wonders. But that was for preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Think of it: at that time Israel was under the rule of Rome, people from all

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over the world came and went, they could not understand one another's languages, and the Gentiles knew neither the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement nor Jesus. To make such people believe that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior, God gave His servants power to perform signs and wonders as they preached Jesus. In those days He gave His servants power so that they might preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit (Acts 2:43).

But after the gospel of the water and the Spirit was fully completed and was brought to a close by the Word of the Book of Revelation—that is, after He said that anyone who adds to or takes away from this Word will be erased from the Book of Life and be cursed—God has the gospel preached through His still, small Word, not through signs and wonders. If He still did it that way now, He would have to keep doing it without ceasing.

If, while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, someone suddenly spoke in tongues and leaped about in ecstasy, how could the hearer understand that gospel? If a person believes just because he is told to believe in Jesus unconditionally, is that salvation? Is that being saved from his own sins? We must know the truth of the water and the Spirit, and we must deliver it so that all people may know that truth.

And so the history of Christianity in the whole world has ended up becoming a history of pseudo-Christian crowds. I know something of the history of world Christianity. When I hear a Christian preach today, I can tell what ideas he believes. Those who, calling themselves pastors, neither know nor believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit are the pseudo-ones and the heretics. Such people are truly heretical.

We must save the heretics within Christianity. We must carry out all this work. For this we must pray to God: "God,

please save the heretics within the Christianity of the whole world." This work cannot be entrusted to those who do not believe in Jesus. Among those who believe in Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be known, for in it are contained all the work and the will of God, and all the salvation by which God has saved us.

In this way God has worked through His servants; He has spoken in a still small voice, entrusted His work, and revealed His will. With the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, with the still, small Word of God, we must deliver to the Christian believers of the whole world how Jesus took over the sins of people. God had Jesus baptized through John the Baptist so that Jesus Christ took over the sins of the world; and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us. He has saved us by the water, the blood, and the Spirit. Delivering this truth quietly and clearly, we are saving people.

In this work of God saving us, we take part by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and with that faith we must carry out this task. Therefore, let us strive so that all the people of the whole world, and the Christian believers who have fallen into heresy, may be saved from sin. Let us pray to God to save them, and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And all Christians must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only then can they avoid becoming heretics before God. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

God Prepares the Remnant and the Next Workers

< 1 Kings 19:1-21 >

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.' And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!' Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.' So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of

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hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.' Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.' So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, 'Please

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let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' And he said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?' So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant."

1 Kings chapter 19 begins with Elijah's discouragement but ends with God's preparation. Elijah fled before Jezebel's threat and asked to die under the broom tree. On Mount Horeb he lamented that he alone was left. But God let Elijah know that not everything was over. God was already preparing Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, and He had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

This Word shows how God carries His work onward. The work of God is not bound to the strength of one person. The servant of God can be weak, but the plan of God is not weak. Man can be discouraged, but the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has established does not stop.

Even When It Looks Finished to Human Eyes, God Is Working

Elijah experienced a great victory on Mount Carmel. But when he heard Jezebel's threat, he fled into the wilderness. He was exhausted enough to ask God to take his life. God fed such an Elijah and led him to Mount Horeb. And there He set his heart before the Word.

Elijah said that he had been very zealous for the LORD, but

that Israel had forsaken His covenant, torn down His altars, killed His prophets, and that he alone was left. This was the reality visible to Elijah's eyes. But the reality visible to God's eyes was different. God had left a remnant, had prepared the kings who would judge, and had made ready the prophet who would succeed Elijah.

We too can sometimes feel that the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit looks small, lonely, and blocked. But God is working more deeply than what is visible to human eyes. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—completed when Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—is the Word of salvation God has established. This Word is not interrupted because of man's circumstances.

God Establishes His Will Even in the Course of History

God told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Syria was a nation outside Israel. But God establishes even the kings of Gentile nations under His sovereignty. Then He told him to anoint Jehu as king over Israel. God did not leave the house of Ahab alone; He prepared the instrument that would judge it at His appointed time.

This word shows that God is not One who governs only the affairs within the Church, but the One who governs all history. The evil of Ahab and Jezebel looked strong, but that evil could not escape the judgment of God. Idolatry and false faith may seem to hold power for a time, but before the Word of God they are surely exposed.

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Today as well, the faith that abandons the order of salvation God has appointed and follows man's religious methods is exposed in the end before the Word. If one speaks only of the blood of the Cross and leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John, he cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. However great man's tradition, numbers, and power may look, they can never replace the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has appointed. God distinguishes true faith and false faith by His Word.

God Prepares the Next Generation of the Word

God told Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place. Elijah thought that he alone was left, but God had already prepared the next servant. The Word of God did not end because Elijah was exhausted. After Elijah, the Word of God would continue through Elisha.

This is an important order in the work of God. God establishes a person, and then establishes the next person. One person does not bear all the work forever. The Word of God keeps being delivered through the servants God raises up.

The work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the same. God causes those who have realized this truth to deliver it to the next people. The one who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not saved for himself alone and finished; he must deliver to other souls the righteousness of God accomplished by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death. God calls, establishes, and trains people for His Word.

The Remnant Are the People God Has Reserved

God said to Elijah, *"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel" (1 Kings 19:18)*. They were the people who had not bowed the knee to Baal and had not kissed him with their mouths. Elijah said that he alone was left, but God had reserved seven thousand.

The remnant are not people who remained by their own strength. They are people God has reserved. Even in an age when Baal worship covered the whole nation, God kept His own people. This word was a great comfort to the discouraged Elijah, and at the same time a word revealing the sovereignty of God.

It is the same with those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today. It is not because our wisdom was outstanding that we came to know the truth. It is because God let us hear and believe the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That we have come to believe the truth—that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified us by rising again from death—is entirely the grace of God.

Therefore we cannot boast of ourselves. We can only give thanks that God has kept us from bowing the knee to Baal and has made us stand within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who do not yet know this truth.

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The Calling of Elisha Is the Sign That God's Work Continues

Elijah came down from Mount Horeb and met Elisha. Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. He was a man working in the place of his own living. Elijah went over to him and threw his mantle on him. This was the sign that God had called Elisha.

Elisha at once left the oxen and ran to Elijah. After asking to kiss his father and mother and then come, he went back, slaughtered a yoke of oxen, burned the oxen's equipment, and gave the flesh to the people to eat. Then he arose, followed Elijah, and served him.

Elisha's decision was a decision to lay down the center of his former life. The oxen and the equipment were the tools of his livelihood. But he laid them down before the calling of God. And he did not sit in a high place at once, but entered the place of serving Elijah. The worker of God learns first in the place of serving.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit needs the same heart. That we have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean merely that we have gained new knowledge. It means the center of life has changed. If before we lived holding on to our own righteousness, worldly security, and people's recognition, now we must go forward into the life of serving the righteousness of God, completed when Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

The Work of God Is Not a Work That Exalts Man

Neither Elijah nor Elisha was called in order to exalt himself. Elijah was the man who had brought down fire on Mount Carmel, but he was a servant whom God upheld. Elisha was the one who would succeed Elijah, but he began in the place of serving. The center of the work of God is not man but the Word of God.

Today as well, when we do the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not exalt man. Neither a person's ability, nor outward phenomena, nor the size of a community must become the center. The center must always be the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ has accomplished. The righteousness of God—who justified sinners through the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death—must be the center.

God establishes people through this Word. And through the people so established, He gives life to still others. Elijah's meeting Elisha was the sign that the work of God does not end in one generation. The work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit also continues through the people God establishes.

We Must See God's Preparation, Which Is Greater Than Discouragement

1 Kings chapter 19 begins with Elijah's flight and discouragement, but it ends with God's preparation. God fed His weary servant, met him in a still small voice, and sent him back to the way of his mission. And He told Elijah that he was not alone. God had reserved seven thousand, and He had prepared Elisha.

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We too must have the eyes of faith before this Word. Even when the way of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit looks lonely, God keeps a remnant. Even when we are exhausted, God prepares the next work. Even when it looks like a small cloud to our eyes, God can send a heavy rain. Even when it looks as if one man has collapsed in exhaustion, God raises up the next person and carries His Word onward.

Therefore we must look at God's preparation rather than at discouragement. The Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is alive today also. The Word of salvation—completed when Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—does not change though the generations of men change. God establishes the remnant who believe this Word, calls the next workers, and is saving people from sin in this age as well. ✉

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CHAPTER

20

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1 Kings Chapter 20

1) Summary of the Entire Content

1 Kings chapter 20 records how Ben-Hadad the king of Syria attacked northern Israel twice, but God gave Ahab great victories. Yet Ahab, for his own political gain, let Ben-Hadad, whom God had determined to destroy, go alive and made a treaty with him. In the end, Ahab heard through a prophet the word of judgment that his own life and his people would bear the responsibility for it.

1. Ben-Hadad Besieges Samaria (Verses 1–6)

Ben-Hadad the king of Syria besieged Samaria, leading thirty-two kings who were with him and many horses and chariots. At that time Syria possessed a military power far stronger than northern Israel.

Ben-Hadad sent messengers to Ahab and demanded that Ahab's silver and gold, his wives, and his lovely children were his. At first Ahab could not resist, and answered that he and all that he had belonged to Ben-Hadad.

When Ahab submitted, Ben-Hadad expanded his demand even further. He said that the next day he would send his servants to search Ahab's palace and the houses of his servants and take away whatever was pleasant in their eyes.

Ben-Hadad's aim was not simply to receive tribute, but to make Ahab and northern Israel submit completely and be put to shame. Ahab's first concession did not stop Ben-Hadad's greed; rather, it led to an even greater demand.

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2. The Elders and the People Refuse Ben-Hadad's Demand (Verses 7–12)

Ahab called the elders of the land and consulted with them about Ben-Hadad's demand. The elders and the people advised him not to listen to Ben-Hadad or consent.

Ahab answered that he could accept what was demanded at first, but that he could not allow Ben-Hadad to search his palace and the houses of his servants at will and take their possessions.

Ben-Hadad was enraged and threatened to destroy Samaria completely. He boasted that because the army following him was so numerous, not even the rubble of Samaria would amount to a handful for each of his soldiers.

Ahab responded that one should not boast as if he had already won before the war had even begun. Ben-Hadad heard this word while drinking with the kings, and commanded his men to get ready to attack Samaria.

3. God Promises Ahab the Victory (Verses 13–15)

A prophet came to Ahab and delivered the word that God would deliver the great army of Syria into Ahab's hand. The purpose lay in letting Ahab know that God is the true God.

Ahab was a king who served Baal and had acted more wickedly than all the kings of northern Israel before him. Nevertheless, God did not simply hand Ahab and northern Israel over into the hand of Syria.

The victory in this war was not a reward for Ahab's righteousness. God was revealing His own name and sovereignty and giving Ahab an opportunity to know God.

God had the battle begun through the young men who belonged to the governors of the provinces. Their number was two hundred and thirty-two, and the people of Israel who

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would follow behind them were seven thousand. Compared with the enormous allied army of Syria, it was a very small force.

4. The Small Army of Israel Defeats the Army of Syria (Verses 16–21)

When the army of Israel went out at noon, Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were drunk in their tents. When Ben-Hadad received the report that men were coming out of Samaria, he commanded that they be taken alive whether they came out for peace or came out for war.

The young men of the governors of the provinces went out first and attacked the army of Syria, and the army of Israel went out after them. The men of Israel each struck down the enemy soldier before him, and the army of Syria began to flee.

Ben-Hadad escaped on a horse with the cavalry and saved his life. Ahab attacked the horses and chariots and defeated the army of Syria with a great slaughter.

The cause of the victory was not that Israel's military power was strong. God used a small force to defeat the enormous army of Syria, and so revealed who it was that had given the victory.

5. The Prophet Warns Ahab to Prepare for the Next War (Verse 22)

After the war was over, the prophet told Ahab to strengthen himself and to take note of what he had to do and prepare. For when the year returned, the king of Syria would attack again.

One victory had not ended every threat. God had given the victory, but Ahab also had the responsibility to prepare for the next war.

Believing God's promise and making the preparations

entrusted to oneself do not stand in opposition to each other. Ahab was not to settle down in the victory God had given, but to prepare against Syria's renewed invasion.

6. The Syrians Misunderstand God as a God of the Hills (Verses 23–27)

The servants of the king of Syria thought that the reason they had lost was that the God of Israel was a god of the hills. They judged that if they fought on the plain instead of the hills, they would win.

They advised Ben-Hadad to remove the thirty-two kings from their positions of command and replace them with professional captains. They also replenished all the soldiers, horses, and chariots they had lost, and prepared for war again.

When the year returned, Ben-Hadad led the army of Syria up to Aphek to fight against Israel on the plain.

The army of Israel looked like two little flocks of goats before the great army of Syria. The army of Syria, on the other hand, was so numerous that it filled the land. By human conditions, Israel seemed to have almost no chance of winning.

7. God Reveals That He Is the Sovereign of the Hills and the Valleys (Verses 28–30)

A man of God came to Ahab and delivered the word that because the Syrians had said that God was only a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, God would deliver that great army into the hand of Israel.

God was not a being who worked powerfully only on particular hills or in particular regions. He was the God who rules the hills, the plains, and all nations and armies.

The two armies encamped facing each other for seven days. When the battle began on the seventh day, the army of Israel

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killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of Syria in one day.

The remaining army of Syria fled into the city of Aphek, but the wall collapsed and twenty-seven thousand of them died. Ben-Hadad hid himself in an inner chamber inside the city.

The second victory, too, was a victory that could not be explained by Israel's military power. By defeating the overwhelming army of Syria, God revealed that He is the God who rules both the hills and the plains.

8. Ben-Hadad Submits and Saves His Life (Verses 31–34)

Ben-Hadad's servants said they had heard that the kings of Israel were merciful, and they girded sackcloth around their waists, put ropes on their heads, and went out to Ahab. This was the sign that they had been defeated and had submitted.

They conveyed that Ben-Hadad was asking him to spare his life. When Ahab heard that Ben-Hadad was alive, he called him his brother.

Ben-Hadad's servants took Ahab's word as a good sign and said again that Ben-Hadad was Ahab's brother. Ahab called for Ben-Hadad and had him come up into his own chariot.

Ben-Hadad promised to restore the cities his father had taken from Israel and to let Ahab set up streets for commerce in Damascus. Ahab accepted these terms, made a treaty with Ben-Hadad, and released him.

Ahab used the victory God had given as an opportunity to gain his own political profit. He did not ask the will of God, and made a personal treaty with the king of an enemy nation.

9. The Man Who Refused God's Command Is Killed by a Lion (Verses 35–37)

One of the sons of the prophets, following the word of God, asked his companion to strike him. But the companion refused

to strike him.

The prophet said that because that man had not obeyed the word of God, a lion would kill him after he departed from him. Indeed, when he departed, a lion found him and killed him.

The prophet made the same request to another man, and that man struck the prophet and wounded him. Having come to look like a wounded soldier, the prophet covered his eyes with a cloth and waited for Ahab.

This event shows that a person cannot follow the word of God selectively according to his own judgment. Even a command hard to understand, if it was a word God had given, was not to be taken lightly.

10. The Prophet Draws Out Ahab's Judgment through a Parabolic Event (Verses 38–41)

Disguised as a wounded man, the prophet waited for Ahab by the road. When Ahab passed by, he said that he had received a command in the battle to guard a certain man, but that while he was busy with other things, he had lost that man.

He explained that there had been a condition: if he lost that man, he would have to pay with his own life in his place, or else pay a talent of silver.

Hearing the prophet's story, Ahab judged that since he himself had decided the matter he was responsible for, he must suffer according to that condition.

When the prophet took off the cloth covering his face, Ahab recognized that he was one of the sons of the prophets. When Ahab thought it was another man's story, he judged the responsibility precisely, but he did not know that the judgment would immediately be applied to himself.

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11. Judgment Is Declared on Ahab, Who Released Ben-Hadad (Verses 42–43)

The prophet declared that because Ahab had released the man whom God had determined to destroy, Ahab's life would go for Ben-Hadad's life and the people of Israel for the people of Syria.

The two victories given to Ahab were not personal spoils he could use as he pleased. They were victories God had entrusted to him so that His will would be done.

By calling Ben-Hadad his brother and making a treaty, Ahab tried to gain political and economic profit. But he put his own judgment and profit ahead of the will of God.

Hearing the word of judgment, Ahab returned to his palace in Samaria sullen and displeased in heart. Before the Word he did not correct his wrong; instead, he was merely uncomfortable because of the word of judgment.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 20

First, God gave even the wicked Ahab an opportunity to know Him. The purpose of giving him victory in the two wars lay in letting Ahab know that God is the true God.

Second, God's help does not rest only on a person's merit or qualification. Ahab was a king who served idols, but God delivered northern Israel out of the hand of Syria in order to reveal His own name and sovereignty.

Third, human pride brings defeat. Ben-Hadad boasted as if he had already won before the war began, but in his drunkenness he was utterly defeated by the small army of Israel.

Fourth, God is not One who is confined to a particular place. The Syrians thought of God only as a god of the hills, but God defeated the army of Syria on the plain as well.

Fifth, the number of men and military power do not decide

the victory. Israel, which looked like two little flocks of goats, defeated the great army of Syria that filled the land.

Sixth, after experiencing the grace of God, one has the responsibility to obey the will of God. Ahab received victory twice, but he used those victories for his own political profit.

Seventh, human kindness and obedience to the will of God must be distinguished. Ahab called Ben-Hadad his brother and spared him, but that became disobedience that released the man God had determined to destroy.

Eighth, the word of God cannot be followed selectively according to one's own judgment. The event in which the man who refused the prophet's request was killed by a lion shows the responsibility of taking the word of God lightly.

Ninth, a person may judge another's fault precisely while failing to see the same fault in himself. Ahab heard the prophet's story and judged the responsibility clearly, but that judgment was applied to himself.

Tenth, merely being distressed after hearing the word of God is not enough. Ahab was sullen and displeased when he heard the word of judgment, but he did not bow his heart to the will of God.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 20 records how God gave Ahab overwhelming victories in two wars and revealed His sovereignty, but Ahab put political profit ahead of the will of God and let Ben-Hadad go alive, so that he and his people came to bear the responsibility for it.

2) Chapter 20 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

1 Kings chapter 20 is the event in which God gave even

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Ahab, who served idols, two victories and let him know that He is the true God, but Ahab put his own political profit ahead of the will of God and made a treaty with Ben-Hadad. Seen from the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it shows that salvation is obtained not by human qualification but by the grace God has bestowed, and that we must not leave in our hearts again the sin Jesus has completely dealt with, nor compromise with other words of salvation.

1. Ben-Hadad, Who Tried to Take Away Everything (Verses 1–6)

Ben-Hadad the king of Syria besieged Samaria, leading thirty-two kings and many horses and chariots. He demanded that Ahab hand over not only his silver and gold but also his wives and children.

When Ahab accepted the first demand, Ben-Hadad demanded even more. He said he would send his servants to search the palace and the houses of Ahab's servants and take away whatever was pleasant in their eyes.

The power of sin and Satan is likewise not satisfied with taking away only a part from a person. Sin seeks to dominate a person's heart and life and in the end drag him into eternal destruction.

A person cannot overcome the power of sin and death by his own strength. Just as Ahab was afraid before Ben-Hadad's army, a sinner cannot escape the judgment of sin by his own ability. Therefore the salvation God has accomplished is necessary.

2. Refusing Ben-Hadad's Demand and Preparing to Fight (Verses 7–12)

Ahab called the elders and consulted about Ben-Hadad's

demand. The elders and the people told him not to accept his demand any longer, and Ahab conveyed his refusal to Ben-Hadad.

Ben-Hadad boasted that he would destroy Samaria completely. He acted as if he had already won the war, but the actual war had not yet begun.

The power of sin and Satan likewise threatens that a person can never be saved and must live as a sinner to the end. But God completely overcame the power of sin and death through Jesus.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not accept Satan's word that sin remains in his heart. He believes not his own feelings or conduct, but the Word that Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for them.

3. God Promises Victory to the Unqualified Ahab (Verses 13–15)

Ahab was a king who followed the way of Jeroboam and served Baal and Asherah. Nevertheless, God sent a prophet and said that He would deliver the great army of Syria into Ahab's hand.

It was not because Ahab was righteous or loyal that God gave him the victory. It was grace, to let Ahab and the people of Israel know that God is the true God.

The salvation of a sinner likewise does not begin from his good deeds or qualification. God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ for mankind, who were caught by sin and could not save themselves.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body. And bearing those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death. A sinner believes this salvation in

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his heart and receives the washing of all his sins.

4. God Gives Victory by Using a Few Young Men (Verses 14–21)

God had the war begun with two hundred and thirty-two young men belonging to the governors of the provinces at the front. The people of Israel following behind them were also no more than seven thousand.

Compared with the allied army of Syria, the army of Israel was very small and weak. But the victory did not depend on the number of men and military power; it depended on God.

Ben-Hadad and the kings were drunk, and when the young men of Israel attacked, the army of Syria began to collapse. God defeated a strong army through weak people.

Those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also look weak and few in number in worldly terms. But the power of the gospel does not come from the position and knowledge of the one who preaches; it comes from the Word of salvation Jesus has completed.

When a person believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart, all his sins are washed away and he becomes a child of God. This is the power of God that cannot be achieved by human wisdom or religious effort.

5. Even after the First Victory, They Had to Prepare Again (Verse 22)

After the victory in the first war, the prophet told Ahab to strengthen himself and prepare to fight again. For the king of Syria would attack again when the year returned.

Being saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean that the thoughts of the flesh and the temptations of the world all disappear. Salvation is perfect, but

for the saved there remains a spiritual fight to keep the gospel by faith as they live.

This fight is not a fight to be saved again. It is a fight to hold firmly in the heart the salvation Jesus has already completed, and to discern one's own fleshly thoughts and the influence of other gospels.

The Holy Spirit leads the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to keep hearing the Word and engraving it on his heart, and to serve the gospel and preach it to other souls.

6. The Syrians, Who Limited God to a God of the Hills (Verses 23–28)

The Syrians thought that the reason they had lost the first war was that the God of Israel was a god of the hills. They judged that if they fought on the plain, they would win.

But God is not One who works only on the hills. God is the only God, who rules the hills, the plains, the whole world, and every life.

People may think of Jesus as one among many religious beings, or limit Him to a being who only solves the problems of the flesh. But Jesus is the God who created the heavens, the earth, and all things, and the Savior who has saved mankind from sin.

Jesus is not merely One who helps us in difficult circumstances; He is the God who completely solved the problem of sin and death through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death.

7. God Defeats the Army of Syria on the Plain as Well (Verses 27–30)

The army of Syria filled the land, but the army of Israel

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looked like two little flocks of goats. Seen by human conditions, Israel had almost no chance of winning.

But God delivered the army of Syria into the hand of Israel on the plain as well. Through this He revealed that He is not a being confined to a particular place, but the God who rules the whole world.

This victory shows that God is the One who completes perfectly the work He has begun. Not only in the first war but also in the second war, God delivered Israel.

Salvation, too, God began and God completed. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world, and on the Cross He received all the judgment of those sins. By rising again from death, He revealed the complete victory over sin and death.

8. We Must Receive by Faith the Victory God Has Given

God delivered the great army of Syria into Ahab's hand. What Ahab needed was to deal with the enemy God had delivered to him to the end, and to take fully the victory God had given.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also needs the faith that fully believes the salvation God has already given. If he thinks that sin remains in his heart even though Jesus took all sins upon Himself and was judged for them, he has failed to fully receive the victory God has given.

Jesus did not take upon Himself only some sins. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He took upon Himself all the sins from birth to death, and paid all the wages of those sins on the Cross.

Therefore, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must believe, on the basis of the Word of God, that he has become a sinless, righteous person, even when his

own insufficiency comes into view. This is taking by faith the victory of salvation God has given.

9. Ahab, Who Called Ben-Hadad His Brother (Verses 31–34)

The defeated Ben-Hadad girded himself with sackcloth and begged Ahab to spare his life. Ahab called Ben-Hadad, whom God had delivered into his hand, his brother, and had him come up into his own chariot.

Ben-Hadad proposed to restore the cities he had taken and to let Ahab set up streets for himself in Damascus. On the ground that he could gain political and economic profit, Ahab made a treaty with him and released him.

Ahab received the man God had determined to be His enemy as a brother who brought him profit. He put the profit before his eyes and human relationship ahead of the will of God.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not acknowledge words of salvation different from the gospel as the same faith. Loving people and preaching the Word of life must be distinguished from receiving different gospels as one.

The way to truly love a person who holds a wrong faith is to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to him so that he may know and believe the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

10. The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit Cannot Be Mixed with Other Words of Salvation

The gospel of the water and the Spirit believes the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross as one salvation. Because Jesus took over all sins through the baptism He received from John, He was judged for those sins on the

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Cross.

If we acknowledge both the claim that sins were washed away by the blood of the Cross alone and the gospel of the water and the Spirit as right, we blur the Word of God concerning the passing of sins. Just as Ahab received Ben-Hadad as a brother, it produces the result of compromising spiritually with the enemy of the gospel.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not hate or harm people; rather, he sets the standard of faith clearly. He does not unite with other words of salvation, but preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately so that they too may be saved from all sins.

The Holy Spirit leads the believer not to reduce or change the gospel in order to gain human recognition or material profit, but to keep the salvation God has accomplished just as it is.

11. We Must Put the Word of God ahead of Our Own Judgment (Verses 35–37)

One of the sons of the prophets, following the word of God, told his companion to strike him. But the companion refused that request by his own judgment.

Humanly, the act of not striking a person may look right, but in this event God was preparing, through the prophet, a Word enacted in deed. When that man refused the word of God, he was killed by a lion.

This shows that the word of God must not be received selectively according to one's own feelings and judgment. What is right must be judged not by human thought but by the standard of the Word God has written.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise cannot be reduced or changed by human common sense. We must know from the Word of the Scriptures why Jesus, who has no sin,

received baptism from John the Baptist. That baptism was to fulfill the righteousness of God that passes all the sins of mankind on to Jesus.

12. The Prophet's Parable Exposes Ahab's Sin (Verses 38–42)

Disguised as a wounded man, the prophet told Ahab the story of having lost a captive entrusted to him in the battle. Ahab judged that since the prophet had lost the man entrusted to him, he must bear the responsibility.

When the prophet took off the cloth, Ahab recognized that he was a man of God. The prophet delivered the word that Ahab, who had released Ben-Hadad whom God had determined to destroy, would bear the responsibility according to his own judgment.

Ahab judged another's fault precisely, but he did not realize his own disobedience. He used the victory God had given as if it were his own possession and made a treaty with Ben-Hadad.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not use the salvation received from God as a means for his own greed. The purpose for which God saved us from all sins lies in having the saved reveal the righteousness of God and preach the gospel of life to other souls.

13. Ahab, Who Was Distressed at the Word of Judgment (Verses 42–43)

Ahab heard the word that, as the responsibility for releasing Ben-Hadad, his own life and his people would pay the price. He returned to his palace in Samaria sullen and displeased in heart.

Ahab had heard the word of God many times and had experienced amazing victories twice. But rather than fully

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believing and following God, he kept putting his own thoughts and profit first.

Faith does not become right merely because the heart is made uncomfortable by hearing the Word. One must lay down his own thoughts and receive in his heart the salvation and the will God has accomplished.

When the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit finds before the Word of God that his own thinking has been wrong, he corrects the direction of his thoughts and life following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

14. The Responsibility of Faith Entrusted to the Saved

The victory given to Ahab was something God had entrusted to him so that His will would be done. But Ahab used that victory for his own political profit and honor.

To the one saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the responsibility to keep and preach the gospel is likewise entrusted. Salvation is received by the grace of God, but the life after being saved must not be used only for one's own greed.

The one who believes the fact that Jesus has washed away all his sins should regard that salvation with thanksgiving and preach it to other souls. He should use his time, talents, and material things for the work of spreading the gospel, and live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We may form human relationships with those who hold a different faith, but we do not achieve spiritual union at the cost of the truth of the gospel. Believing and preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit clearly is the way to save ourselves, our families, and other souls.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 20

First, salvation is given not by human qualification and ability but by the grace of God. God gave victory even to Ahab, who served idols, and let him know that He is the true God.

Second, a sinner cannot overcome the power of sin and death by his own strength. Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death, accomplishing the complete victory.

Third, we must fully believe the victory of salvation God has given. If we think that sin remains in our hearts even though Jesus has removed all sins, we have failed to fully receive the completed salvation.

Fourth, even after being saved, there is a spiritual fight to keep the faith. This fight is not to obtain salvation again, but to keep the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart and to discern the thoughts of the flesh and other gospels.

Fifth, God is the only God, who rules the hills, the plains, and the whole world. Jesus is not one among many objects for obtaining worldly blessings, but the God who has saved mankind from sin.

Sixth, the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be mixed with other words of salvation. The baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death constitute one perfect salvation.

Seventh, loving people is different from compromising with another gospel. True love is to preach the Word of life so that the person who holds a wrong faith may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved from all sins.

Eighth, we must put the word of God ahead of our own judgment. Even what looks right to human thinking must not be followed if it differs from the Word of salvation written in

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the Scriptures.

Ninth, the saved must not use the grace God has given only for their own greed, but use it in serving the gospel and souls.

Tenth, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must keep the faith that all his sins have been washed away, and, led by the Holy Spirit, preach this Word of salvation to the world.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 20 shows, through the event in which God delivered the army of Syria to Ahab twice and made him win but Ahab compromised with Ben-Hadad and lost that victory, the fact that we must fully believe the salvation Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death, must not mix it with other words of salvation, and must keep the truth of the gospel to the end. ✉

1 Kings Chapter 20

Do Not Let the Grace God Has Delivered Slip Away like Ahab Did

Introduction

1 Kings chapter 20 begins with the scene in which Ben-Hadad the king of Syria surrounds Samaria with a great army. Ahab was not a king upright before God. He had followed the sin of Jeroboam, and he was the king who had made Israel sin with the worship of Baal and Asherah. Such Ahab was arrogant before the word of God, but before Ben-Hadad's threat he tried to submit servilely. A person who has left God cannot stand boldly before the powers of the world and the demands of sin.

Ben-Hadad tried to take away not only Ahab's silver, gold, wives, and children, but even everything Ahab delighted in. The enemy's demand does not end with one time. This is like the nature of sin and false faith. If we step back even a little from the way God has set, in the end we are robbed all the more deeply. If we regard it as no great matter to leave out the baptism of Jesus and speak only of the Cross, we cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus, and in the end we lose the truth of the remission of sin in our hearts.

Yet God sent a prophet even to the wicked Ahab. God's purpose was that *"you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13)*. It was not because Ahab was righteous that God helped him; it was to let even Israel, fallen into idol worship,

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know that the LORD God is the true God. God had the great army of Syria driven back through small young men, and showed that victory rests not in man's strength but in God.

Even after their first defeat, the Syrians did not come to know God. They limited the LORD to a god of the hills, and thought they could win if they fought on the plain. But God is the God of the hills and the plains, the One who governs the whole world and the life of every person. Man cannot shut God up inside his own thinking. In the same way, the way of salvation cannot be reduced by human doctrines and traditions. The baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death are the righteousness of God connected as one.

But Ahab, even after receiving the grace of God, failed to discern to the end. He did not keep the victory God had given according to God's will, but called Ben-Hadad his brother and released him. Receiving grace does not automatically make one's faith stand upright. The one who has received grace must make that grace the road that leads back to God.

1 Kings chapter 20 warns us not to pass by like Ahab even after hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given us. God made us righteous not because we were righteous, but because Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished the complete salvation by rising again from death. Having received this grace, we must not make sin and false faith our brothers, but live with a faith that belongs to God on the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

A King Who Has Left God Becomes Servile before the Enemy

"Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it" (1 Kings 20:1).

1 Kings chapter 20 begins with the scene in which Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathers a great army and surrounds Samaria. He did not come alone. Thirty-two kings were with him, and there were horses and chariots. Seen with human eyes, northern Israel was placed in a very perilous situation. Samaria was the capital of northern Israel, and the fact that the city was besieged meant that the center of the nation was being shaken.

But we must not see this event merely as an international war. Northern Israel, from Jeroboam on, had abandoned the law of sacrifice God had established and had served the golden calves as if they were God. In the days of Ahab that sin grew still deeper, and the worship of Baal and Asherah covered the nation. A nation that does not acknowledge God as God but follows idols is inevitably followed by spiritual hardship and fleshly hardship. A person who has left God loses true strength even if he outwardly holds royal power.

Today as well, it is the same when a person leaves the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If he says he believes in Jesus and yet does not know the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, sin remains in his heart. Even if he speaks of the Cross, if he does not know how sins were passed on to Jesus, he cannot stand boldly before God. Then, before the threats of the world and the condemnation of sin, his soul cannot but become servile.

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The Enemy Knows the Weakness of a Person without God

"Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, 'Thus says Ben-Hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.'" (1 Kings 20:2–3).

Ben-Hadad sent messengers and said to Ahab, *"Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine" (1 Kings 20:3)*. This was no mere threat. It was an arrogant word regarding Israel as his own possession even before fighting. He claimed as his own not only the wealth of Israel but even the precious ones of Ahab's family and people.

Worldly power that does not fear God always comes out this way. When it has strength, it regards what belongs to others as its own and tries to swallow the weak. Ben-Hadad spoke as if he were one who could take everything for himself. But however strong a power a man may hold, he cannot become God. The Owner of life, of nations, and of every possession is God.

Ahab should have known this fact. He was the king of Israel, and he should have known that God is the One who keeps Israel. But Ahab did not lean on God. Because he had left God and followed Baal and the golden calves, he lost his spiritual center before the words of the enemy.

We too easily collapse before the demands of the world and of sin if we do not stand within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Sin says to us, "You are mine. Your heart, your life, and your future are mine." But the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be spoken to that way. For Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and

made us God's children by rising again from death. We are no longer the possession of sin but people who belong to God.

Ahab's Answer Shows the Servility of a King without Faith

"And the king of Israel answered and said, 'My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.'" (1 Kings 20:4).

Hearing Ben-Hadad's demand, Ahab answered, *"My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours" (1 Kings 20:4)*. Though he was the king of Israel, before the enemy he said he would hand over himself and all his possessions. This is not so much wise diplomacy as the servile appearance of a king without faith.

When Ahab dealt with Elijah and the servants of God, he opposed them fiercely. He did not humble his heart before the word of God. But before Ben-Hadad the king of Syria, he cowered at a single word. This is the contradiction of a person who has left God. He is arrogant before God and servile before the powers of the world. He opposes the word of God and submits to the threats of men.

The one who believes in God is not a person who becomes recklessly arrogant before the world. But the one who truly believes in God does not hand over his soul before sin and false powers. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can be bold even before the condemnation of sin, because he knows that Jesus has already taken all his sins upon Himself and been judged for them. The salvation Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death is our true boldness.

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The Enemy's Demand Does Not End with One Time

"Then the messengers came back and said, 'Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, 'Indeed I have sent to you, saying, 'You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children'; but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.'" (1 Kings 20:5–6).

When Ahab answered as if yielding to the first demand, Ben-Hadad made a greater demand. Now he spoke not simply of silver, gold, wives, and children; he said he would send his servants to search Ahab's house and the houses of his servants and take away whatever was pleasant in their eyes. The greed of the enemy does not end because one yields once. Once we step back, it comes in deeper and tries to take away everything.

This is like the nature of sin and false faith. When a person takes lightly a small departure from the way of salvation God has set, greater deception comes in at last. Jeroboam, to keep his royal power, made the golden calves and changed the place of worship, and then went on to change the priesthood and the feasts. That sin grew deeper into the worship of Baal and Asherah in the days of Ahab. Changing even a little the way God has set is never a small matter.

Today as well, if we regard it as no great matter to leave out the baptism of Jesus and speak only of the Cross, we end up losing the truth of the remission of sin. The fact that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John is not a peripheral story of salvation. It is the righteous procedure of God that shows how the sins judged on the Cross

were passed on to Jesus. If we lose this truth, we are continually dragged along by the condemnation of sin and the demands of our own righteousness.

The Words of the Elders Stopped Ahab's Servility

"So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, 'Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.' And all the elders and all the people said to him, 'Do not listen or consent.'" (1 Kings 20:7–8).

Before Ben-Hadad's second demand, Ahab called the elders of the land. And he told them that he had not been able to refuse the first demand. The elders and all the people said plainly, *"Do not listen or consent" (1 Kings 20:8)*. They saw that Ben-Hadad's demand was not a mere negotiation but a design to destroy Israel.

Ahab was not a king who stood on his own faith. Gaining strength from the words of the elders and the people, he came to refuse Ben-Hadad's demand. This scene shows Ahab's weakness, and at the same time makes us think that God had not utterly cast off Israel but had still left them the opportunity of the Word. Following this, God sent a prophet and said that He would make Ahab win this war. Its purpose lay in having Ahab and Israel *"know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13)*.

God sometimes shows mercy even to a person without faith. But the purpose of that mercy is not to make that person boast of his own strength. It is to bring him back to the true God. The opportunity to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the same. God lets us hear the truth of the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death in order to make us

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abandon our own way of religion and return to the righteousness God has accomplished.

Faith Makes Us Refuse What Must Be Refused

"Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, 'Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.' And the messengers departed and brought back word to him" (1 Kings 20:9).

Ahab said to Ben-Hadad's messengers to tell him that he had intended to do all that was demanded at first, but that this thing he could not do. His answer is still hard to regard as a complete confession of faith. He keeps the expression "my lord the king," and the servility with which he had tried to grant the first demand is exposed as it is. Yet at least this time he stopped on the road of handing over everything.

On the road of faith there are things that must be refused. We must refuse what sin demands, refuse what false faith demands, and refuse the demand to change the way of salvation God has set. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot accept the word that the baptism of Jesus may be left out. He cannot agree with the incomplete faith that says the blood of the Cross alone is enough. For God accomplished the complete salvation by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

We do not refuse with a heart that wants to fight people. We refuse in order to keep the righteousness of God. The truth of the remission of sin cannot be compromised. The way of salvation God has set cannot be reduced or changed according to human convenience.

The Arrogant Boasts Even before the War Begins

"Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, 'The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.' So the king of Israel answered and said, 'Tell him, 'Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.'" (1 Kings 20:10–11).

Hearing Ahab's refusal, Ben-Hadad was greatly enraged. He said that even the rubble of Samaria would not suffice to fill the hands of the people following him. This was an arrogant word declaring that he would trample Samaria completely. He had not yet fought the war, but he boasted as if he had already won.

This time Ahab answered, *"Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off" (1 Kings 20:11)*. It means not to boast as if one had won before the war has even begun. This word is right. But Ahab himself was not a man standing on the faith that truly leans on God. He pointed out the enemy's arrogance, but he himself was arrogant before God and was a king who had refused the word of God.

This word is a warning to us as well. A person may criticize the arrogance of the world while failing to see the arrogance of his own heart. The arrogance that relies on strength like Ben-Hadad is sin, and the heart that disobeys the word of God like Ahab and looks for help only in a crisis is also sin. True faith relies neither on one's own strength nor on worldly power, but believes the righteousness God has accomplished. The gospel of the water and the Spirit tears down our boasting. For salvation was not achieved by our righteousness; it is the grace of God accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

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Drunken Arrogance Collapses before the Judgment of God

"And it happened when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, 'Get ready.' And they got ready to attack the city" (1 Kings 20:12).

Ben-Hadad was drinking with the kings in the tents. Even with the war before him, he was drunk with arrogance, already assured of victory. When he heard Ahab's word, he told his servants to set themselves in array, and the army at once set itself in array toward the city.

But when we look at the word that follows, God sends a prophet and says that He will deliver this great multitude into Ahab's hand. The purpose for which God does so is that Israel may *"know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13)*. It was not because Ahab was righteous that God helped him. It was because God wanted even Israel, serving idols, to know again that He is the true God, and wanted them to return.

Today as well, it is not because a person is righteous that God lets sinners hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Rather, because they are in sin and cannot be saved by their own strength, God gives them the Word of salvation. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished the complete salvation by rising again from death. When we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we escape from the threats of sin and worldly power and stand as those who belong to God.

Therefore 1 Kings chapter 20, verses 1 through 12, shows through Ben-Hadad's arrogance and Ahab's servility the reality of a life without God. The one who serves idols is arrogant

toward God and servile before the world. But even to such Israel, God sends His word to let them know that He is the LORD. Before this Word, we too must not rely on worldly power or our own strength, but build our faith on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by His baptism, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

God Sent His Word First

"Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" (1 Kings 20:13).

Ben-Hadad the king of Syria surrounded Samaria with a great army and thirty-two kings. Ahab was not a king who served God rightly. He had followed the sin of Jeroboam, served Baal and Asherah, and made the people of Israel sin before God. Therefore it was not because Ahab was righteous that God helped him.

Even so, God sent a prophet to Ahab. This is the mercy of God. God did not leave Israel, fallen into idol worship, utterly alone; even in their hardship He sent His word. *"Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13).* The purpose of this word was not the victory itself. It was to make them know that God is the true God.

Today as well, people are powerless before the great multitude of sin and the world. Material things, power, the condemnation of sin, and the current of false faith seem impossible to overcome by human strength. But God has sent us the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Through

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this Word—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death—God has let us know that He is the true God of salvation.

Do You See the Great Multitude, or Do You See God?

In this passage God said, *"Have you seen all this great multitude?" (1 Kings 20:13)* The army of Syria was very great in human eyes. The army surrounding Samaria, the chariots, and the forces of the kings were a threat Israel could hardly withstand. Yet while God had them see that great multitude, at the same time He said that He would deliver them into Ahab's hand.

Faith is not denying that the great multitude exists. It is seeing God, who is greater, while knowing that the great multitude really exists. Ahab was not a king with right faith before God, but through this event God had Israel come to know the LORD God. Not Baal, not the golden calves, not human military power—He made them know that the LORD God alone is the true God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit lets us see this as well. Man's sin is real and great. Human deeds cannot solve that sin. However much one repeats prayers of repentance, builds up his own righteousness, and pours out religious zeal, the sin of the heart does not disappear. But God has accomplished in Jesus Christ a salvation greater than that sin. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the Cross,

and made us righteous by rising again from death. Therefore we must see, rather than the great multitude of sin, the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God Works through the Weak

"So Ahab said, 'By whom?' And he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.'" (1 Kings 20:14).

Ahab asked, *"By whom?" (1 Kings 20:14)* Then the prophet answered, *"By the young leaders of the provinces" (1 Kings 20:14)*. God did not speak first of mighty commanders or a great army. He said that He would accomplish this work through the young men of the governors of the provinces.

This is the way God works. God does not work only through strength that men can boast of. Rather, He often reveals His own power through those who look weak and small. Only then does man fail to boast of his own strength and come to know that God has done it.

The work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the same. This Word is not spread only by worldly grand authority or the power of organization. God holds those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and through them He has the Word of salvation preached to souls. Man is weak, but the Word has power. For the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death, is not human wisdom but the righteousness of God.

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The King Had to Begin the Battle First

"Then he said, 'Who will set the battle in order?' And he answered, 'You.'" (1 Kings 20:14).

Ahab asked again, "*Who will set the battle in order?" (1 Kings 20:14)* The prophet answered, "You." Though God had said He would deliver the army of Syria to him, Ahab was not to sit still. The king had to begin the battle first.

This word shows that the grace God gives does not remove man's responsibility. What God has delivered must be taken by faith. But what matters here is not that Ahab wins by his own strength; it is that he believes what God has delivered and goes forward. Ahab was still an insufficient and wicked king, but through this war God intended to let him and Israel know who the LORD is.

We too, if we have heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must respond with faith. God has already had Jesus take all our sins upon Himself, accomplished the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and achieved the complete salvation by rising again from death. But if a person does not believe this Word, that grace does not come upon his heart. Receiving by faith what God has accomplished is faith. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the completed Word of salvation, and we must come before that Word with faith.

Through a Small Number God Revealed That He Is the LORD

"Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven

thousand" (1 Kings 20:15).

When Ahab mustered them, the young men of the governors of the provinces were two hundred and thirty-two. And all the rest of the people, all the children of Israel, were seven thousand. Compared with the great army of Syria, it was far too small a number. By human calculation this battle looked impossible. But it was precisely in this situation that God intended to reveal that He is the LORD.

The reason God uses a small number is clear. It is to make known that the ground of victory lies not in man but in God. Israel wins not because Israel is strong, but because God has delivered the enemy into their hand. The purpose of this event was not to establish Ahab's honor but to fulfill the word, *"you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13).*

The faith of the gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise leaves no room for boasting of human merit. It is not because our labor was great that we received the remission of sin. Nor is it because our resolution was strong. It is because Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us completely by rising again from death. Therefore the saved cannot boast of themselves; they boast only of what God has done.

God Shows the Way of Return Even to Those Fallen into Idols

1 Kings chapter 20, verses 13 through 15, shows the longsuffering of God. Ahab was a wicked king before God. Yet God sent a prophet even to him and said that He would deliver the great multitude of Syria into his hand. The reason was not

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to exalt Ahab, but to make him know the LORD God.

Today as well, God shows sinners the way of return through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if a person has long been in wrong faith and has lived holding on to his own righteousness and worldly desires, he can return when he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given. If he believes the Word of salvation completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death, he is delivered from sin and comes to know the true God.

Therefore this passage teaches us not to rely on human strength but to believe the word of God. It tells us not to fear before the great multitude, but to take by faith what God has delivered. Within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God has already made us overcome our sin and condemnation. Now we must believe that Word and live with the faith that knows God is the LORD.

There Are Those Who Believe the Word of God and Go Out First

"So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post" (1 Kings 20:16).

Ahab mustered the young men of the governors of the provinces, and they went out first at noon. God did not put forward great commanders or men of much experience in war. He had the young men of the governors of the provinces go out first. Seen with human eyes, these were not men fit to face the great army of Syria. But it was precisely through such men that God revealed His power.

On the other hand, Ben-Hadad was drinking and drunk in

the tents with the thirty-two kings. He was already acting like a man who had won. He had surrounded Samaria, his army was great, and he thought Israel was in his hand. But in a battle where God works, man's arrogance is of no strength at all.

This word shows that the fight of faith is not decided by human conditions. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also look small and weak in worldly terms. But when he believes and goes forward on the Word—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death—God works through that faith.

The Arrogant Takes the Work of God Lightly

"The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out a patrol, and they told him, saying, 'Men are coming out of Samaria!' So he said, 'If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.'" (1 Kings 20:17–18).

Ben-Hadad received the report that men were coming out of Samaria. But he did not fear them in the least. He said, *"If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive" (1 Kings 20:18)*. He thought that with whatever intent Israel came out, they would be caught in his hand.

This is the appearance of an arrogant man. Ben-Hadad saw only the number of Israel's soldiers, and did not see God working behind them. Seeing that the young men came out first, he must have despised them all the more. But to make light of the small ones God has sent is, in the end, to make light of the

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work God is doing.

Today as well, the world and false faith may look lightly on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They may ask why the baptism Jesus received from John is so important, and say that speaking only of the Cross is enough. But if we leave out the baptism of Jesus, we cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. Man cannot take lightly the way of salvation God has set. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the righteous way God Himself established to save sinners.

The Battle God Has Delivered Surpasses Human Calculation

"Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled" (1 Kings 20:19–20).

The young men of the governors of the provinces and the army following them went out of the city. And each one struck down and killed the enemy soldier before him. Then the Syrians fled. Something happened that is hard to understand by human calculation. Small-numbered Israel broke down the great army of Syria.

But this victory was not meant to exalt the valor of the young men themselves. God had already said, *"I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13)*. Therefore the victory in this battle came to pass just as God had spoken. The battle God has delivered surpasses human numbers and experience.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is likewise the salvation of God that surpasses human calculation. Man cannot solve his own sin. However hard he tries, he cannot wash away

the sin of his heart. But God had Jesus receive baptism from John so that He would take the sins of the world upon His body, accomplished the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us completely by His rising again from death. This salvation is not something made by human ability; it is the grace God has delivered into our hands.

Arrogant Power Comes to Flee before God

"And Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry" (1 Kings 20:20).

Until a moment before, Ben-Hadad had been drunk in the tent, and had commanded that everyone coming out of Samaria be taken alive. But when God actually worked through Israel, he fled on a horse with the cavalry. The arrogant king became a fugitive.

When God works, even the strong powers of the world collapse. When a man does not know God, he overtrusts his own strength. He relies on armies, chariots, and numbers, and boasts as if his own words would become reality. But before the battle God has delivered, all that boasting collapses.

Our faith is the same. However strong sin and condemnation may look, if Jesus has already taken our sins upon Himself and been judged for them in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, sin no longer has any authority to rule over us. It is not by our own strength that we overcome sin. We escape from the condemnation of sin by believing the righteousness of God accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

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The Victory God Gave Is Grace to Make Us Know God

"Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter" (1 Kings 20:21).

The king of Israel went out, attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter. Israel gained a great victory. But this victory must not be seen as the result of Ahab's faith or righteousness. Ahab was still a wicked king before God. God gave him the victory to let him and Israel know the LORD God.

God sometimes bestows grace even on a wicked king and shows him the way of return. Ahab should have realized through this victory. He should have known that neither Baal, nor the golden calves, nor his own military power, but the LORD God alone is the true God. But even after receiving the grace of God, Ahab did not fully turn back. This is Ahab's tragedy.

That the gospel of the water and the Spirit has been delivered to us today is also the grace of God. God did not give us this truth because we were righteous. Because we were in sin and could not save ourselves, He sent Jesus Christ. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the complete salvation by rising again from death. If we have heard this grace, we must not pass it by like Ahab. We must know that God is the LORD, and turn our hearts before the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore 1 Kings chapter 20, verses 16 through 21, is the Word in which God breaks down a great enemy through small ones. Ben-Hadad's arrogance ended in flight, and the small

young men of Israel went out following the word of God and saw the victory. We too must not look at human conditions and numbers, but believe the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given. When we take by faith the grace God has delivered, even the great multitude of sin and condemnation cannot overcome us.

Even after the Victory, We Must Prepare Again

"And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, 'Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.'" (1 Kings 20:22).

Israel defeated the army of Syria according to the word of God. The young men of the governors of the provinces went out first, and because God had delivered the battle to them, the great army of Syria fled. But after the victory God sent the prophet and spoke to Ahab again. *"Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do" (1 Kings 20:22)*. This was the warning that the war was not completely over: when the year returned, the king of Syria would come up against him again.

It is not that a person may grow careless because God has given victory once. If God has bestowed grace, we must not count that grace vain, but prepare for what comes next. Through this victory Ahab should have realized that the LORD God is the true God. But God, knowing Ahab's weakness and Israel's condition, even told him in advance of the war that would come again.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also engrave this word on his heart. If we have

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received the remission of sin by believing the Word—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the salvation by rising again from death—we must keep growing the strength of faith within that grace. Even after we are saved, the attacks of sin, the world, and false faith can come again. Therefore we must prepare our hearts within the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and discern the way that pleases God.

The Enemy Did Not Look to God for the Cause of Their Defeat

"Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, 'Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20:23).

Even after losing the first war, the Syrians did not acknowledge that the LORD God is the true God. They said, *"Their gods are gods of the hills" (1 Kings 20:23)*. They thought Israel had been strong because their God exercised power only on the hills. So they judged that if they fought on the plain, they would win.

This word regarded the LORD God as one of the idols. The Gentiles thought of gods as bound to regions and terrains. They divided them in their thinking—a god of the hills, a god of the plains, a god of the sea. But the LORD God is not such a god of created things. God is God on the hills and God on the plains, the living God who governs the whole universe and the life of every person.

Today as well, people try to shut God up inside their own

thoughts. Some think of God only as a being who gives worldly blessings, and some say that the blood of the Cross alone is enough while leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John. But the salvation God has accomplished cannot be reduced by man. Jesus' taking the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, His receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and His completing the salvation by rising again from death are the righteousness of God connected as one. To know God rightly, we must know the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly.

The Thought That Limits God Is the Root of False Faith

The servants of Syria did not see Israel's victory as the result of God's delivering. They saw it as a matter of terrain. They thought they had lost because they fought in the hills, and that they could win if they fought on the plain. This is spiritual ignorance. When a person sees what God has done and still does not know God, he always looks for the wrong reasons.

Israel, too, was not free at this point. Ahab and Israel knew the LORD God and yet followed the golden calves and Baal. Though they had seen that the LORD God is the living, true God, their hearts did not fully turn. Therefore this word does not rebuke the Syrians only; it is a warning given to everyone who does not fully know God and tries to believe in his own way.

Faith that does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit is like this. If one says he believes in Jesus and yet removes the baptism of Jesus from the center of salvation, he is limiting the way of the remission of sin God has set. Jesus, who

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shed His blood on the Cross, is the One who had already taken the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. If we speak of the Cross without that baptism, we cannot know how sins were passed on to Jesus. We must not reduce with human thinking the salvation God has accomplished.

Man's Strategy Cannot Take the Place of God

"So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places" (1 Kings 20:24).

The servants of Syria advised Ben-Hadad to change the method of war. They told him to dismiss the kings who had been with him and to put captains in their places. They looked for the cause of the first defeat in the army's organization and the place of battle. So they thought they could win if they changed the command structure and changed the place.

Making a strategy is not wrong in itself. But if that strategy comes out of a heart that does not know God, it ends up as a vain calculation. The Syrians did not know the LORD God. They failed to see the fact that God had given Israel the victory. So they supposed that if they only overhauled their military system, they could win the next time.

A person's faith is like this too. If he does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he keeps trying to change his methods. He looks for more zeal, stronger repentance, greater devotion, and more splendid religious forms. But the remission of sin is not achieved by the improvement of methods. The remission of sin is received by believing the righteousness God has accomplished. Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving

baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—solves man's problem of sin.

The Enemy Thought They Could Win by Replenishing What They Had Lost

"And you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.' And he listened to their voice and did so" (1 Kings 20:25).

The servants of Syria said to muster an army like the army that had been lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. And they said that if they fought on the plain, they would surely win. They believed in numbers, equipment, and terrain. They thought that if they refilled what they had lost, they could become stronger than before.

But before God, human numbers and equipment cannot be the ground of victory. In the first war, too, Syria was strong and Israel was small. Yet Israel won because God had delivered the enemy into their hand. The Syrians failed to see that core. They were under the delusion that with more soldiers, horses, and chariots they could defeat God.

Today as well, people try to fill their lack with numbers and conditions. They think that with a bigger organization, more wealth, a better environment, and stronger human means, even spiritual problems will be solved. But the problem of sin and salvation is not solved by human conditions. It is solved only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given. If we do not believe the salvation God completed in Jesus, the sin of the heart remains, however much we fill up.

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The True God Is the God of the Hills and the Plains

1 Kings chapter 20, verses 22 through 25, shows the foolishness of man limiting God. The Syrians regarded the LORD God only as a god of the hills. They thought that on the plain they would win. But God is neither a god of the hills only nor a god of the plains only. God is the Creator of the whole world, the living God who hears the words and hearts of men and judges them.

This God sent Jesus Christ to save us. Jesus took the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the complete salvation by rising again from death. This salvation is not a salvation shut up in any place or condition. Whoever believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin and becomes God's people.

Therefore we must not shut God up inside human thinking. We must not reduce God to a being who only gives worldly blessings, nor stay in the incomplete faith that speaks only of the Cross of Jesus while leaving out His baptism. The true God is the God of the hills, the plains, and the whole universe, the only God who has completely saved sinners by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we stand on the faith that believes this God, we can remain unshaken even before the great multitudes of the world and false ideas.

Syria Came to Fight Again, but They Did Not Know God

"So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad

mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel" (1 Kings 20:26).

When the year returned, Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians again and came up to Aphek. He had lost the first war, but he had not realized the true cause of that defeat. He did not see that the LORD God had given Israel the victory; he thought they had lost merely because the battlefield was hill country.

This is the foolishness of a person who does not know God. Even seeing the work God has done, he does not see God, and looks for causes only by his own calculation. The Syrians thought that if they reorganized their forces, changed the terrain, and changed their organization, they could win. But the One they had to face was not the military power of Israel but the living LORD God.

Today as well, people try to shut the salvation God has accomplished inside their own thoughts. They may say that speaking only of the Cross of Jesus is enough, and fail to regard as important the fact that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John. But the way of salvation God has set cannot be divided or reduced by man. The baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death are the one connected gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Israel Looked Small, but God Was with Them

"And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside" (1 Kings 20:27).

The children of Israel were also mustered and given

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provisions, and they encamped before the Syrians. But the Scripture describes Israel as like *"two little flocks of goats" (1 Kings 20:27)*. The Syrians, on the other hand, filled the land. Seen with human eyes, this battle was no match at all. Israel looked small and weak, and Syria looked great and strong.

But God's battle is not decided by numbers. When God is with them, even the small can defeat the great. It was not because Israel was righteous. It was not because Ahab was a king upright before God. It was because God intended, through this event, to make known who the LORD God is.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also look small in the world. The way of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit may not look broad and splendid. But this Word cannot be judged by human size. The salvation accomplished by Jesus' receiving baptism from John and so taking the sins of the world upon Himself, His receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and His rising again from death is the righteousness God Himself has completed. Therefore faith is not looking at one's own small circumstances, but looking at the salvation God has accomplished.

Words That Limit God Are Judged before God

"Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" (1 Kings 20:28).

A man of God came to the king of Israel and delivered the word of God. The Syrians had said that the LORD is *"God of*

the hills, but He is not God of the valleys" (1 Kings 20:28). God had heard their words. And He said that He would deliver that great army into the hand of Israel. The purpose lay in this: *"you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:28)*.

The Syrians thought of the LORD God like the gods of the Gentiles. They limited Him to a god who had power on the hills but no power in the valleys. But the LORD God is not such a being. God is the only God, who governs the hills and the valleys, heaven and earth, war and peace, and the life and death of man.

Today as well, there is faith that limits God. It is the faith that regards God only as a being who gives worldly blessings, or that limits the salvation of Jesus to the blood of the Cross alone and leaves out the baptism of Jesus. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit testifies in detail how God has completely saved sinners. When Jesus received baptism from John, He took the sins of the world upon Himself; on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins; and by rising again from death He made us fully righteous. To leave out or reduce this truth is to limit with human thinking the salvation God has accomplished.

The Battle God Has Delivered Surpasses Human Numbers

"And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day" (1 Kings 20:29).

The two camps faced each other for seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined. On that day the children of

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Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of Syria in one day. Seen with human eyes, it looked impossible for Israel, like two little flocks of goats, to defeat the army of Syria that filled the land. But because God had delivered them, Israel won.

This victory was not Israel's boast but God's testimony. By breaking down the great army of Syria, God fulfilled the word, *"you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13)*. He exposed that the thinking of Syria, which had limited and mocked God, was wrong.

Our salvation is the same. Man cannot overcome sin by his own strength. The power of sin is stronger than man. But because God had Jesus take the sins upon Himself and judged them, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit escapes from the condemnation of sin. This is not a victory obtained by our effort but the victory of salvation God has delivered to us.

The Refuge of the Arrogant Collapses

"But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber" (1 Kings 20:30).

The men of Syria who were left fled to Aphek and went into the city. But the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of those who were left. Ben-Hadad also fled, came into the city, and went into an inner chamber. The king who a moment before had relied on a great army and vowed to win without fail on the plain now crept into an inner room to hide.

The refuge of the arrogant collapses before God. Ben-Hadad relied on armies, horses, and chariots. The servants of

Syria thought they would win if they changed the place. But when God judges, even the city a man hides in is not safe. Wisdom that does not know God is wisdom that collapses in the end.

This word is a warning to us as well. People try to make their own righteousness, their own tradition of faith, worldly strength, and religious zeal their refuge. But a refuge apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit collapses before God. Only the faith that believes the truth that Jesus took our sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, together with the judgment of the Cross and His rising again from death, is the faith that is safe before God.

Those Who Know the True God Are the True Israel

1 Kings chapter 20, verses 26 through 30, shows how the arrogance of Syria, which limited the LORD God, collapsed. Israel was like two little flocks of goats and Syria filled the land, but God delivered the great army into their hand. The heart of this event lies not in the victory of the war but in making known that God is the only true God.

Today as well, the true people of God are not determined by outward appearance or religious name. The one who knows and believes the true God is the true people of God. The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit God accomplished through Jesus Christ is the person who belongs to God. The one who believes the fact that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the complete remission of sin and new life by rising again from

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death is the person of true faith.

Therefore we must not limit God as a god of the hills or a god of the valleys. Nor must we shut God up inside worldly blessings or religious experiences. God is the Owner of the whole universe, the only God who has completely saved sinners by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we believe this God, we come to see the victory of God even in circumstances like little flocks of goats.

The Defeated Ben-Hadad Tried to Exploit Mercy

"Then his servants said to him, 'Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.'" (1 Kings 20:31).

Ben-Hadad the king of Syria had relied on a great army and tried to swallow Israel. At first he told Ahab to hand over his silver, gold, wives, and children; going further, he said he would send his servants to search out and take away everything. But when God gave Israel the victory, Ben-Hadad fled and hid in an inner chamber. And now his servants sought a way to save his life by using the report that the kings of Israel were merciful.

They thought that if they girded sackcloth around their waists, put ropes on their heads, and went out, Ahab might spare him. This was not true repentance but a calculation to survive. Ben-Hadad had not acknowledged that the LORD God is the true God and turned back. When he was about to die, he tried to exploit Ahab's merciful disposition.

This scene shows the craftiness of false faith. Sin and

falsehood threaten people when they are strong, and when they become weak, they approach in a pitiful appearance and demand compromise. But true faith does not judge only by outward appearance. We must look at what God has said. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also discern when false faith approaches with humble words and a gentle appearance. The faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, and the faith that speaks of the remission of sin while holding on to its own righteousness—however soft they look, they are not the way of salvation God has set.

Human Kindness Cannot Take the Place of God's Will

"So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, 'Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" (1 Kings 20:32).

Ben-Hadad's servants came to Ahab and said, "*Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live'" (1 Kings 20:32)*. The one who before had tried to take away everything Israel had now uses the words "your servant." The words had changed. But his heart had not truly turned before God.

When Ahab heard these words, he should first have asked the will of God. This war was not a mere fight between kings. Because the Syrians had blasphemed the LORD God, regarding Him only as a god of the hills, God had delivered that great army into the hand of Israel in this battle. Therefore it was not a matter for Ahab to handle by human sentiment or feeling.

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The mercy of God is not a mercy that compromises with sin. God loves sinners, but He is not One who simply covers sin over. That is why Jesus took the sins of the world upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us by rising again from death. The love of God is not a love that leaves sin alone, but a love that dealt with sin righteously within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Ahab Called the Enemy His Brother

"And he said, 'Is he still alive? He is my brother.' Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, 'Your brother Ben-Hadad.' So he said, 'Go, bring him.'" (1 Kings 20:32–33).

After asking whether Ben-Hadad was still alive, Ahab said, *"He is my brother" (1 Kings 20:32)*. This very word was his problem. Ben-Hadad was the enemy who a moment before had sought to destroy Israel. God had delivered the great army to him, and that king was fleeing and begging for his life. Yet Ahab did not see him as an enemy standing before the judgment of God, but called him his own brother.

Ben-Hadad's servants took that word as a sign and quickly grasped at it, saying, "*Your brother Ben-Hadad" (1 Kings 20:33)*. They did not miss Ahab's word. When Ahab said "brother" with his own mouth, they at once held on to that word and made it the ground for saving Ben-Hadad. One wrong word of a man can open a way contrary to the will of God.

Today as well, there can be a wrong sense of brotherhood

in faith. Not all who speak of Jesus have the same faith. The faith that does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that denies or leaves out the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, is different from the Word of salvation God has given. We must not hate people, but neither must we receive false faith as a brother and mix it with the truth. The faith that has received the remission of sin within the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the religious faith in which sin remains in the heart cannot be the same faith.

People's Praise Can Cloud Discernment

Ben-Hadad's servants said that the kings of Israel were merciful. Ahab's heart must have been moved by that word. Before words that recognized him as a merciful king, he could not deal sternly with Ben-Hadad. He did not handle the victory God had given according to God's will; he moved according to people's evaluation and his own reputation.

This is connected with Ahab's long spiritual weakness. Ahab was stubborn before God, and he heard the words of servants of God like Elijah only with resistance. But he was shaken by Jezebel's words, and shaken also by the words Ben-Hadad's servants delivered. He was a man moved more easily by the words of men than by the will of God.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must fear the Word of God more than the praise of men. What matters is not that we look kind and generous. What matters is keeping the truth God has set. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of

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those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death—is a truth that cannot be changed to please people.

What God Had Delivered, Ahab Released by a Human Treaty

"Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot. So Ben-Hadad said to him, 'The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.' Then Ahab said, 'I will send you away with this treaty.' So he made a treaty with him and sent him away" (1 Kings 20:33–34).

Ahab had Ben-Hadad come up into his own chariot. This was more than merely sparing his life. He lifted the enemy up beside himself and treated him as an equal. Then Ben-Hadad proposed to restore the cities that had been taken, and to let Ahab make streets for himself in Damascus. Ahab received that treaty and released him.

Seen outwardly, Ahab appears to have gained profit. He seems to have received back cities and obtained a treaty granting him commercial rights in Damascus. But the problem is that this was a treaty made without asking the will of God. Ahab, by his own calculation, released the enemy God had delivered to him. He turned God's war into a deal of his own politics and diplomacy.

This becomes a very important warning for faith today as well. The salvation of God is not a deal. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a Word that can be conveniently compromised to gain human profit. The truth of salvation Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John, the Cross,

and His rising again from death is the absolute righteousness of God. If we blur this truth for worldly profit or human relationships, in the end we lose the will of God.

We Must Not Make a Treaty with False Faith

Ahab's releasing Ben-Hadad was not a mere matter of generosity. It was a matter of man stopping, by his own will, the flow of judgment God had revealed. In the word that follows, God rebukes Ahab for this. For he released the man God had determined to destroy.

We must not apply this word carnally today, as though it meant to harm people. The war events of the Old Testament are history carried out within the judgment and rule of God in that age. But spiritually there is a clear lesson: we must not compromise with false faith. We must not receive as brothers sin, self-righteousness, golden-calf faith, or the incomplete faith that has thrown out the baptism of Jesus.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true mercy of God that saves sinners. But this mercy is not a mercy that tolerates falsehood. It is the mercy that leads us to believe the truth that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and so took the sins of the world upon Himself, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the remission of sin by rising again from death. Therefore we must love people and preach the gospel to them, but we must not make a treaty with false faith.

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After Receiving God's Grace, We Must Follow God's Will

1 Kings chapter 20, verses 31 through 34, shows Ahab's undiscerning mercy. He received the victory God had given, but he failed to keep that victory according to the will of God. When Ben-Hadad's servants spoke of *"merciful kings" (1 Kings 20:31)*, his heart was moved; he called Ben-Hadad his brother, lifted him into his chariot, and in the end made a treaty and released him.

Through this war Ahab should have come to know that the LORD God is the true God. But rather than returning to God, he followed human recognition and political calculation. This is Ahab's tragedy. Though he received the grace of God, he failed to make that grace the occasion of returning to God.

We too, if we have heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must treasure that truth. God made us righteous not because we were righteous, but because Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. The one who has received this great grace must keep the truth following the will of God. We must not make sin and false faith our brothers, but live with a faith that belongs to God on the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Word of God Is Delivered through God's Servants

"Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, 'Strike me, please.' And the man refused to strike him" (1 Kings 20:35).

Ahab gained the victory God gave in the war with Ben-Hadad the king of Syria. But he released Ben-Hadad, whom God had determined to destroy. When Ben-Hadad girded himself with sackcloth and begged for his life, Ahab called him "my brother," lifted him into his chariot, received a political treaty, and sent him back. The battle God had delivered into his hand, he ended with his own kindness and his own calculation.

After that, God intended to speak to Ahab through one of the sons of the prophets. But that prophet first said to his companion, "Strike me, please." This was not a mere personal request. The Scripture records that he said so *"by the word of the LORD" (1 Kings 20:35)*. That is, it was a command meant to reveal the will of God.

What matters here is the fact that God reveals His will through His servants. God did not send His voice down to Ahab directly from heaven; He had His word delivered through a prophet. The Scripture clearly emphasizes this point. When God works, He speaks to His servants and fulfills the word those servants have delivered. Therefore the words a servant of God delivers within the word of God are not words to be heard lightly.

Today as well, God saves people through the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This Word was not made by human thought or religious assertion. It is the Word of God: that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us completely by rising again from death. Therefore, before the Word that preaches this gospel of the water and the Spirit, a person must not judge by his own thoughts but hear with faith.

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The Man Who Refused the Word Did Not Escape Judgment

"Then he said to him, 'Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.' And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him" (1 Kings 20:36).

The prophet's companion was unwilling to strike him. Seen humanly, his refusal to strike a servant of God may look courteous. But the problem lay in the fact that it was refusing the word of God. God had said, "Strike," but he judged by his own thinking, "I cannot strike."

As a result, the prophet said, *"Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD" (1 Kings 20:36)*. And he said that when the man departed from him, a lion would kill him. Indeed, as soon as the man departed, a lion found him and killed him. This shows that the word of God comes before human feelings and courtesies.

This word gives us a weighty lesson. When God speaks, a person cannot pick or refuse that word by his own standard. Above all, no one may reduce or change at will the Word of salvation God has set. If we speak only of the Cross of Jesus and leave out the truth that He took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, that is failing to hear fully the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has established.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a partial doctrine a person may pick and choose from. The baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death are the one connected salvation of God. If one does not believe this Word, he cannot solve the problem of the sin remaining in his heart. Therefore, when we hear the Word of the gospel of the water

and the Spirit God has given, we must put the word of God ahead of our own thoughts.

The Wounded Prophet Prepared to Deliver God's Will to the King

"And he found another man, and said, 'Strike me, please.' So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes" (1 Kings 20:37–38).

The prophet met another man and again said, "Strike me, please." This man struck him, wounding him. Then the prophet covered his eyes with a cloth, disguised himself, and waited for the king by the road. He had become, not simply a wounded man, but a sign to make Ahab realize the word of God.

God sometimes spoke through the actions of the prophets. This prophet, by receiving a wound on his own body, created a parabolic situation Ahab could understand. Ahab would come to pass judgment with his own mouth. God intended to expose Ahab's wrong so that he could not evade it.

The word of God exposes a person's heart. Ahab may have thought that he had handled the matter of releasing Ben-Hadad well in his own way. But God, through the prophet, made plain how great a disobedience that was. Releasing the one God had determined to destroy was not a simple mistake but a matter of going against the will of God.

Today the gospel of the water and the Spirit also exposes a person's heart. A person may think that he is believing in Jesus well. But if he does not believe the fact that Jesus took his sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, sin still remains in his heart. The gospel of the water and the Spirit makes a

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person examine his own faith. It reveals whether I am believing the way of salvation God has set, or holding on to an incomplete faith made by human thinking.

Ahab Passed Judgment on His Own Sin with His Own Mouth

"Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.' Then the king of Israel said to him, 'So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it.'" (1 Kings 20:39–40).

The prophet told the king a story. He had gone out into the midst of the battle, and a man had entrusted a captive to him, saying that if he lost him, his life would go for that man's life, or else he would have to pay a talent of silver; and while he was busy here and there, the man disappeared. Hearing this, Ahab judged at once, *"So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it" (1 Kings 20:40).*

Ahab did not know that this word applied to himself. He thought it was another man's story and judged it easily. But that judgment was the very judgment on his own sin. For the one who had released the enemy God entrusted to him was Ahab himself.

A person can judge another's affairs clearly while failing to see his own sin. So it was with Ahab. He did not realize how great a sin it was to release Ben-Hadad, whom God had delivered to him. But when he heard the same principle as

another man's story, he judged it plainly. Through that judgment God had Ahab acknowledge his own sin with his own mouth.

We too must see ourselves before the Word. When we hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not use it to judge others. First we must see whether my own faith stands on the way of salvation God has set. We must examine whether I believe the fact that Jesus took all my sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and made me righteous by rising again from death.

The Sin of Releasing What God Had Determined to Destroy Was Exposed

"And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. Then he said to him, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" (1 Kings 20:41–42).

The prophet hastily took the cloth away from his eyes. And Ahab recognized that he was one of the prophets. Then the prophet delivered the word of the LORD: *"Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people" (1 Kings 20:42).*

This word is the heart of the passage. Ben-Hadad was not merely a foreign king. He was a man God had determined to judge. The Syrians had blasphemed the LORD, regarding Him only as a god of the hills, and God, by delivering that great

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army into the hand of Israel, had made known that He is the LORD. Yet Ahab did not see that will of God; drawn by human recognition and diplomatic profit, he released Ben-Hadad.

This is a spiritually very important warning. If we leave alive what God has told us to destroy, in the end it comes back to harm us. We must not receive the war events of the Old Testament carnally today, as though they meant to harm people. But spiritually it is clear. False faith, self-righteousness, the heart that serves material things as God, and the incomplete faith that holds only to the Cross while throwing out the baptism of Jesus—these we must cut off from our hearts. If we make them our brothers and make treaties with them, they end up harming our souls.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the salvation of God that does not compromise with sin. God loves sinners, but He did not simply cover sin over. So Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed the remission of sin by rising again from death. Within this gospel of the water and the Spirit, sin has been dealt with righteously. Therefore we must not compromise with any faith that blurs this truth.

Ahab, Who Did Not Hear the Word of God, Went Back Only with Distress

"So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria" (1 Kings 20:43).

Ahab heard the prophet's word and went back to Samaria sullen and displeased. But this distress did not lead to true

repentance. His heart grew heavy when he heard the word of God, but before that word he did not turn from his sin. This was Ahab's problem.

Merely being distressed at hearing the word of God is not salvation. Having heard the Word, one must turn. Ahab had seen many times that the LORD God is the true God. He saw the fire on Mount Carmel, saw the heavy rain, and saw the victory God delivered in the war with the army of Syria. Yet he still did not turn from idol worship, and he kept following his own thoughts rather than the will of God.

Today as well, a person's heart may be pricked for a moment when he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But a pricked heart alone is not enough. He must believe the fact that Jesus took his sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved him completely by rising again from death. And he must turn from his own righteousness and false faith.

The Words of God's Servants Are Not Words to Hear Lightly

1 Kings chapter 20, verses 35 through 43, shows that God speaks through His servants and fulfills that word. The man who did not listen to the prophet's word was killed by a lion, and Ahab, who had released Ben-Hadad, heard the word of judgment that his own life and the lives of his people would be required in their place. This means that man must not take lightly the word of God delivered by the servants of God.

Today as well, the true servants of God are not those who deliver words that please people. Those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that people receive the remission

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of sin and turn from false faith are the servants who deliver the will of God. If one speaks only of the blood of the Cross and leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John, no one can know how man's sins were passed on to Jesus. Therefore the servants of God must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit plainly.

Before this Word, we must not follow human recognition and worldly calculation like Ahab. We must not make the false faith God has told us to destroy our brother. We must stand on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death. The one who believes and follows this Word is the one who hears the will of God, and the one who lives before the true God. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

God Gives Grace and Blessing to Those Who Live by Faith

< 1 Kings 20:1-21 >

"Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it. Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, 'Thus says Ben-Hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.'' And the king of Israel answered and said, 'My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.' Then the messengers came back and said, 'Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, 'Indeed I have sent to you, saying, 'You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children'; but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.'' So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, 'Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.' And all the elders and all the people said to him, 'Do not listen or consent.' Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, 'Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'' And the messengers departed and

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brought back word to him. Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, 'The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.' So the king of Israel answered and said, 'Tell him, 'Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.'' And it happened when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, 'Get ready.' And they got ready to attack the city. Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'' So Ahab said, 'By whom?' And he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.'' Then he said, 'Who will set the battle in order?' And he answered, 'You.' Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven thousand. So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post. The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out a patrol, and they told him, saying, 'Men are coming out of Samaria!' So he said, 'If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.' Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry. Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter."

In the passage we have read, from 1 Kings chapter 20, verse 1 through verse 21, it says, *"Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it" (1 Kings 20:1)*. Samaria is the capital of northern Israel.

Samaria, Which Inherited the Sin of Jeroboam

From chapter 20 on, we need to know the background and the flow. It is telling us what happens after Jeroboam replaced God with the golden calves and changed the priesthood and all the law of sacrifice as he pleased. In particular, it is telling us that Samaria—northern Israel, the nation Jeroboam ruled and the kings after him ruled, the nation still serving the golden calves—comes to have this many hardships and adversaries.

For those who fail to serve the LORD God as their own God and do not even know Him, who serve idols and regard a golden calf as God, many hardships follow—even if they are the people of Israel. Outwardly it is just the story of Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathering all his forces and attacking the city of Samaria together with thirty-two kings, but it shows that if, like Jeroboam, we replace God, refuse to acknowledge God as God, oppose Him, and follow idols, there are hardships like these.

Therefore we must know this spiritual fact, and we must deal with such things by faith.

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Ahab, Who Became Servile before Ben-Hadad

Ben-Hadad the king of Syria sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel and commanded like this: *"Thus says Ben-Hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.' And the king of Israel answered and said, 'My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.'"* Ben-Hadad came to King Ahab of northern Israel and said that the silver, the gold, and all the possessions Ahab had were all his, and that Ahab's wives, his children, and the lovely ones were all his, so he should hand them all over.

But King Ahab answers, "That is right. All that I have is yours," saying he would do just so. When we examine this word, it is servile beyond measure. Ahab opposed Elijah and the servants who served God so fiercely and frightened them; yet when Ben-Hadad the king of Syria, the actual enemy, came with his soldiers, he cowered at a single word and said he would hand everything over. He gave up his wife, his children, and the wealth of the nation, telling him to take them all. He could at least have put up a fight once; it is a truly small-minded and cowardly sight.

A person without faith, a person who replaces God with a golden calf, in fact comes to have many adversaries and enemies both spiritually and physically, and becomes actually poor and servile. In the end he is ruined.

Ben-Hadad's messenger comes again and makes a second demand: if all that Ahab has is his, then he should send him his wives and his children and all the treasures he has. Ahab, not knowing what to do, calls the elders of the nation and consults them. When he asks what he should do, since the king of Syria speaks like this, the elders and the people say that it can never be, that he must not consent—rather, let us fight.

I Will Deliver This Great Multitude into Your Hand

Strengthened by the support of the people, Ahab now tries to resist. His opponent is a great army in which the king of Syria and the kings of thirty-two tribes allied with him have gathered; their soldiers alone number more than a hundred thousand. The soldiers of Israel are no more than about seven thousand. When Ahab tries to resist, Ben-Hadad at once tells his men to set themselves in array, and they encamp toward the city. At this moment a prophet comes forward. *"Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" (1 Kings 20:13).*

When Israel is in hardship, God sends His servants and speaks to the people. He says that He will deliver this great multitude to them, and that they should therefore know that He is the LORD. The word 'Jehovah' means the One who exists by Himself; closer to the original text, it is 'Yahweh.' He is saying: know that I am truly the self-existent God; all the rest are vain gods and idols, not true gods. He is saying that He will deliver that army of more than a hundred thousand to them and break them all down, and that when such a thing happens, they should know that Yahweh God is the true God and return to Him—abandon the golden calves and the idols, believe in Him, follow Him, and fear Him, and receive the blessing He gives and live well.

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The Savior of Israel Is the LORD God

In fact, the Savior of Israel is God. He is Yahweh God. What great skill or ability does Israel have? They were not a great nation to begin with, and the history of their monarchy was short. Their soldiers had no proper training either; they were at the level of rushing in with pickaxes or sickles. This is not to despise them—their level was simply so. If they clashed head-on with the professionally trained army of Syria, they were in a position to collapse at once.

So the Savior of Israel is always God. Yahweh God sends His servant and says through that servant that He will drive out the enemy like this, and He keeps exhorting them: know that I am the LORD God; I am truly your God, the God of the whole universe, the true God—please know this. So He exhorts them, and He saves Israel. Such a history continues without ceasing.

But the people of Israel are foolish and dull, and they do not return. They are glad only for that moment, and soon they think they live by their own strength. Israel itself has no strength. David, who truly feared and believed God, had strength—but apart from that, what strength did they have? God is their strength—the LORD is my strength, my Shepherd, my God—and yet they keep trying to do something by their own strength.

They ought to believe God, respect and follow Him, ask His help, and live in this world by faith; but they fail to do so and insist on doing it with their own strength. When seven thousand soldiers clash with a hundred thousand, it is no match. Yet God says that He will make them win, that He will deliver this great army into their hand.

The Battle God Had the Young Men Begin

"So Ahab said, 'By whom?' And he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.'' Then he said, 'Who will set the battle in order?' And he answered, 'You.'" In this way the battle begins.

He said it would be done by the young men of the governors of the provinces. Young men have no experience and do not know how to scheme. They simply have spirit; they are simple and brave. Why did He have such ones do the fighting? Because if He sent out experienced men who fought well, before an army of a hundred thousand they would calculate first and take fright in advance, and even if God told them to fight, they would not fight. That is why He picked the young men and had them begin the battle.

When the young men believed the word the messenger of God had spoken and went out and fought, they won. At that time Ben-Hadad the king of Syria was unwinding and getting drunk together with the thirty-two kings. For they considered the fight already won without even trying. The young men went forward and struck those who were intoxicated with victory and drunk with wine, and swept them away. Ben-Hadad barely escaped.

After that, the king of Syria invades again. They think that the god of Israel is a god of the hills, and that since they lost in the hills, this time they will surely win if they fight on the plain. But God says again through His servant that He will show that the LORD God is the living, true God everywhere, whether on the hills or on the plain, and He makes them win again.

We will look at verse 27 and following next time; today we will look up to verse 21.

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If God Is on Our Side, We Win

When we pray, God hears us and keeps us. Recently a great typhoon was said to be coming up and we were worried, but thankfully it passed by without great damage. There is no telling how much God helps us. These days there were people trying to speculate by taking out bank loans to buy land, but this time a policy to stop real-estate speculation came out, so that loans and the sources of funds are traced. That way, decent farmers are also kept from having their land taken away. I consider this, too, a grace God has given by blocking it.

It is the same with our trading and making products. God is on our side and helps us. If we do not exchange God for a golden calf, but know God as God, believe, fear, and serve Him, and follow His will by faith even in our insufficiency, God keeps us and blesses us. That is exactly what today's passage is saying.

From 1 Kings chapters 18 and 19 on, King Ahab commits all kinds of evil together with Jezebel. Because he served idols so much, God said through the prophet Elijah that He would not send rain for three years, and He did just so. Then, when that problem was resolved, Ahab still did not know God and still served the golden calves. So this time God set the king of Syria upon him, letting a fearful army sweep in, and brought it about that his wife, his children, and his wealth would all be taken away.

Yet even in the midst of that, God shows compassion and asks which is the true God—the golden calf, or Yahweh. A man would exhort once or twice and, if not listened to, cast that one off and raise up another; but God keeps exhorting and leading. That is how kind and merciful God is. And because He promised the descendants of Abraham that He would be their

God, I know that He does so in order to keep that promise.

If You Replace God, You Are Cursed

Looking at this word, we must know that all these things—Ahab and Israel going through such suffering and disgrace, and their adversaries multiplying—happen because they do not acknowledge God as God. Our faith is weak and insufficient, but we must know and believe the Lord who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and know and believe that Lord's Father as our Father and the Holy Spirit as our God. If instead we make material things, people, or the vain gods of the world our god and follow them, we must know that we go through such suffering, are ruined, and are cursed.

The one point is just this: if, while believing in the LORD God, you exchange Him for a golden calf or for anything else, you are cursed both in the flesh and in the spirit. Here lies the reason the people of Israel did not have a single day of ease. All they had to do was acknowledge God as God and, however insufficient, believe and follow Him; because they did not do so, they suffered this disgrace.

Everyone, however great an army Ben-Hadad the king of Syria brought, the LORD God drove out all those soldiers and saved Israel. I think the same about commerce, and I believe the same about the preaching of the gospel. We lack strength and have little, but God is with us, and when we believe in Him, He is on our side. So I believe that He lets us preach the gospel to the whole world, makes these businesses we do prosper, and makes our products sell.

If God does it, it is possible. Even if Ben-Hadad brings a hundred thousand soldiers and our soldiers are no more than

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seven thousand, we clash and win. Because God is on our side. So whether we trade or run a business, we do it by faith. Even when, doing it, we grow discouraged and wonder whether it can work, it certainly works. There is nothing to fear, and if the work is too heavy, we can divide the strength and do it. God is blessing us greatly even now.

In fact God has helped us continually until now and helps us still, so that everything has been done. If we try to do it by our own strength alone, we are ruined and nothing comes of it. Because God is on our side and helps, it certainly is done. When David fought wars, he said, *"For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall" (Psalm 18:29)*. Who knows whether a man holding a spear is waiting behind the wall? But relying on his God, he leaps over the wall. It is the faith that God keeps me and blesses me.

Whenever David went to war, he prayed to God, asking, Should I fight this war or not? Will You deliver that enemy into my hand? And God answered, and even taught him how to fight. That is how David won and subdued the surrounding nations.

If God is on our side, it is done. If the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit regards a golden calf as God and exchanges the LORD God away, he goes through curse and hardship like this. Knowing this fact, we must fear and believe the God who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, with the faith that knows He is the true God, and fight by faith and live by faith. Then God is on our side and accomplishes His will through us.

The Bible is not a story that merely turns from chapter to chapter. It is showing in practical terms that if Israel keeps committing the sin Jeroboam committed and goes on that way, they are ruined like this. We gain a precious lesson here. If the

people of God, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whether as a body or as individuals, do not replace God even though they are insufficient, but know and believe God as God, pray in their insufficiency, ask Him to help with everything, and live together by faith, then God keeps them and blesses them.

We keep looking at circumstances. Since things are like this, we suppose it must go this way; since things are like that, it must go that way. It is not so. Whether you and I live well or poorly, whether the business goes well or not, depends on God. We are only God's instruments. Therefore the one who believes in the LORD God must live by faith. Whatever work we do, we must do it that way. I believe so and I do so. Is it so with you as well? —Yes— That is how it must be.

Serve the True God Who Made the Heavens and the Earth

Ahab was a man who reigned as king inheriting the road of Jeroboam's sin; in fact he had no royal legitimacy, nor was he of the family of Judah. Such a man became king and stood against God. The LORD God is the God of Israel—what is so hard about believing in that God, that they should bring stones and gold, make images, bow down before them, burn incense, and offer sacrifices? It is a truly foolish thing. It could never happen with a person in his right mind; yet they make gods themselves and serve them themselves.

This is just like the idol worship of our own country. People carve wood, set up an image, and bow before it; they bring a single rock, set it up, and bow to it. Man makes it and man serves it. Who is the One who made the heavens, the earth, the

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universe, and all things? The LORD God. Is not the One who made the universe Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ who saved us from sin—we serve, believe, and follow that Jesus Christ as our God.

When we worship Him, praise Him, and give Him thanks, the living One gives us blessing. Why then needlessly do things that bring a curse? We ought to do what receives blessing. If a person, even after believing in the God who saved us from sin by the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sin, exchanges God for relatives, for people, or for material things because things get a little hard, he is ruined and cursed. If he does not do so, he receives blessing instead. It is telling us this plain fact.

Therefore we must live by faith. When it is hard, we pray to God and rely on Him; we must not do the thing of exchanging God for another god, and we must live like that. Then, even if we are insufficient, God keeps us in everything and bestows grace, and makes even what would not work come to work. God is One who does so.

The LORD God is the self-existent God, and Jesus Christ and His Father are also the self-existent God. God is Jesus Christ, the Father of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These three are the same one God to us. The Father of Jesus Christ is our Father; Jesus Christ is our Savior; and the Holy Spirit is God who is with us. Because Jesus Christ came to this earth in the flesh and saved us from sin, we call Him the Savior. He is alive even now, hears and answers our prayers, and is with us. Therefore we must live holding this faith.

The Many Blessings He Has Bestowed on Us

When we repeat one kind of work, stray thoughts can arise. All the more we must hold on to faith. This is the truth that does not change even if a hundred million years pass. Is there truly faith in my heart? Do I believe and rely on the God who saved me from sin as the true God? Do I believe that this God keeps me and blesses me? Each of us must ask this of his own heart and examine it. We must live by faith. It says, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).*

I am insufficient, but I pray. I believe the fact that He is my God, my Savior, the One who made me, my Deliverer, and my Shepherd—and not mine only, but the Creator, Savior, and Shepherd of the brothers and sisters. So when I pray, God solves things in the best way. Even now God helps us greatly. I believe that God will also help the work of selling our products and opening the way, and open it for us. Only when God opens the way is the way opened. We must work by faith.

I serve the gospel within this Church and work by faith. Until the end of the world I work with this faith. Since the work of serving the gospel must be effective, we think together, pray, and set the direction. Even problems that look complicated are usually sorted out in a moment when I have them talked through. If God has given wisdom, we solve it according to that wisdom; if the work is hard, we divide it and do it.

Do not say that because our number is small it is hard to preach the gospel to the whole world. We can preach it as much as we please. It is not by having great numbers that the gospel is preached. If by faith we rely on God, and God is on our side, and when we become God's soldiers, we can bear it all. And we also receive the blessings God gives. God has truly

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blessed us much until now. It is because God has blessed us that we live like this—how else would we live? That is what I believe.

Ask, seek, and knock, and God gives. When something has been accomplished, we must believe that God gave it and give thanks. Thank You; I am grateful; thank You for blessing us—that is how we must settle it. Saying that it came about because I did this and that is all empty talk. Even not having followed the sin of Jeroboam is a thing to be truly thankful for.

The person who commits the same sin as Jeroboam has many afflictions and no peace. It is hard in the flesh and hard in the spirit. But if we do not commit that sin but come out from it, know and believe God rightly, follow and ask Him even in our insufficiency, and seek to follow His will, then spirit and flesh are at peace. When we quietly think it over, it is a truly enormous blessing.

In this age a person without debt is rare. Even those who ride around in fine cars, when you look into it, are very often deep in debt. I say it openly: the person without debt is the rich one. Is that so, or not? —Yes, it is.— We are the ones who have received blessing.

Everyone, the works we are doing now are going well. The product we newly made this time was also finished cleanly. It is a truly great thing, a blessing bestowed upon the Church. That a work which seems humanly impossible gets done without difficulty—that is the blessing of God. It is not that it gets done because we are outstanding or clever; that God makes it get done is the blessing. Meanwhile our faith has also grown. We have not followed the world, have not committed the sin Jeroboam committed, and have not exchanged God for a golden calf.

If we were trying to exchange God for a golden calf, then

when a person came in we would not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit but only welcome him warmly, ask about his church office, and pass on. Then we would come to serve material things as God. Many churches of the world today are serving material things—the golden calf—as God. If you do that, there is nothing to quarrel over and many people gather. I too could do that if I set my mind to it. But that is serving the golden calf. Even just not having served the golden calf while being in the church until now is a thing to be thankful for.

That you and I have not exchanged God for a golden calf—we ought to give thanks thinking of this alone. We must know how to give thanks for what is spiritual. Physically, if we have no debt and no great affliction, that is a thing to be thankful for; spiritually, we must give thanks that we have not exchanged God for a golden calf. If we are not careful, any one of us can become such a person. It is only that God keeps us, makes us live by faith, lets us take part in spiritual work together, keeps us also in the flesh, and blesses us when the time comes.

A while ago I was having a meal with the workers, and at the table across from us people from some church were exchanging talk about faith. One said that when she prays at night, if He comes, tears flow, and if He does not come, tears do not flow. They were gauging whether God was present at the worship service by whether tears flowed or not. I had thought such things existed only in comedy, but it actually happened. But God is not One who only makes tears flow from our eyes. He is the God who makes us rejoice, makes us glad, gives us peace, makes us long for righteousness, and blesses us. God has given us truly many blessings, and I believe He will give still more blessings from now on.

Therefore we must receive blessing. Spiritually we have already received it. We must keep this well and live by faith,

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and receive it also in the flesh. And spiritually we must serve more souls, and physically, in the midst of peace, serve the gospel and live in plenty. That is why I keep expanding and go forward without staying in only one thing. I believe it will be so.

We Must Live by Faith

We must live by faith. By faith we must not commit the sin Jeroboam committed. If we commit such sin, we are ruined and our adversaries multiply. When I have many enemies, I too pray to God. I think that the real-estate policy coming out as it did this time is also a grace God gave by blocking the way. Had it not been so, decent people would have had all their land taken away. I believe God blocked it.

When I think of the Church, I can say that God has given many blessings until now. He is giving them even now, and it is visible to my eyes that He will give many more. So I give true thanks. Let us live by faith. I have finished the message. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Take What God Has Delivered into Your Hands

< 1 Kings 20:1-43 >

"Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it. Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, 'Thus says Ben-Hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.'' And the king of Israel answered and said, 'My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.' Then the messengers came back and said, 'Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, 'Indeed I have sent to you, saying, 'You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children'; but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.'' So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, 'Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.' And all the elders and all the people said to him, 'Do not listen or consent.' Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, 'Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'' And the messengers departed and

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brought back word to him. Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, 'The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.' So the king of Israel answered and said, 'Tell him, 'Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.'' And it happened when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, 'Get ready.' And they got ready to attack the city. Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'' So Ahab said, 'By whom?' And he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.'' Then he said, 'Who will set the battle in order?' And he answered, 'You.' Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven thousand. So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post. The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out a patrol, and they told him, saying, 'Men are coming out of Samaria!' So he said, 'If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.' Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry. Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter. And the prophet

came to the king of Israel and said to him, 'Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.' Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, 'Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they. So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.' And he listened to their voice and did so. So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside. Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'' And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber. Then his servants said to him, 'Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our

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waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.' So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, 'Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'' And he said, 'Is he still alive? He is my brother.' Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, 'Your brother Ben-Hadad.' So he said, 'Go, bring him.' Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot. So Ben-Hadad said to him, 'The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.' Then Ahab said, 'I will send you away with this treaty.' So he made a treaty with him and sent him away. Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, 'Strike me, please.' And the man refused to strike him. Then he said to him, 'Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.' And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him. And he found another man, and said, 'Strike me, please.' So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.' Then the king of Israel said to him, 'So shall your

judgment be; you yourself have decided it.' And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. Then he said to him, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'' So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria."

The words recorded in the Scriptures were written so that God might educate us in righteousness—so that through this Word we would receive salvation, know the will of God, and do that will. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must read it attentively, examining what it means.

Ben-Hadad the King of Syria, Who Coveted Israel

The adversary of the two kingdoms of Israel, south and north, was the neighboring nation of Syria; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces, with thirty-two kings with him and horses and chariots. It is like Egypt conquering all the surrounding nations in ancient times. In today's terms, it is similar to the United States—not one nation standing alone, but with many nations of the world belonging to its side.

Thirty-three nations, including Syria, coveted Israel. They coveted northern Israel, the nation Ahab ruled, intending, once they had swallowed it, to swallow southern Israel as well. So Ben-Hadad, as if he himself were God, even before fighting sent a messenger and said, *"Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine,"* telling him to

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hand it all over.

Caesar said, 'I came, I saw, I conquered,' but this man, as if he had already sealed the victory, says that all that is yours is mine—I will send my servants, so send it all. Ben-Hadad had thirty-two nations under his grip, so his power seemed to pierce the heavens. When he spoke like that, Ahab the king of Israel, on first hearing it through the messenger, answered that he would do so. But then the messenger comes again and says: by tomorrow I will send my servants, so prepare your wives and your children, your silver and gold and your beautiful things, and wait.

Ahab consults this problem with the elders of the people. When the elders say, Do not consent; tell him you cannot, the messenger reports it to Ben-Hadad just so. Ben-Hadad again says: even if you offered up everything of northern Israel, the city of Samaria included, it would not fill my heart—and yet you say you cannot give it? If I fail to swallow your nation, may our gods add punishment upon punishment to me. So saying, he vows that he will surely attack.

I Will Deliver This Great Multitude into Your Hand

While the king of Israel was sunk in worry, a prophet appeared and spoke: *"Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD."* God is saying that He will deliver that king of Syria and the kings and soldiers of the thirty-two nations into his hand, so do not be anxious but wage the war. When Ahab asks, *"By whom?" (1 Kings 20:14)*, He says, *"By the young leaders of the provinces" (1 Kings 20:14)*; and when

he asks, *"Who will set the battle in order?" (1 Kings 20:14),* He says, "You." When Ahab mustered the young men of the governors of the provinces, they were two hundred and thirty-two; and when he mustered all the rest of the people, the children of Israel, they were seven thousand.

How many young men did it say? Two hundred and thirty-two. It is so unexpected that it could well be drawn as a cartoon. We intend in the future to do literature evangelism with cartoons as well—and it is truly an astonishing scene. Yet God has the young men go out and fight, and says the king must begin the battle first. The king is to challenge Ben-Hadad head-on and begin the fight, and the young men are to go out and wage the war. Their number was no more than two hundred and thirty-two. The Scripture records that the following year, when they fought again, Israel was like two little flocks of goats and the Syrians filled the land. That is how great the difference was.

The Victory That Began with the Young Men

The kings of Syria drank and played, saying that such trifling fellows would not even make them a light snack to sober up on in the morning. They thought they could drink their fill today and sweep them away tomorrow with a single command. But when Ahab sent out a few of the governors' men, the Syrian scouts saw them and reported that men were coming out of Samaria. Ben-Hadad says to take them alive whether they come out to make peace or come out to fight. But the young men of Israel won. The Syrians were drunk and could not fight, so they collapsed at the first clash, and the king and the generals fled on horseback.

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God, Who Made Them Win on the Plain as Well

After that, they think that the god of Israel is a god of the hills and that they lost in the hills, so if they fight on the plain they will win, and they assemble their army on the plain. This news comes into Israel. The servant of God speaks to King Ahab and the people: it is not so; the LORD will surely fight and make you win anywhere, whether on the hills or on the plain, so fight. So when they joined battle on the plain, Israel killed one hundred thousand Syrian foot soldiers in one day. They were scattered in terror and all fled.

Ben-Hadad, as he fled, heard the report that the king of Israel was merciful, and thinking he might possibly be spared, girded his waist with sackcloth, put a rope on his head, and came before the king of Israel, saying, O king, please spare my life. And Ahab the king of Israel, being so very merciful, called Ben-Hadad the king of Syria his brother, lifted him into his chariot, and spared him. The condition for sparing him was that Ben-Hadad would return all the cities his father had taken, and that, as his father had done in Samaria, Ahab too would be allowed to make streets for himself in Damascus. Ahab received that promise and released Ben-Hadad.

In the old days the servants of God did not only deliver the Word in speech; they sometimes showed it in living signs as they delivered it. A prophet, by the word of the LORD, told a passing man to strike him, but the man was unwilling to strike him; so he told him that because he had not obeyed the word of the LORD, a lion would kill him—and it came to pass just so. He told another man to strike him, and that man struck him until he was wounded. The prophet covered his eyes with a cloth to disguise himself and waited for the king by the road; and when the king passed by, he called out to the king and said:

Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and a man entrusted a captive to me, telling me to guard this man, and that if I lost him, my life would go for his life or I would have to pay a talent of silver; but while I was busy with one thing and another, he disappeared. The king said, *"So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."* Then the prophet took off the cloth and speaks: Because you have released with your own hand the man the LORD had determined to destroy, your life shall go for his life and your people for his people. Ahab, sullen and displeased, returns to Samaria.

Ahab's Wrong of Sparing What God Had Delivered

God delivered the king of Syria and the soldiers of the thirty-two nations to Israel, and said He would surely make them win, so kill them all. All they had to do was strike and win by faith, take all that wealth, and live in plenty. But Ahab, priding himself on being warm-hearted and merciful, left God's enemy alive. The king of Syria was one who reviled God, the LORD, and treated Him with contempt; yet Ahab spared the man God had delivered to him to be killed. It is like Saul failing to keep the word to utterly destroy Amalek. As a result Ahab comes to pay with his own life in his place, and his wife and countless people of Israel die.

What I have spoken so far is the historical fact recorded in this passage. You have to know the whole flow to understand, as you listen to the sermon, what each part means, so I have spoken of it first.

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God Has Delivered All Mankind to the Church

God delivered the soldiers of Syria, its king, and the kings of the thirty-two nations to Israel, saying that He would surely make them win, so strike and win by faith. What does this tell us? That God has delivered all the people of the whole world, all nations, to His own people, upon the Church of God. All we have to do is take this by faith. This literature ministry is truly precious. With this literature we can cover the whole world and save souls. When we preach the gospel once and hand over the literature, that literature works exactly as when we preach in person. The person who has received the remission of sin reads this literature and his heart is confirmed, and the Holy Spirit works together with that literature.

Though our number is small—no more than some two hundred and thirty-two, as it were—and though our king is ever so weak, no match for the king of Syria, if we receive by faith the fact that He has said through the servant of God that He has delivered that nation to us, and challenge them and stand against them, seeking the righteousness of God, we can take them all. I believe we can take all the people of the whole world. Though we are not many and the church is not large, I believe we can embrace the whole world.

I believe that God has delivered all the souls of the whole world to the Church, the body of God. This comes not from human will; it comes from seeking the righteousness of God. The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. If we first seek His kingdom, that is, the expansion of the preaching of the gospel, and if our own lives seek, for the righteousness of God, the life He delights in, and we offer even a little to the Lord and work for this literature ministry, then the Lord has the gospel translated

and preached in the language of every people—the English-speaking world, the Muslim world, or Asia—and has disciples made. As Israel destroyed Ben-Hadad and his soldiers, so I believe that the Lord has delivered all nations to us and saves them all through us.

"Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

We must live a life that seeks His righteousness. Having received the remission of sin, we must live the life that seeks His righteousness. The life that seeks His righteousness is living the life the Lord delights in. What does the Lord delight in? Keeping far from sin and serving God; setting our heart on God even in small things and living according to the Word. Living out the life He delights in like this is seeking His righteousness.

The one who has received the remission of sin must live the life that seeks His righteousness. If we only receive the remission of sin and simply live on, that is not the will of God. The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,"* and spoke of these two things. First, His kingdom is the expansion of the gospel, and His righteousness is following the will He delights in. When we live following what the Lord delights in, we gain boldness in our hearts, enjoy sufficiency on this earth, and come to make all people disciples, to rule, and to enjoy.

"Who will set the battle in order?" When Ahab asked, the answer was "You." The battle is something the king begins. When we have received the remission of sin and seek His righteousness, we must know the Lord's word: *"And all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. The Lord spoke

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it in Matthew chapter 6. Seeking His righteousness is what we are to do, and this life is the blessed life. If it ends with merely having no sin, we become salt that has lost its flavor, trampled by people and useless to the world.

The one who has received the remission of sin must live the life that seeks His righteousness. Then his own soul prospers, and every matter of the flesh and every wish is accomplished as the Lord adds it to him. After receiving the remission of sin, I thought about what the Lord would delight in and searched the Scriptures. It was exactly this: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. Our individual lives are to live the life the Lord delights in, and the first work we do is to live for the expansion of this gospel.

Here Ahab spared the one God had delivered to him, and so he came to pay with his own life in his place. But God has delivered all mankind to the Church of God, to the servants of God. When we preach the gospel by faith, there are many who are worn down by the world, broken in heart, and seeking God. When we preach the gospel to them in many forms—by literature, by tapes, by the living voice—those souls receive salvation and become God's people.

How many are there in this world who would perish, who would be hated by God? Yet God has saved them. We work together in that work God has done—and that is seeking His righteousness. The Lord delights in our serving God and not idols, in our following the Lord and not sin, in our loving the Lord, doing the Lord's work, and living holy. Our life must be one that seeks His righteousness and lives out what the Lord delights in.

We have no sin. Therefore, if we live seeking His righteousness, in which the Lord delights, our life becomes a blessed life before God. The Lord clearly promised, *"Seek the*

kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord hears every wish of our hearts and blesses us in spirit and in flesh.

Take It by Faith

Our fight is not against flesh and blood; it is fought with the two-edged sword of God, that is, the Word. We believe that we can cover the whole world with the gospel. We believe that the Lord lets the truth of the water, the blood, and the Spirit—this gospel the Lord speaks—cover the earth once over, and that the Lord delights in this. Many Christian books have come out, but literature of this gospel containing the truth of the water, the blood, and the Spirit exists neither in the whole world nor in our own country. I may be insufficient, but the Word of the Lord is never insufficient.

The word we read today was to raise the battle: the LORD has delivered all these souls to us, so conquer by faith. If we preach the gospel by faith, we can save all the people of the whole world. The Lord has already saved them; we have only to deliver it to them. If we seek His righteousness, serve the Lord, and live the life the Lord delights in, the will of the Lord is done on this earth and our lives become prosperous and blessed in the Lord. Everyone, do you believe? —Yes— The Lord has already delivered all those souls to us.

I went to the land of China, and I knew and believed that He had delivered those people to us. The one who preached the gospel at that time was none other than Brother Shin. At first we asked one brother whether there was anyone there who believed in Jesus, and the one he brought was Brother Shin; then we sent a few more as a follow-up team to preach the

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gospel, and beginning from there, many brothers and sisters were raised up. After that, a Han Chinese brother heard the gospel at a book exhibition, received the remission of sin, was raised up as an evangelist, and is now ministering in Harbin. The Lord has delivered that people to us. Though we are few, and though they number 1.5 billion or however many billions, He has delivered them to us.

We have only to take them by faith. Since the Lord has delivered them to us, if we take them by faith and live with the faith that believes the Lord, all the people of the whole world receive salvation. Your families also receive salvation. Where there is one church, the work of God arises, and we come to see it. I want you to become people who seek the righteousness of the Lord. For that is the way to be blessed by God, and the way to receive the things of this earth in addition. Since I too have received the remission of sin, I want to live the life that seeks the righteousness of the Lord until the Lord comes.

Let Us Challenge by Faith

Let us challenge by faith. *"Who will set the battle in order?"* "You." The workers of the church charging forward in the vanguard is the work of the king. Who does the fighting? The young men go out and fight. Even if we cannot fight well, if it is a soul God has delivered to us, then even when we preach the gospel falteringly, that prepared soul receives the remission of sin. God wants all these souls to be saved, so if we only proclaim, I believe that the Word and the Holy Spirit work so that those souls are saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. —Amen—

We must minister holding on to faith. Our life does not end

with this. At all times we seek the righteousness of the Lord, and we live the remaining days before the Lord until we go before Him, until the Lord comes. Everyone, do you believe? —Yes— I want you to live seeking the righteousness of the Lord. I have finished the message. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Only Those Who Believe in the One and Only God Are the True People of Israel

< 1 Kings 20:22-34 >

"And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, 'Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.' Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, 'Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they. So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.' And he listened to their voice and did so. So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside. Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' therefore I

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will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'' And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber. Then his servants said to him, 'Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.' So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, 'Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'' And he said, 'Is he still alive? He is my brother.' Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, 'Your brother Ben-Hadad.' So he said, 'Go, bring him.' Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot. So Ben-Hadad said to him, 'The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.' Then Ahab said, 'I will send you away with this treaty.' So he made a treaty with him and sent him away."

This morning, watching television over breakfast, there was a report that the sea-surface temperature around our country is higher than anywhere else in the world. When a cold air current

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and a warm air current meet and collide in the skies over our country, a great rain can pour down, and it has in fact been falling that way. Rainfall that might or might not happen once in five hundred years now occurs often, and if a thousand millimeters pours down in one day, most dams cannot hold—that was the story.

There is no guarantee that a great disaster like the hurricane that struck New Orleans in the United States will pass our country by. The whole world seems likely to be laid up for a while because of natural disasters. But before such things come upon us, we can diligently preach the gospel and prepare well the enterprises entrusted to us. I believe God will keep us.

"In the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you"

On the basis of the passage we have read today, I intend to speak about Ahab's faith. King Ahab fought a war with Syria and won. He did as the servant of God told him, and just as God promised to deliver the army of the king of Syria into the hand of Israel and make them win, the young men went out and struck boldly and gained the victory. But when the first war had been won and Ahab's army had withdrawn, the prophet came to the king of Israel and said, *"Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you" (1 Kings 20:22)*. It was a word telling him to prepare for war, for they would come up to attack again.

Then the servants of the king of Syria said to their king, *"Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will*

be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20:23). So they said, and they prepared for war. A great army of a hundred thousand and a small army of fewer than ten thousand encamped facing each other on the open field.

Wars in the old days were different from now. These days one fires missiles, drops bombs from aircraft, subdues the front with naval guns, and then sends in the infantry; but in those days all they held in their hands were swords and spears, so to come within striking distance they had to stand facing each other. That is why they stood facing each other on a broad plain. On one side a hundred thousand stood in ranks, holding swords and spears and shouting; on the other side stood soldiers numbering less than ten thousand, like a lone baby cicada perched there. It was a matchless situation. The servants of the king of Syria judged that the god of Israel was a god of the hills, so that if they fought on the plain they would win, and that is why they encamped there.

"The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys"

But what we must pay attention to here is verse 28. *"Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.''" (1 Kings 20:28)*. When Israel fights this war, who is it that gives them the intelligence and lays out the strategy of how to fight? The servant of God. The king and the army wage the war, but the One who actually leads it is God, and the one who delivers His

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will is the man of God.

When the Syrians said that the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, God heard all those words. And He spoke to the servant of God, saying that He would show that the LORD God is not One who is only a god of the hills, nor One who is only a god of the plain, but the God of the whole universe. So He said that He would deliver this great army into their hand, and that if they would only fight, He would make them win.

The Living, Personal God

Therefore we must know God in this way. God is alive and has personhood. That He has personhood means that when someone says something, speaking carelessly about God, He hears it all. The word the soldiers of Syria spoke to their king—that the god of Israel was a god of the hills, so they could win if they fought on the plain—God heard it all and answered through the servant of God.

God is alive; He rejoices and He is also angered; like you and me He has a heart and thoughts. He is almighty, able to do anything, yet He is One who has personhood like ours. We must know this. If we think it is all the same whether one serves Buddha, or serves a stone, or serves God—that serving Jesus and serving some other god are alike—that is a gravely mistaken thought. God is the One who searches the hearts of men; He knows our hearts, knows our thoughts, and knows everything we do.

A Hundred Thousand Syrian Foot Soldiers Fall in One Day

So God said that He would make them win this war, and He had the battle joined. *"The children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left" (1 Kings 20:29–30).* The great army of a hundred thousand fought with the people of Israel and fell entirely in a single day. Because God presided over that battle.

When God laid His hand on them, the Syrian foot soldiers could not thrust out their arms even when they tried to swing their spears, and their legs would not move even when they tried to flee. So in one day a hundred thousand foot soldiers fell. The remaining twenty-seven thousand or so retreated into a certain city, and that city wall collapsed with a crash and came down on them. God made them win that war. It is not that the army of Israel, fewer than ten thousand, won; rather, God had a word He wanted to speak to both the Syrians and the people of Israel. He did so to show that the LORD God is the true God—the One who hears with His ears, who also speaks, and who makes one win and makes another lose.

Ahab, Who Spared Ben-Hadad

Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria fled into a certain city, and when the wall collapsed and twenty-seven thousand soldiers were crushed to death under the stones, he was frightened out of his wits. The soldiers who had followed him were all dead, and only a few servants were guarding him. In

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such a situation, Israel had as good as taken over Syria. They could have gone straight into Syria with their soldiers, planted the military standard of Israel in the palace, and proclaimed to the people of Syria: your king is dead, your army has been annihilated, and the LORD God in whom we believe has done this.

But the servants of Ben-Hadad the king of Syria said to their king, *"The kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life" (1 Kings 20:31)*. So they girded sackcloth around their waists and came in a shabby appearance and said, *"Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live'" (1 Kings 20:32)*. Then Ahab said, *"Is he still alive? He is my brother."* Look once at the faith of this man Ahab.

Israel and Syria are now enemies. A while before, when he first came making war, Ben-Hadad the king of Syria invaded together with thirty-two kings and, while drinking, sent his servant to threaten that the wives and children and the treasures of silver and gold the king of Israel had were all his. When King Ahab took fright and said he would do so, the king of Syria sent envoys again, telling him to send his wives, his children, his servants, his army, his silver, gold, and jewels, and all his land and people besides. Without even fighting a war, he tried to take what belonged to Israel whole.

The King Who Failed to Keep the Victory

The king of Syria who had threatened like that now comes out in a shabby appearance with his servants, falls prostrate, and surrenders, begging only that his life be spared—and

Ahab's attitude was *"Is he still alive? He is my brother."* He ought to have come to his senses and responded. He should have said, Are you still alive? Have you come out before me seeking your own death?—and received his surrender, had him hand over the nation of Syria, and enjoyed the joy of victory. Like a triumphant army with music sounding, he should have marched into Syria, taken over the royal palace, proclaimed that neither Asherah nor Baal is the true God but that only the LORD God is the true God, and led even the people of Syria, expanding Israel.

When you have won the war, you must gather in that victory decisively. He should have offered thanksgiving and prayer before God and praised the LORD God, distributed that land to the people of Israel, and turned even the people of Syria back to God. He could have done so—God had given him such blessing—yet King Ahab said, *"He is my brother" (1 Kings 20:32)*. It was wrong. Even when God gives blessing, he failed to receive and enjoy it. Our faith must be distinct and clear.

Ben-Hadad, thinking this was his moment, quickly took up that word and said that he was the king's brother, and the king of Israel had him ride in his own chariot. Once Ben-Hadad had been spared, what word could he not say? He said: I will return all the cities your father lost to us, and as a street was opened in Samaria in the name of the king of Syria, so you should make streets for yourself in Damascus. Ahab, feeling pleased, told him to do so, and even carried him in his chariot all the way to Syria.

Then did Syria not invade again after that? They invaded again. They came in again, and the people of Israel died beyond counting. The soldiers killed without mercy—even a pregnant woman they would stab in the belly and crush her head. The king of an enemy that kills his people like that—

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Ahab, wanting to hear himself called a merciful king, showed him such favor and sent him back.

Ahab's Faith That Was Not Clear

What is wrong here? The faith of Ahab—the king of northern Israel who came after Jeroboam and became king following his faith—and of Jezebel was wrong. They served not only the golden calves but foreign gods as well. Heresy does not stop at serving golden calves; in the end it switches God out for something else. Because of this wrong faith, though he was the king of Israel he made his own people suffer, and he could not receive the blessings God gives. Since the line of his faith was not clear, he could neither keep nor enjoy that blessing.

Our faith must be clear. We must make clear who is our enemy and who is not. We must make clear the boundary line of whether we are God's people or not, and even when we make peace, we must keep that line as we do it. If it is not the same faith, what is there to ally with? Without the boundary line of faith, we only make our own people suffer and are ruined.

If you and I, preaching the gospel to the world, were to say—because Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself—that the god they believe in is our God and the God we believe in is their god too, loving unconditionally without any boundary line, then our faith would also die, and we would become heretics before God and receive the curse. We would fail to receive the blessings God gives.

We are clearly citizens of the Republic of Korea. When the nation must be defended, we must block the force that invades

while defying God, even if they are our own people. Yet the Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to bear arms and do not take up a gun in the army. They have no boundary line. It is only that no war has broken out; once it breaks out, we must win. If you lose, you become slaves; losing a war is a truly wretched thing.

If Ahab is truly of the people of Israel—Israel is the descendants of Abraham, so the LORD God is their God. He ought to fear, believe, praise, and serve that God. That God gives the blessing, and even now He made them win the war with Syria and felled that great army. And yet King Ahab is behaving like this.

The True God Who Saved Us by the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Everyone, through this we must know clearly what kind of God the God we believe in is. He is Jesus Christ, who gave us salvation from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus Christ is our Father and our God, and the Holy Spirit is also our God. Where is there a true God besides Jesus Christ? Who is the One who made the universe? Jesus Christ.

When God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, He made the universe by the Word, and the One who is that Word is Jesus Christ. *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3)*. This word points to that only One, our Savior Jesus Christ.

No god of this world can be better than Jesus Christ or be any match for Him. The many gods of the world are all things men have made up. They are carved out of stone and invented in thought. But God is not a god we have made. He has existed

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from the beginning and exists forever, and He is alive even now, knowing all that we say, all that we think, and our every movement. That God has saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit; that God is the One we believe in; and that God keeps us, blesses us, and calls us His own people.

The End of Ahab, Who Followed the Way of Jeroboam

I am now speaking of Ahab's wrong faith. Concerning Ahab, who followed the faith of Jeroboam, the Scripture records that he walked in the way of Jeroboam, and that his was the sin of leading the people of Israel into the way of Jeroboam. So this Ahab died most wretchedly before God, and God had the dogs lick his blood. God does such things.

If we live inside the nation of Israel and join hands with the army of Syria, that is wrong. If one makes an alliance with the enemy, not knowing that God is his God, that in itself is a curse. Even when God gives blessing, he cannot receive it. God has clearly given the blessing, yet he fails to keep it. Spiritually, the true people of Israel are only those who believe the LORD God as their own God—those who believe in the one and only God. God keeps such people and gives blessing to such people.

There is no telling how much suffering the people of Israel underwent and how many curses they received because they held a wrong faith. Each one of you must hold a distinct faith; if instead you say that what is agreeable is good, and unite even with the enemy, you become like Ahab. Not only does that person receive the curse; even all who are attached to him receive the curse. Because Ahab, like Jeroboam, served the golden calf as God and did not serve Yahweh God, he became

the very person who made his own people live in poverty and finally brought them to ruin. Therefore each one of us must hold a right faith.

From 1 Kings until Jesus Christ came, the Scriptures speak of this part again and again: that the people of Israel, though they were the people of the LORD God, did not believe that God as the true God but served other gods, and so received the curse. God made them win wars so that they would return; He told them through the servants of God that the god they leaned on was not the true God but that the LORD God is the true God; He gave them blessings and kept them—yet the people of Israel went on serving other petty gods. It is a history spotted through with curses.

The Clear Faith of One Person Saves the Whole Household

Everyone, you and I have become the people of Israel spiritually by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I am truly gentle toward you. But if someone does not truly believe in the LORD God—in Jesus Christ who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit—as his own Savior, and believes in another god while trying to do something together with me, I have a clear line. I greet him well, help with what should be helped, and have fellowship; but since he is not the same spiritual people of Israel, I cannot share with him the blessing God has given.

If you get along closely with a person who has not been born again, who is not united with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and keep on like that, you are the very Ahab. Then your household is also ruined, and even when God gives

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blessing you cannot receive and enjoy it. This is not the problem of one person alone. As it says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31),* when one person receives the remission of sin and keeps that faith distinctly, God saves his family as well. But if he abandons the faith of his salvation and unites with those who believe in other petty gods, even his own family comes to receive the curse. Everyone, is that so, or not? It is so.

We must believe the God we believe in as the true God, and keep a clear boundary line with those who believe in other gods—keeping the line that says, you are not the people of God. Without this clear line of faith, you are ruined, I am ruined, and all the people of the world are ruined as well. So we must know how important each single person is, and hold firmly to the faith that believes God and keep it. And we must pray for them. God, have mercy on them, turn their hearts and save them, bless them in spirit and in flesh, and give them peace—to pray like that is love.

Among the kings of the Old Testament, when we speak of Ahab, we remember him as the representative of the kings who served idols collectively. He is the king of the age when Elijah kept the rain from falling for three years and six months, a king famed for wickedness together with Jezebel. But we have received the remission of sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so we must believe distinctly that the One who truly saved us is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is never the same as those petty gods, and the people who believe in those petty gods are not our brothers. Even within one household, the one who believes and the one who does not believe are clearly different. We must see them not as objects of union but as objects to be saved.

We must live holding a distinct faith before God. There

must be this clear line of faith. Knowing that keeping the faith like this is for the sake of the people of the world and for the sake of many families, let us live holding on to faith, and not throw away the blessings God gives but receive them, enjoy them together, and live well. I want God to pour out many blessings on God's people, upon God's Church, and upon the businesses. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Words of God's Servants Are the Very Word of God

< 1 Kings 20:35-43 >

"Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, 'Strike me, please.' And the man refused to strike him. Then he said to him, 'Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.' And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him. And he found another man, and said, 'Strike me, please.' So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, "Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver." While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.' Then the king of Israel said to him, 'So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it.' And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. Then he said to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction,

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therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people."' So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria."

This evening, too, let us look into the will of God through the word of 1 Kings chapter 20, verses 35 through 43. Verse 35 says, *"Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, 'Strike me, please.' And the man refused to strike him" (1 Kings 20:35)*. It means that whenever God accomplishes His work, He always speaks through a prophet, and what He has spoken He surely fulfills.

The Death of the Man Who Was Unwilling to Strike the Prophet

King Ahab fought a war with Ben-Hadad the king of Syria and won greatly, but Ben-Hadad devised a scheme, saying that the king of Israel was a merciful king, and went back to Syria alive. After that, God speaks to a prophet, and the prophet delivers it to the king. First the prophet said to his companion by the word of the LORD, *"Strike me, please,"* but the man was unwilling to strike him. Then the prophet said, *"Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you" (1 Kings 20:36)*, and when that man departed, a lion really did find him and kill him.

Humanly seen, this man is in a truly pitiable position, but spiritually seen, it came to be so because he did not obey. When the servant of God delivers the Word, all one has to do is believe and follow it; he did not listen, and so he met death. Through this, God showed how weighty the word of the

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servant of God is.

God Works through His Servants

God works through His servants. The book of 1 Kings we are now reading is the story of the age when kings reigned. David died and Solomon became king, and because Solomon served many idols, God divided the nation and gave many tribes to Jeroboam. That man was not a man of Judah, yet he became the king of northern Israel, and Solomon's son Rehoboam became the king of the south, so that one nation was split in two.

But Jeroboam, to keep his own royal power, exchanged the LORD God for golden calves, changed the dates of the sacrifices, and made anyone who volunteered a priest. So he incurred the wrath of God. The people of Israel, living in their own land, served gods like Baal, Asherah, and Milcom, and God was angered. It came down that way until it reached King Ahab, and Ahab too, as one who had become king following Jeroboam's faith, still served many idols.

The True God Shown through Elijah

So although God said through Elijah that He would not send rain for three years and six months, Ahab did not listen. God actually carried it out just as He said, and afterward showed that the LORD is the true God. Through Elijah He had the contest of faith waged with the eight hundred and fifty false prophets, revealing that the god who sends down fire from heaven is the true God. Those who served Baal and Asherah

called on their god first, but there was no answer at all; and when Elijah prayed before God, God sent down fire from heaven, burned up the sacrifice on the altar, and licked up even the water in the trench.

Yet King Ahab, though he had tasted the work of God, did not turn back. He still served idols. He ought to have believed the LORD God as the true God, obeyed Him, and settled his heart—but he did not. So God sent the army of the king of Syria to strike Israel and gave them hardship. And when they were in such straits, God, in order to show again that the LORD is the true God, made Israel, which was no match at all, win that war. Yet even then King Ahab called the king of Syria his brother and sent him back alive.

Because You Have Let Him Slip out of Your Hand, Your Life Shall Go for His Life

So God again has a prophet speak to the king. By the word of the LORD the prophet said to a man, "Strike me, please," but that man did not listen to the prophet's word and did not strike him. Since the word of God said to strike, he had only to strike him and go on his way; he was told that if he went without striking, a lion would kill him, and still he simply went—and the lion prepared on the road killed him. God reveals His will and accomplishes His work through men; He does not just do it directly, but always works through His servants.

When word of this got around, the prophet met another man and said, *"Strike me, please,"* and this man this time struck him until he was wounded. Fearing that he might die by a lion like the man before, when told to strike, he struck him until he

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was wounded. Then the prophet disguised himself with a bandage and lay fallen by the roadside, and when the king passed by, he cried out and spoke like this: *"Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.'" (1 Kings 20:39–40)*. The king of Israel said, *"So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."*

The prophet of Israel hastily took off the cloth that had covered his eyes, and when the king looked, he was a prophet. The prophet speaks to the king: *"Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" (1 Kings 20:42)*. Because you have sent back alive the man I had determined to kill, I will have your life stand in his place; and I had determined to kill all the people of the king of Syria, but since you released him, I will put the people of Israel to death in their place—that is what it means. For the king it was a truly fatal word. Hearing that word, the king, sullen and displeased, went to Samaria to return to his own palace. This is the whole of the passage we have read today.

The history of Israel, and the history of our life of faith today, is in truth a history that God leads. God raises up His servants and speaks, and He fulfills what those servants have proclaimed on His behalf, accomplishing His work. So we can call it the history of the prophets. If a man is a servant of God, what he says all comes to pass. If he is not a servant of God it does not come to pass; but if he is a servant of God, the words he speaks—above all the words he proclaims on behalf of the

word of God—are certainly fulfilled.

If You Receive the World's Praise, You Become God's Enemy

This man Ahab of Israel did something utterly incomprehensible. Syria was right beside them; left alone even a little, it would surely invade—in his father's generation too it invaded, seized great amounts of the land of Israel, and afflicted the people. God delivered such an enemy into his hand and gave him the opportunity to kill him, yet he sent him back alive just as he was. It was to display his own goodness. To be recognized by the people of the world as exceedingly good—if I may borrow the Lord's word to say it—the one who receives the world's praise is the enemy of God and one who will suffer woe. The Lord said that woe is to you when all men speak well of you, and the Scripture says that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God.

Everyone, if that person is a man of God, then whether he rebukes me or praises me, it becomes the word God speaks to me. But if the people of the world respect me and call me good, it means I have tuned myself to the world. Then I am hated by God and ruined. If we follow the will of God, it can never be so. As the Lord said that one cannot serve both God and mammon, if we are recognized before God we are hated before the world, and if we are recognized by the people of the world we are hated before God. We cannot receive recognition in both places.

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The Will of God Revealed through God's Servants

I cannot but say again and again that God accomplishes His work through His servants. When the servants of God preach the gospel, that preaching of the gospel is certainly right; and when the servants of God do some work, we must believe that God is doing that work because He delights in it. If God appeared to you in person and spoke, there would be no one who would not believe. But God does not do it that way.

Even the president of a nation sends a prime minister or ambassadors under him. The American ambassador to Korea, sent from the United States, is in our country, and the ambassador of Japan is also in our country, each speaking for his own nation. If Japan says that Dokdo is its own territory, we press that ambassador, asking whether it is right for his country to act this way; and the ambassador conveys that to his home country and delivers his country's position to us. God also does the same. Whether you believe it or not, God does so. I am not telling my own story; what appears in the Scriptures is so, and God still works that way now. What the servants of God have said is truly important.

When the Word of God Is Proclaimed on His Behalf, We Must Listen

Look once at this man—the man bitten to death by the lion. The prophet, a servant of God, told a passing man by the word of the LORD to strike him; all he had to do was strike him and go, yet he said, I will not strike. He was told that on his way he would be bitten to death by a lion, and still he went without striking—and a lion really was waiting and bit him to death.

That man refused to strike because he thought, How could I strike a servant of God?—yet in the end he was put to death. That is how weighty the work God does through His servants is. It is not something one may hear or not hear as he pleases; when someone truly quotes the word of God and proclaims it within the truth as the word of God, it must be heard. Today's passage is saying exactly that.

We must receive and learn this lesson through this passage. If I were to say to you, I am God's servant, so listen to my words, and if you do not you will be put to death, that would be mere human feeling, nothing at all. But when, by the word of God, I too receive the word of God and deliver it in faith, you come to hear the word of God and to be under its rule. It is truly important to recognize the prophets of God and to know the will of God through the prophets of God. Preaching the gospel to the world is the will of God, but how to preach it in the way that pleases God—that we come to know through the servants of God.

Preaching the Gospel to the World through Literature and E-books

Our Lord told us to go through all the world, to every corner, and preach the gospel. Then how shall we carry out this command? With the flesh alone it cannot be done. We must make the sermons we have preached into books, translate them into the languages of the whole world, and preach the gospel. To do that, channels of distribution are needed, and at first we tried to place our books in the large bookstores and marts of the United States.

Before that we had met a company smaller than Amazon.

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They received our books, and even after reading them they gave no full answer and told us to wait a month. We asked them—if they had a committee of pastors, they could pass the books around and read them within a few days, examine whether the content was sound and whether they would sell, and then contact us—but no word came. In the end, without even opening the package, they had pushed the books aside as a collection of sermons that came from Korea. While saying the content was good, they gave no precise answer; all they sent was a single e-mail quietly backing out. They had in fact already refused, but we, not knowing it, had to wait a month.

But I am a servant of God who believes the word of God. Even if I were to meet the world's renowned biblical scholars, I would never think I would be despised. If anything, I would receive respect; in these matters of the Scriptures, I know as much as they do. Going forward in faith like that, we came at last to meet Amazon. If someone asks whether the sermons in these books are the truth, whether they can be set before all people—they can be set out by all means. What is lacking in them? There may be some repetition of words here and there, but nothing has strayed from the Scriptures; they speak the core of the Bible. When people read these books, they receive the remission of sin. Just as people receive the remission of sin when we preach in person, so they receive the remission of sin through the books as well. As we worked in faith like that, the work is now going well, and much of the gospel is being spread every day. God works through His servants.

Everyone, I am not saying these things so that you will recognize me. When the workers preach, I too sit with the same heart as you and listen to the sermon. I listen with my heart set on what God is saying. If he testifies of the word of God and speaks the will of God, I believe it as the word of God and

receive it into my heart. That is what is fitting.

Baptism Left as an Empty Shell—Faith That Has Missed the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

When Israel was in peril, God sent His servant to tell the king to wage the war, saying that He would surely make him win, and He made him win just so. Then he ought to have subdued the enemy and taken over Syria, turning its people back to God and preaching the gospel to them. Today as well, the nations of the world try to subdue other nations, but if they do not hold the true gospel, it is of no use.

For example, President Bush of the United States is a member of a Baptist church. The Baptist church ought to know the truth that when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, all the sins of mankind were passed on to Him; but not knowing that, they follow only the form. They do the same motion of being immersed in the water and coming up, but the kernel is gone and only the husk remains. We must hold clearly to the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus took over our sins by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid all the wages of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death in three days.

Through this word we learn that the work of God appears through the servants of God, that God speaks through those servants, and that we must believe it. Let us learn this part, take hold of faith accordingly, and live on. I have finished the message. ✉

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CHAPTER

21

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1 Kings Chapter 21

1) Summary of the Entire Content

1 Kings chapter 21 records how Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and how Jezebel killed Naboth through false testimony and an unjust trial and then seized the vineyard. God sent Elijah and declared judgment on Ahab's house and on Jezebel. Afterward, when Ahab humbled himself, God did not bring the judgment in his days but postponed it until the days of his son.

1. Ahab Demands Naboth's Vineyard (Verses 1–2)

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard close to Ahab's palace. Ahab wanted to use that vineyard as a vegetable garden.

Ahab proposed to give Naboth a better vineyard or to pay whatever price he wanted in money. Outwardly it looked like a fair transaction, but since the king was making the demand directly of one of his people, it could be considerable pressure on Naboth.

To Ahab the vineyard was a convenient piece of land beside the palace, but to Naboth it was a precious inheritance passed down from his fathers. The two men differed from the very standard by which they looked at the vineyard.

2. Naboth Keeps the Inheritance of His Fathers (Verse 3)

Naboth answered that he could not hand over to the king the inheritance he had received from his fathers. He counted keeping the land God had allotted to his fathers more important than a better vineyard or much money.

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The land of Israel was not merely private property; it was an inheritance God had entrusted to each tribe and family. Naboth refused the king's demand not out of personal stubbornness but in order to follow the word of God.

Naboth's attitude, which made the word of God his standard even before royal power and economic gain, stands in contrast to Ahab's greed.

3. The Refused Ahab Sulks and Refuses to Eat (Verses 4–7)

Hearing Naboth's refusal, Ahab returned to the palace sullen and displeased in heart. He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not even eat.

As king, Ahab already had much land and much wealth, but he lost the composure of his heart for the single reason that he could not obtain the one small vineyard he wanted. Greed keeps a person from being satisfied with what he has and makes him look only at what he has not obtained.

When Jezebel heard why Ahab was not eating, she said she would use the king's power to take the vineyard away. As Ahab's greed and Jezebel's abuse of power combined, the matter developed into the killing of the innocent Naboth.

4. Jezebel Plans a False Trial (Verses 8–10)

Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with the king's seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles of the city where Naboth lived.

She commanded them to proclaim a fast and to seat Naboth in a high place among the people. The fast was used as a device to create a religious atmosphere suggesting that there was a grave sin in the nation and its cause had to be found.

Jezebel had two scoundrels set up as false witnesses to testify that Naboth had cursed God and the king. On the basis

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of that false testimony, she directed that Naboth be taken outside the city and stoned to death.

Jezebel knew that killing Naboth openly would be unlawful murder. So she used religious procedure and the form of a trial to dress up her crime as a lawful judgment.

5. The Elders and Nobles Follow Jezebel's Command (Verses 11–14)

The elders and nobles of the city where Naboth lived carried out exactly what was written in Jezebel's letters. They did not refuse the unjust command of the royal house, and took part in the unrighteous trial.

A fast was proclaimed, and Naboth was seated in a high place among the people. Then the two false witnesses testified that Naboth had cursed God and the king.

Without verifying the truth, the people took Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death. Jezebel's plan was carried out through the cooperation of the elders, the nobles, the false witnesses, and the people.

Naboth's death was not the act of Jezebel alone. Responsibility also lay with those who, watching the face of power, joined in the false testimony and the unjust verdict.

6. Ahab Takes Possession of Naboth's Vineyard (Verses 15–16)

When Jezebel heard the news that Naboth was dead, she told Ahab to take possession of the vineyard. Since Naboth was no longer alive, she said, he could now take the vineyard.

Ahab did not ask in detail through what process Naboth had died, nor did he correct Jezebel's conduct. He went down at once to take possession of the vineyard.

Ahab did not himself set up the false witnesses or throw the

stones, but he accepted the gain that came from Naboth's death. Therefore he could not escape responsibility for the murder and robbery Jezebel had committed.

Even if one has not directly planned a sin, if he knows its result, accepts it, and enjoys its profit, he has become a participant in that sin.

7. God Sends Elijah to Ahab (Verses 17–20)

Naboth's death and the seizure of his vineyard had been processed as if lawful through a human trial, but God had been watching the whole course of it.

God told Elijah to go down to Naboth's vineyard and meet Ahab. Elijah delivered God's rebuke that Ahab had murdered a man and had even taken his possession.

Ahab called Elijah his enemy. But Elijah was not Ahab's personal foe; he was the man who exposed Ahab's sin and delivered the word of God.

Ahab regarded Elijah as an enemy not because Elijah had lied, but because he had exposed the sin Ahab wanted to hide. Hating the one who speaks the truth does not make one's own sin disappear.

8. Judgment Is Declared on Ahab and His Dynasty (Verses 19–24)

Elijah declared that in the place where Naboth's blood had been shed, dogs would lick Ahab's blood as well. It was the judgment that what Ahab had done to Naboth would in the end return upon himself.

God also said that He would make Ahab's house like the house of Jeroboam and the house of Baasha. Just as the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha had been destroyed for idolatry and wickedness, Ahab's dynasty would meet the same end.

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Ahab had not only done evil himself; he had also made the people of northern Israel sin. The king's personal sin affected his family, his dynasty, and the whole nation.

The word was also declared that Jezebel would receive the judgment of being eaten by dogs by the wall of Jezreel. She had used royal power to kill the innocent Naboth, but she could not use her power to escape even the judgment of God.

9. The Evaluation of the Evil of Ahab and Jezebel (Verses 25–26)

The book of Kings evaluates Ahab as a man who sold himself to do evil before God. He committed idolatry and injustice more severely than the kings before him.

Jezebel kept stirring Ahab up into the evil way. But the fact that Jezebel's influence was great does not remove Ahab's responsibility. Ahab himself accepted her words and enjoyed their results.

Ahab followed idols like the Amorites whom God had cast out of the land of Canaan. Though he was a king ruling the people of God, he imitated the deeds of the nations God had judged.

His idolatry did not stop at a personal religious choice. The heart that had left God finally appeared in concrete evils—greed, falsehood, murder, and the seizure of property.

10. Ahab Hears the Word of God and Humbles Himself (Verse 27)

When Ahab heard the word of judgment declared through Elijah, he tore his clothes, girded sackcloth on his body, and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and walked slowly as well.

Before, he had heard the word of judgment and merely returned to the palace in distress, but this time he humbled

himself in action. God saw this in Ahab.

The murder of Naboth and the idolatry Ahab had committed in the past had not become things that never happened. Yet God did not regard lightly the attitude with which he humbled himself.

11. God Postpones the Judgment to the Days of His Son (Verses 28–29)

God saw that Ahab had humbled himself before Him, and spoke to Elijah. As a result, the calamity to come upon Ahab's house would be brought not in his days but in the days of his son.

The judgment was not canceled, but its time was postponed. God took note even of the fact that a king as evil as Ahab had humbled himself.

This shows that God is One who responds to a person's humble attitude. At the same time, Ahab's personal humbling alone did not erase all the results of the evil he had brought upon his people and his descendants as king.

The judgment concerning Ahab's dynasty is fulfilled just as spoken in the history that follows. Though the word of God may seem delayed, it is certainly fulfilled.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 21

First, greed keeps one from seeing what he already has and makes him cling to what he has not obtained. Ahab had much as king, but when he could not get Naboth's one vineyard, he even refused to eat.

Second, keeping the word of God is more important than the profit of the world. Naboth could have received a better vineyard and money, but he kept the inheritance received from his fathers.

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Third, power must be used to establish justice. Jezebel used the king's name, his seal, and the judicial system to kill an innocent man and seize his property.

Fourth, religious form cannot make injustice righteous. Jezebel used the forms of fasting, witnesses, and a trial, but that whole process was for falsehood and murder.

Fifth, those who follow an unjust command cannot escape responsibility either. The elders and nobles carried out Jezebel's command and took part in Naboth's death.

Sixth, accepting the profit gained by sin is also taking part in that sin. Ahab did not kill Naboth directly, but he used his death to take possession of the vineyard.

Seventh, what can be hidden from men cannot be hidden from God. Naboth's death was dressed up as a lawful execution, but God sent Elijah and exposed the responsibility for the murder and the robbery.

Eighth, a wrong influence does not remove personal responsibility. Jezebel stirred Ahab up, but Ahab himself followed her words and did the evil.

Ninth, the judgment of God is connected with the evil a person has done. To Ahab, who shed Naboth's blood and seized his vineyard, the word was declared that he would shed his blood in the same place.

Tenth, God takes note even of an evil person's humbling of himself. When Ahab heard the word of judgment and humbled himself, God postponed the time of the calamity to the days of his son.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 21 records how Ahab and Jezebel killed Naboth through false testimony and an unjust trial and seized his vineyard, but God exposed their hidden evil and declared judgment, and when Ahab humbled himself, He postponed the time of that judgment.

2) Chapter 21 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

1 Kings chapter 21 is the event in which Naboth kept the inheritance of the vineyard he had received from God, while Ahab and Jezebel seized that inheritance by greed and falsehood. Seen from the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Naboth's vineyard makes us think of the gospel of salvation God has given and the inheritance of the community that serves that gospel. This inheritance cannot be exchanged for the profit of the world, and no one may make it his own possession.

1. Naboth's Vineyard, an Inheritance Received from God (Verses 1–3)

Naboth's vineyard was close to Ahab's palace. To Ahab that vineyard was a piece of land beside the palace, good for use as a vegetable garden, but to Naboth it was the inheritance God had entrusted to him through his fathers.

Ahab offered a better vineyard or money, but Naboth refused the king's demand. For the inheritance was not property that could be calculated in economic value alone.

From the perspective of the gospel, this vineyard makes us think of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has entrusted to the believer. The remission of sin, the kingdom of God, and everlasting life are the inheritance of heaven that cannot be exchanged for money, honor, or worldly success.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not abandon the salvation Jesus has accomplished, even when the world offers better conditions. As Naboth kept his inheritance even before the king, we must keep in our hearts the gospel God has given.

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2. Ahab, Who Tried to Turn the Vineyard into a Vegetable Garden (Verse 2)

A vineyard is a place where trees are tended over a long time and made to bear fruit. But Ahab tried to turn that vineyard into a vegetable garden for his own table.

Spiritually, turning God's vineyard into a vegetable garden is like using the gospel and the community of God as a means for personal gain. It is changing what God entrusted for the saving of souls and the preaching of the gospel into a means of gaining money, honor, and power.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a Word that exists to fulfill human desires. The purpose for which God gave this gospel lies in having sinners saved from all their sins, become God's people, and obtain everlasting life.

The one entrusted with the gospel is not the owner of the vineyard but its keeper. Rather than exalting his own name and authority, he must serve so that the fruit of the gospel is borne in many souls.

3. The Faith of Naboth, Who Did Not Trade for the World's Conditions (Verse 3)

Ahab said he would give Naboth a more beautiful vineyard or a sufficient price. Humanly seen, it was a proposal with no loss to Naboth, but he judged by the standard of the word of God.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also be asked to reduce or change the content of the gospel in order to gain people's recognition and material support. But the gospel is not an object of trade.

We must plainly preach the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and the fact that He received the judgment of those

sins on the Cross. If we leave out any one part because people find it uncomfortable, we cannot deliver in full the inheritance received from God.

Naboth's faith was not stubbornness that despised the king; it was faith that counted the inheritance God had appointed higher than the king's authority.

4. Ahab's Greed Rules His Heart (Verses 4–7)

Ahab already had much property and land as king. But when he could not obtain Naboth's one vineyard, he lay on his bed, turned away his face, and refused even to eat.

Greed keeps a person from seeing the many things he has and makes him cling to what he has not obtained. Ahab thought only of the fact that his demand had been rejected, rather than of the fact that Naboth had refused because of the word of God.

Fleshly desire remains even in the one who has been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But if he follows that desire, wealth, honor, and people's recognition can look greater than the remission of sin and the everlasting life God has given.

The Holy Spirit leads the believer to lay down his own greed and think first of the gospel and the good of souls. The saved must not make God's things their own, but use what has been entrusted to them for the gospel.

5. Ahab, Who Accepted Jezebel's Prompting (Verses 5–7)

Jezebel did not correct Ahab's greed; she said she would use the king's power to seize Naboth's vineyard. She devised an evil plan so that Ahab could get what he wanted.

Sin is not accomplished merely because a person who speaks wrong words is nearby. It is when one receives those words into his heart and moves them into action that he takes

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part in the sin together.

Ahab did not draw up Jezebel's plan himself, but he did not restrain her, and after Naboth died he took possession of the vineyard. Therefore Jezebel's prompting did not remove Ahab's responsibility.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must discern whether even the words of those close to him agree with the word of God. We must put the Word of salvation written in the Scriptures ahead of the words of family, friends, and people of authority.

6. A False Trial Dressed in Religious Form (Verses 8–13)

Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with the king's seal. She proclaimed a fast, had Naboth seated in a high place among the people, and then had two men give false testimony.

Outwardly it looked like a holy trial to find and deal with the nation's sin, but its real purpose lay in killing the innocent Naboth and seizing his vineyard.

Not everything becomes the will of God just because there are religious forms and pious-sounding words. There were a fast, a trial, and witnesses, but at the center of them were greed, falsehood, and murder.

Today as well, one can use some words of Scripture and religious forms while veiling the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What matters is not outward ceremony but preaching according to the Scriptures how a sinner is saved from all his sins.

7. False Testimony Makes a Righteous Man a Sinner (Verses 13–14)

The two false witnesses testified that Naboth had cursed

God and the king. Naboth had tried to keep the word of God, but because of the false testimony he was treated as a man who had defied God.

Naboth did not die because he actually had sin; he was made a sinner so that those in power could obtain the result they wanted. False words can make a righteous person look like a sinner.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has become righteous before God because Jesus has washed away all his sins. Yet if it is taught that the one who believes in Jesus is a sinner who holds sin in his heart until he dies, the righteousness Jesus has accomplished is veiled.

If Jesus took all sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John and received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross, then in the heart of the one who believes this gospel no sin remains to be judged. Words that keep making a sinner out of the person God has justified blur the completed salvation.

8. Naboth's Death and the False Testimony Jesus Received

Naboth was dragged outside the city by false testimony and stoned to death. Trying to keep the inheritance of God, he received an unjust trial and lost his life.

Jesus, too, was condemned through the false testimony of the religious leaders and was crucified outside the city. But Jesus did not die because of His own sin; He was judged because of the sins of mankind He had taken upon Himself by the baptism He received from John.

By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death.

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The death of Jesus, even within an unjust human verdict, completed the salvation of God that judged the sins of mankind. Jesus, who rose again from death, gives the remission of sin and everlasting life to the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

9. Ahab Takes the Vineyard through Naboth's Death (Verses 15–16)

When Jezebel heard the news that Naboth was dead, she told Ahab to take possession of the vineyard. Without questioning how Naboth had died, Ahab went down at once to take the vineyard.

Ahab did not throw stones at Naboth himself, but he accepted the gain that came by his death. Because he knowingly took as his own profit the result produced by sin, he took part in that sin.

Making the community of God and the work of the gospel into personal property and power is likewise taking possession of God's vineyard. The community of God is not the possession of any one person or family; it belongs to God, established by Jesus with His own righteousness.

The one who serves the gospel must not use the position and the material things entrusted to him for private desire, but must manage them for the salvation of souls and the spreading of the gospel.

10. Elijah Goes to Ahab with the Word of God (Verses 17–20)

In people's eyes, Naboth's death seemed to have been processed lawfully through a trial. But God knew all the falsehood, the murder, and the robbery.

God sent Elijah and exposed Ahab's responsibility for

killing Naboth and even seizing his vineyard. Ahab called Elijah his enemy, but Elijah had not come because he personally hated Ahab.

The word of God exposes the sin and greed a person has hidden away. The fact that we feel uncomfortable with the one who delivers the Word does not make that Word false.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also exposes the sin in a person's heart and then makes known how Jesus has removed all those sins. The purpose of the gospel is not to shut a person up in despair, but to have him believe the righteousness Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sin.

11. Judgment Declared on the House of Ahab and Jezebel (Verses 19–24)

God said that in the place where Naboth's blood had been shed, dogs would lick Ahab's blood as well. On Jezebel, too, the judgment of being eaten by dogs by the wall of Jezreel was declared.

Ahab and Jezebel used royal power to kill Naboth, but they could not escape the righteous judgment of God. Human power may take another's life, but it cannot block God's judgment on one's own sin.

Judgment follows every sin. God does not pass over sin lightly; He certainly demands the wages of sin.

The reason Jesus died shedding His blood on the Cross is also that the wages of sin had to be paid without fail. Jesus received on the Cross, in our place, the judgment of all the sins He had taken upon Himself by the baptism He received from John.

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12. The Effect of Ahab's Sin on the Whole People (Verses 21–26)

Ahab did not stop at serving idols personally; he also made the people of northern Israel sin. His wrong faith and greed exerted an evil influence on his dynasty and on the whole nation.

If a leader, not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, delivers other words of salvation, sin remains also in the hearts of those who hear those words. The one who serves souls must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the washing of all his sins.

We must accurately preach the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

When one person delivers a wrong faith, many souls can be harmed; but when one person preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately, many people can receive the remission of sin and become God's people.

13. The Faith That Keeps Naboth's Vineyard

Naboth lost even his life to keep the vineyard. He counted the inheritance God had entrusted to him more important than royal power and economic conditions.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the most precious inheritance God has entrusted to the believer. We must not dilute the gospel or mix it with the teachings of the world in order to gain people's recognition and material profit.

Keeping the gospel does not stop at knowing it as knowledge. It is keeping in the heart the faith that Jesus has removed all sins, delivering this gospel to other souls just as it is, and serving with one's life the work of its spreading.

The Holy Spirit leads the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit not to be shaken by the pressure of the world, and to hand down the Word of life to the next generation.

14. Ahab Humbles Himself before the Word (Verses 27–29)

When Ahab heard the word of judgment through Elijah, he tore his clothes, girded sackcloth on his body, and fasted. God saw that Ahab had humbled himself before Him.

God did not regard Ahab's attitude lightly, and postponed the calamity to come upon his house to the days of his son. The word of judgment was not canceled, but God took note of the attitude of the one who humbled himself.

The one who hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also lay down his own thoughts and his own righteousness and humble himself before the word of God. Rather than claiming to have little sin and to have lived a good life, he must receive the salvation of God, who passed all sins on to Jesus.

The one who humbles himself does not try to become righteous by his own works but believes the righteousness Jesus has accomplished. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in our hearts, all sins are washed away and we become God's children.

15. God's Vineyard Must Be Kept as God's Own

Ahab's greatest wrong lay in trying to make his own a vineyard that did not belong to him. For this Jezebel abused even religion, the courts, and the royal power.

The community of God and the work of the gospel likewise cannot become any individual's possession. All property, every office, and every ability are entrusted for a time so that we may

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serve the gospel and souls.

The one who serves God's vineyard must not act as if he were its owner, but must acknowledge Jesus as the Owner. He must not seize what God has given for the benefit of his own family or to satisfy private greed, but use it rightly for the spreading of the gospel.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes that he himself belongs to God and that everything entrusted to him also belongs to God. Living by this faith, he becomes not one who tears down the vineyard but one who makes it bear the fruit of life.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 21

First, Naboth's vineyard shows the preciousness of the inheritance God has entrusted. The remission of sin and the everlasting life received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be exchanged for any condition of the world.

Second, God's vineyard must not be made into a personal vegetable garden. We must not use the gospel and the community of God as a means of gaining personal wealth, honor, and power.

Third, religious form cannot make falsehood into truth. Jezebel used a fast and a trial, but at their center were greed and murder.

Fourth, Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from death. The one who believes this salvation receives the washing of all his sins and becomes righteous.

Fifth, words that keep making a sinner out of the person God has justified blur the salvation Jesus has accomplished. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

must believe, on the basis of the Word, that he has become a sinless, righteous person.

Sixth, accepting the profit gained by sin is also taking part in that sin. Ahab did not kill Naboth directly, but he took possession of the vineyard obtained by his death.

Seventh, a leader's wrong faith and greed affect many people. The one who serves souls must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and preach that Word of salvation accurately.

Eighth, God knows every hidden sin and injustice. Even what can be covered by human power and false institutions is all exposed before the word of God.

Ninth, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must keep God's vineyard and bear the fruit of life. He must use the time, the talents, and the material things entrusted to him for the gospel and for souls.

Tenth, God takes note of the one who humbles himself before the Word. When we lay down our own righteousness and believe the righteousness Jesus has accomplished, we are saved from all sins and become God's children.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 21 shows, through the event in which Naboth kept with his life the inheritance of the vineyard received from God while Ahab and Jezebel seized it by greed and falsehood, the fact that we must not exchange the gospel of the water and the Spirit—given through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death—for the profit of the world, but must fully keep it and preach it as God's vineyard. ✉

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1 Kings Chapter 21

Naboth's Vineyard and the Judgment Brought On by Greed

Introduction

1 Kings chapter 21 shows, through the event of Naboth's vineyard, the fact that man cannot change or seize according to his own desire the inheritance God has given. Naboth's vineyard was not mere private property. It was the inheritance God had given to his fathers, and even before the king's demand Naboth held on to the word of God, saying, *"The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!" (1 Kings 21:3).*

Ahab tried to make that vineyard into a vegetable garden beside his palace. Outwardly it looked like a reasonable proposal—a better vineyard or money in exchange—but spiritually it was an attempt to change the inheritance God had given into a field for his own fleshly convenience and desire. God's vineyard must be kept as a vineyard. Today as well, the Church of God must be not a vegetable garden that fills human desires, but a vineyard that believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit and brings souls to life.

Jezebel used religious form and false evidence to fulfill Ahab's greed. She proclaimed a fast, seated Naboth high among the people, and then set up scoundrels to testify falsely that he had cursed God and the king. Outwardly it looked like a

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pious procedure, but inside it were the evils of murder and robbery. This shows how fearful a tool religious form can become when it does not fear God.

God was watching all this hidden sin. When Ahab went down to take Naboth's vineyard, God sent Elijah and rebuked him: "*Have you murdered and also taken possession?" (1 Kings 21:19).* Ahab and Jezebel could deceive the eyes of men, but they could not hide before God. Making the inheritance of God a tool of one's own desire must stand at last before God's rebuke and judgment.

This word teaches us to keep the true inheritance, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the remission of sin and new life by rising again from death. This Word of salvation is the inheritance of life God has given. We must not exchange this inheritance for human honor, material things, or power, but stand with the faith that keeps it before the word of God, as Naboth did.

Ahab, hearing the word of judgment, showed for a while a humbled appearance. God saw that humbling and did not bring the calamity in his days but deferred it. Yet when we look at Ahab's whole life, he was not a man who fully returned to God to the end. Therefore 1 Kings chapter 21 teaches us to go beyond a mere humbling of fear, on to the true turning that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Vineyard Is an Inheritance Man Cannot Change at Will

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the

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Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria" (1 Kings 21:1).

1 Kings chapter 21 begins with the story of Naboth's vineyard. Naboth's vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Outwardly it looks like a question of the ownership of one vineyard beside the palace. But through this event the Scripture exposes how evil the sin of Ahab and Jezebel was.

In Israel, land was not merely private property. It was the inheritance God had allotted to each tribe and each family. Therefore Naboth's vineyard was not land he held out of personal greed, but the inheritance of his fathers to be kept before God. Naboth did not regard it as a thing he could sell at will.

Spiritually, this vineyard makes us think of the inheritance of faith God has given. Jesus is the true vine, and those who belong to Him are the branches. The most precious inheritance given to the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today is the Word of salvation Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and so taking the sins of the world upon Himself, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising again from death. This inheritance cannot be exchanged or sold for man's fleshly purposes.

Ahab Tried to Make the Vineyard a Vegetable Garden

"So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.'" (1 Kings 21:2).

Ahab asked Naboth to give him the vineyard. The reason was that it was near his palace, and he would make it a vegetable garden. He said he would give a more beautiful vineyard in its place, or, if Naboth wished, pay its worth in money. Outwardly it can look like a reasonable business proposal. But seen spiritually, it is a very fearful word.

A vineyard must remain a vineyard. Yet Ahab tried to change the vineyard into a vegetable garden. The vineyard is a field that bears fruit, and biblically it makes us think of the people of God and the Church of God. A vegetable garden, on the other hand, is a field used for one's own fleshly needs. Ahab tried to exchange the inheritance of God for the convenience beside his palace and the desire of his flesh.

This heart can exist today as well. If a person, while believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and being inside the Church of God, tries to change that faith and that Church into a place for his own fleshly convenience and profit, that is the same heart as Ahab's. The Church of God is not a vegetable garden that satisfies human desires. It is a vineyard that believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit and leads sinners to salvation.

Naboth Refused Because of the Word of the LORD

"But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!'" (1 Kings 21:3).

Naboth refused Ahab's proposal. He said, *"The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"* Naboth did not refuse out of contempt for the king. Nor did he refuse because he disliked a better vineyard or money. He refused because it was a thing the LORD had forbidden.

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This is Naboth's faith. He feared the word of God more than the king's demand. He counted the inheritance of God more precious than better conditions. Worldly speaking, refusing the king's demand was a dangerous thing. But Naboth did not step back before the word of God.

The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must hold this same faith. People may say that believing only in the blood of the Cross is enough. They may say there is no need to speak of the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John. But man cannot change the inheritance of salvation God has appointed. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death, is the truth to be kept as the word of God.

Greed Cannot Endure Refusal

"So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food" (1 Kings 21:4).

Hearing Naboth's refusal, Ahab went back to the palace sullen and displeased. He lay on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat. Though he was a king, his appearance was not that of a mature ruler. When things did not go his way, he was hurt in heart and simply lay down.

Ahab was a king who had already walked an evil road before God. He had followed the sin of Jeroboam, and together with Jezebel had brought Baal worship deep into Israel. Now such a man coveted even the vineyard of one of his people. A

heart that has abandoned God fails in the end to respect even a man's inheritance. A person who is not upright before God cannot restrain his own greed before men either.

Today we too must examine our own hearts. While saying that we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must see whether there is any heart in us that would follow the desires of the flesh and make God's vineyard into a vegetable garden. If there is a heart that would make the work of God and the Church a means of one's own convenience and profit, that is the same direction as Ahab's greed. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must count the inheritance of God more precious than his own desire.

Jezebel Tried to Trample God's Inheritance with Royal Power

"But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" (1 Kings 21:5–6).

Jezebel asked Ahab why he was so sullen that he would not eat. Ahab said that Naboth would not give him his vineyard. But he did not fully tell why Naboth had refused. Naboth had said, *"The LORD forbid" (1 Kings 21:3)*, but Ahab spoke with that core blurred. Rather than the reason being the word of God, he exposed only the fact that his own wish had been rejected.

When a person is caught by his own greed, he leaves out the word of God. Naboth's refusal was a refusal of faith that feared God, but Ahab spoke of it merely as a rejection of his

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proposal. Hearing this, Jezebel pushed Ahab's desire in a still more evil direction.

Jezebel was a Gentile woman, the person who had brought Baal worship into Israel. She neither knew nor feared the inheritance of Israel and the law of God. So she did not see Naboth's vineyard as the inheritance of God, but as an object the king could seize if he wanted it.

People who do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit are like this as well. They think the Church of God and the gospel can be handled by human organization or power. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a religion man has made. It is the righteousness God has accomplished in Jesus Christ. Therefore this gospel and the Church of God cannot be handled by human desire and power.

Worldly Power Despises the Law of God

"Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.'" (1 Kings 21:7).

Jezebel said to Ahab, *"You now exercise authority over Israel!" (1 Kings 21:7).* This word means that a king should be able to take whatever he wants. She did not see the kingship as an office standing under the word of God. She saw it as absolute power for accomplishing her own will.

But the king of Israel is not one who stands above God. The king, too, must stand under the word of God. Naboth's vineyard was not something the king could seize at will just because he wanted it. It was an inheritance God had forbidden to be sold. It was precisely this order of God that Jezebel ignored.

Today as well, worldly thinking despises the word of God. It thinks that with power the truth can be changed, that where people are many they must be right, and that with authority even the Church of God can be moved at will. But it is not so before God. No power can change the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus' taking our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, His being judged for those sins on the Cross, and His rising again from death are the order of salvation God has appointed.

They Tried to Kill a Righteous Man with False Religious Form

"And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, 'Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people" (1 Kings 21:8–9).

Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with the king's seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles. And she told them to proclaim a fast and seat Naboth in a high place among the people. Here an evil work proceeds by borrowing religious form. Fasting is an act of humbling oneself before God. Yet Jezebel used that holy form as a tool for killing Naboth.

False faith can make use of religious appearance. Outwardly it is a fast; outwardly it is a public trial; outwardly it looks like exalting a man before the people. But inside it was the plot of murder and robbery. The person who does not fear God turns even holy forms into means of achieving his own desire.

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Today as well, one can oppose the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the name of faith. Worship, prayer, fasting, church office, denomination, and tradition can look pious on the outside. But if within them there is not the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, and not the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by the Cross and His rising again from death, they are only human religious forms. What pleases God is not the outward appearance but the heart that believes the righteousness of God.

The False Evidence Was in the End a Road to Seizing the Vineyard

"And seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die" (1 Kings 21:10).

Jezebel's plan was plain. She would set up two scoundrels to bear false witness that Naboth had cursed God and the king, and then have him taken out and stoned to death. The final goal was to kill Naboth and seize the vineyard. The man who tried to keep the inheritance of God was to be killed under the false charge of having cursed God.

This is the fearful face of false faith. It can turn the one who keeps the truth into a criminal. It can make the faith that keeps God's inheritance look like obstinacy. It can even paint the one who keeps the gospel of the water and the Spirit as a strange person. But God looks at the center. Naboth tried to keep the inheritance of God, while Ahab and Jezebel tried to seize that inheritance for their greed.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this word is a very solemn warning. The heart that would change God's vineyard into a vegetable garden is a great evil before God. The heart that would make the Church of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit into a place for one's own fleshly profit is the road of Ahab and Jezebel. We must not walk that road.

The inheritance God has given us is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ completed. Jesus took our sins upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the remission of sin and new life by rising again from death. We must not exchange this inheritance for money, power, or the desires of the flesh.

Therefore 1 Kings chapter 21, verses 1 through 10, contrasts the faith that keeps the inheritance of God, seen in Naboth's vineyard, with the evil that would seize that inheritance and turn it into a field of its own desire. Naboth held on to the word of God even before the king, while Ahab and Jezebel ignored the word of God and tried to take the vineyard by power and false evidence. Today we too must keep the vineyard of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must not turn the Church of God and the gospel into our own fleshly vegetable garden, but hold to the end the righteousness of God completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

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The Elders and Nobles Failed to Keep God's Inheritance

"So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them" (1 Kings 21:11).

Jezebel wrote the letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with the king's seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles in Naboth's city. The elders and nobles were the ones who should have discerned right and wrong among the people. They should have kept anyone from being wronged, according to the law of God, and should have helped in keeping the inheritance of the fathers. Yet they moved exactly as Jezebel's letters directed.

This is the first fearful sight in this passage. When evil power commanded, the very people who should have discerned by the word of God became instead the tools of that evil command. They would have known why Naboth had said he could not sell the vineyard. Naboth was not a man holding out from greed; he was the man who had said, *"The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!" (1 Kings 21:3).* Even so, the elders and nobles followed Jezebel's orders rather than the word of God.

Today as well, it becomes a great sin when spiritual leaders fail to keep the inheritance of God. The Church of God is not a place for filling human desires. It is the vineyard that keeps and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the place that keeps the Word of salvation Jesus completed by receiving baptism from John and so taking the sins of the world upon Himself, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising again from death. This inheritance must not be handed over to worldly power or human greed.

A False Religious Form Became the Tool for Killing a Righteous Man

"They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people" (1 Kings 21:12).

The elders and nobles proclaimed a fast according to Jezebel's letters and seated Naboth in a high place among the people. Fasting is originally an act of faith, humbling oneself and repenting before God. But within Jezebel's plan, the fast became not a matter of fearing God but a religious decoration for killing Naboth.

Seating Naboth high among the people was not meant to honor him either. Rather, it was preparation for publicly making him a criminal before everyone. Outwardly it looked pious, outwardly it looked like a public procedure, but inside it lay the plot of greed and murder.

This shows the essence of false faith. Outwardly it can carry worship, prayer, fasting, and the name of the Scriptures. But if the righteousness of God is not at its center, it can become a tool for accomplishing human desires. Faith from which the gospel of the water and the Spirit is missing is like this too. It speaks of Jesus and speaks of the Cross, but if the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John is left out, the problem of sin in the heart is not solved. What pleases God is not religious form but the faith that believes the righteousness of God within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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The False Testimony Was a Means of Seizing God's Inheritance

"And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died" (1 Kings 21:13).

According to Jezebel's plan, the two scoundrels came in. Before the people they testified falsely that Naboth had cursed God and the king. Naboth was a man who had tried to keep the inheritance of God, yet he was framed as a man who had cursed God. The man who would not yield to the king's greed was accused as a man who had cursed the king.

This is the terror of false testimony. It makes a criminal of the one who keeps the truth, and makes the faith that holds to the word of God look like rebellion. In the end the crowd dragged Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death. The man who had kept the inheritance of God was killed by the collusion of false religion and power.

Keeping the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also at times be misunderstood before the world and religious authority. When we say plainly the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, some may ask why we do not speak only of the Cross. But if we do not tell how the sins judged on the Cross were passed on to Jesus, the truth of salvation is not fully revealed. Keeping the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a matter of opposing people; it is keeping the inheritance of salvation God has given.

Those Who Obeyed Evil Power Also Took Part in the Sin

"Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.'" (1 Kings 21:14).

Those who had killed Naboth reported to Jezebel: *"Naboth has been stoned and is dead" (1 Kings 21:14)*. They must have known what they had done. They had set up false testimony, killed an innocent man, and shed the blood of the man who tried to keep the inheritance of God. Yet they reported the matter to Jezebel, announcing the completion of the evil plan.

In this event the sin is not Jezebel's alone. There was Ahab's greed, there was Jezebel's scheme, there was the obedience of the elders and nobles, there was the false testimony of the scoundrels, and there was the violence of the crowd. Before God, evil can appear woven together like this.

Today as well, the work of opposing the gospel of the water and the Spirit may not be accomplished by one person's evil alone. One person may take part in damaging the inheritance of God for his own profit, another out of fear of human power, another because he is deceived by false teaching. Therefore we must not move according to the mood or the power of men, but discern according to the word of God. The Church of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit are not things that can be torn down by the will of man.

Jezebel Heard of the Death and Still Did Not Repent

"And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise,

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take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.'" (1 Kings 21:15).

When Jezebel heard the news that Naboth was dead, she did not grieve. Nor was she afraid. Rather, she told Ahab to arise and take possession of the vineyard. Since Naboth was not alive but dead, he should now take the vineyard.

To her, Naboth's life did not matter. Nor did the inheritance of God matter. All that mattered was obtaining the vineyard Ahab wanted. When human greed deepens like this, it regards even another's life and the word of God as means for achieving its desire.

This scene is a fearful warning before God. The heart that would make God's vineyard one's own vegetable garden ends by harming people and damaging the inheritance of God. The church today must be a vineyard that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit; if it is turned into a vegetable garden for gaining human honor, material things, and power, that is following the road of Ahab and Jezebel. The Church of God is the place that preaches the righteousness of God completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death—not a place that fills the fleshly desires of man.

Ahab Went to Take the Fruit of Death as His Own

"So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (1 Kings 21:16).

When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up at once. The man who before had lain on his bed sullen and displeased, refusing even to eat, arose the moment he heard the news of

Naboth's death and went down to take possession of the vineyard. He may not have thrown the stones with his own hands, but he sought to receive and take the fruit of that death. Therefore Ahab cannot escape this sin.

God then sent Elijah and said to Ahab, *"Have you murdered and also taken possession?" (1 Kings 21:19).* God knew all these things. People hid their sin behind religious forms, false testimony, and the king's seal, but before God it could not be hidden.

Ahab seemed to have obtained Naboth's vineyard, but in fact he had drawn the judgment of God upon himself. To seize the inheritance of God and make it one's own is never a blessing. It is the beginning of judgment.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must stand before this word with an even more fearful heart. The inheritance God has given cannot be seized or changed by man. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again from death—is the inheritance of life God has given us. We must not change or damage this inheritance for our own desire.

We Must Stand with the Faith That Keeps God's Vineyard

1 Kings chapter 21, verses 11 through 16, shows how the evil that sought to seize God's inheritance used religious form, power, and false evidence. The elders and nobles moved as Jezebel's letters directed; the form called fasting became the

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tool of an evil plot; and the scoundrels killed Naboth with false testimony. Jezebel tried to seize the vineyard by using a death, and Ahab went down to take that vineyard.

But God saw this matter. He saw Naboth's blood, saw the greed that would seize the vineyard, and saw the false testimony and the religious hypocrisy. Before the eyes of God, man can hide nothing.

Therefore we must not make God's vineyard into a vegetable garden. The church that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and our faith, are the precious inheritance God has given. Our faith is to keep and preach the righteousness of God completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death. We must stand firmly on the Word so that human greed, worldly power, and false religious forms cannot seize this inheritance.

God Sees Even the Hidden Sins

"Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it" (1 Kings 21:17–18).

Ahab heard the news that Naboth was dead and went down at once to take possession of his vineyard. Outwardly it seemed that the owner of the vineyard was dead and nothing remained but for the king to take the land. But God was watching all of it. God knew everything—that Jezebel had written letters in Ahab's name, that the elders and nobles had proclaimed a fast, and that two scoundrels had killed Naboth with false testimony.

God spoke to Elijah and told him to meet Ahab. People hid their sin behind the king's seal, religious forms, and legal

procedure, but before God it could not be hidden. God saw Naboth's blood, saw Ahab's greed, and saw Jezebel's scheme.

Today as well, God sees everything that opposes His Church and the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A person can speak pious words outwardly, keep the forms of faith, and justify his own gain. But God looks at the center. The heart that blurs the gospel of the water and the Spirit—completed by Jesus' receiving baptism from John and taking the sins of the world upon Himself, His receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and His rising again from death—or makes the inheritance of God a tool of its own greed, cannot be hidden before God.

The Sin of Murdering and Also Taking Possession Was Rebuked

"You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: Have you murdered and also taken possession?' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours'" (1 Kings 21:19).

God said to Ahab, *"Have you murdered and also taken possession?"* This word pierces Ahab's sin precisely. He wanted Naboth's vineyard, and Jezebel killed Naboth to fulfill that desire. Even if Ahab did not throw the stones himself, he went to take the fruit of that death. Therefore God said to him, "You have murdered."

Ahab's sin did not end with greed. He killed an innocent man and seized the inheritance that had come down from that man's fathers. This vineyard was an inheritance God had granted. Naboth refused the king's proposal in order to keep

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that inheritance. Yet Ahab and Jezebel killed the man who kept the word of God and seized his inheritance.

This is a very solemn warning from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Church of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit are not things a man may seize or change for the profit of his own flesh. The Word of salvation completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death is the inheritance of life God has given. To damage this inheritance for one's own honor, material things, power, or religious profit is a great sin before God.

Ahab, Who Regarded God's Servant as His Enemy

"So Ahab said to Elijah, 'Have you found me, O my enemy?' And he answered, 'I have found you" (1 Kings 21:20).

Seeing Elijah, Ahab said, "O my enemy." This is Ahab's spiritual state. He regarded the servant of God who rebuked his sin as an enemy. Ahab's real enemy was not Elijah. His enemy was the greed within himself, the idolatry, and the obstinate heart that went against God. Yet he hated the servant who delivered the word of God.

The person who is in sin is made uncomfortable by the word of God. When he hears the Word that exposes his greed, the Word that rebukes the wrong of his faith, he may treat the one who delivers that Word as an adversary rather than repent. Ahab could have heard the will of God through Elijah's words, but he treated Elijah like a foe.

Today as well, there are people who regard the Word that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit as an adversary. When they hear the truth that Jesus took all our sins upon

Himself by receiving baptism from John, the incomplete Cross-only faith they have held is exposed. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a Word meant to harm anyone. It is the Word of God's love that delivers us from sin. We must not regard this Word as an enemy, but hear it as the Word of life that turns us from our sins and our false belief.

The Man Who Sold Himself to Do Evil

"And he answered, 'I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 21:20).

Elijah said to Ahab, *"You have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 21:20)*. Ahab was not a man who had sinned because he could not help it. He was a man who had given himself over to evil. He followed the sin of Jeroboam, served Baal and Asherah, and did not refuse that road even as he was dragged along by Jezebel. Coveting Naboth's vineyard also lay on the extension of that evil life.

The word "sold yourself" is very fearful. A person follows his own desires until in the end he becomes a slave of sin. At first it looks like a small craving, but if he keeps holding on to that craving, he ends up giving himself over to the road God hates. Ahab was a king, but in reality he was a slave of sin, of greed, and of idols.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the Word of God that delivers us from slavery to sin. Jesus took our sins upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us from sin by rising again from death. The one who believes this truth is no longer a person sold to sin, to his own righteousness, or to

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golden-calf faith. He is a person who belongs to the righteousness of God.

The Sin of Making Israel Sin Was Judged

"Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin" (1 Kings 21:21–22).

God said He would make Ahab's house like the house of Jeroboam and like the house of Baasha. The reason was that Ahab had provoked God to anger and made Israel sin. Ahab's sin was not only a personal moral failure. As king he led the people into wrong faith. He made them abandon the LORD God and serve the golden calves, Baal, and Asherah.

Here lies the reason God weighs a leader's sin so heavily. When one man goes the wrong way, he does not perish alone. Those who follow him go the wrong way together. Jeroboam's sin broke down the whole of northern Israel, and Ahab carried that sin on still more deeply.

Today as well, it is a grave problem when a leader of faith guides people without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If he does not preach the truth that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, but speaks only of the blood of the Cross so that sin remains as it is in people's hearts, that is not leading souls rightly. A servant of God is not one who binds people to himself, but one who leads them to God, having them receive the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jezebel's Sin Was Also Exposed before God

"And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'" (1 Kings 21:23).

God spoke judgment not only concerning Ahab but also concerning Jezebel. Jezebel had brought Baal worship deep into Israel, had killed the prophets of God, and had devised the plot that killed Naboth. She was the one who had made Ahab's greed come true in an even more evil way.

God did not overlook Jezebel's sin. Jezebel could move people with power and scheming, but she could not escape the judgment of God. God saw how she had caused Naboth's blood to be shed, and He said He would surely repay that evil.

This word shows us that consenting to sin and instigating it are also judged before God. Even if a person does not carry out the desire with his own hands, if he stirs up another to seize the inheritance of God and to harm the servants and the people of God, he cannot escape responsibility for that sin. It is the same with opposing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even without opposing it directly, if one joins his heart to the road of defending false faith and hindering the Church of God, he takes part in that sin.

The Judgment of God Cannot Be Escaped

"The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.'" (1 Kings 21:24).

God spoke concretely of the judgment to come upon Ahab's house. He said that the dogs would eat whoever died in

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the city, and the birds of the air would eat whoever died in the field. This means that Ahab's house would receive a thorough judgment.

God is longsuffering. He gave Ahab, too, many opportunities. On Mount Carmel He let him see that He is the true God; in the war with Syria He let him know who the LORD is; and He sent prophets to speak to him many times. But Ahab did not turn. In the end the word of judgment came upon the man who had despised God's longsuffering.

Today as well, God lets people hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the grace that turns them back before He judges. Whoever hears and believes the Word—that Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, was judged on the Cross, and saved sinners by rising again from death—receives salvation. But if one rejects this truth and holds on to his own righteousness and false belief to the end, he cannot escape the judgment of God.

Ahab's Evil Grew Deeper through Jezebel's Prompting

"But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up" (1 Kings 21:25).

The Scripture says that there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD. And it gives as one reason the prompting of Jezebel. Ahab was under her evil influence and failed to discern her words. He followed Jezebel's words more than the words of the servants God had raised up.

But the fact that Jezebel stirred him up does not make

Ahab's responsibility disappear. He was the king, and he had the responsibility to stand before the word of God. He should have refused the evil counsel, but he did not. Rather, following that counsel, he went down to take Naboth's vineyard.

For the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whose words he listens to is also important. However close the relationship from which a person's words come, and however sweet they sound, if they do not agree with the righteousness of God we must not follow them. We must listen to words that agree with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism Jesus received, the Cross, and His rising again from death. If we count man's words more precious than the word of God, the soul surely collapses.

Faith That Submits to Idols Is an Abominable Faith

"And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel" (1 Kings 21:26).

Ahab's sin was, in the end, the sin of submitting to idols. He did not submit to the LORD God but submitted to idols. He followed the abominable road of the Amorites, whom God had cast out before Israel. The king of Israel imitated the idolatry of the Gentiles and behaved very abominably.

An idol does not mean only an image made of stone or wood. Anything loved more than God, relied on more than God, and followed more than God can become an idol. For Ahab, power, greed, Jezebel's words, and Baal were idols. He counted his own desire greater than the inheritance God had given.

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In the faith of today as well, idols can arise at any time. If a person says he believes in Jesus but in his heart seeks material things, honor, and worldly blessings more than God, he can fall into golden-calf faith. If he does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit but holds to his own zeal and religious tradition, that too is not right faith before God. True faith is to submit to the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given.

We Must Be Keepers of God's Inheritance, Not Seizers of It

1 Kings chapter 21, verses 17 through 26, shows that God did not pass over the sin of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was rebuked for the sin of murdering and also taking possession. He was a man who had sold himself to do evil, and a king who had made Israel sin. Jezebel also did not escape the judgment of God. They tried to make God's vineyard a field of their own desire, and in the end they received the word of judgment.

Before this word, we must keep the inheritance of God with fear. The most precious inheritance God has given us is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us the complete remission of sin and new life by rising again from death. We must not exchange this truth for human desire and worldly gain.

The Church of God is a vineyard. It is not man's vegetable garden. It is the place where the righteousness of God is preached and the souls who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit bear fruit. We must not try to seize that vineyard with our own desire like Ahab and Jezebel, but stand with the

faith that keeps the inheritance God has given, like Naboth. That is the right posture the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must have before God.

Ahab, Brought Low before the Word of God

"So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning" (1 Kings 21:27).

Ahab heard the word of God's judgment through Elijah. God had rebuked Ahab, *"Have you murdered and also taken possession?" (1 Kings 21:19),* and had said He would bring calamity on his house. When he heard this word, Ahab tore his clothes, girded sackcloth on his body, and fasted. He lay in sackcloth, and he went about mourning. This was an outward sign of humbling himself.

Ahab was an evil king before God. He had walked the road of the golden calves following the sin of Jeroboam, had made Israel serve Baal and Asherah together with Jezebel, and had gone as far as killing the innocent Naboth while coveting his vineyard. Therefore we must not regard his humbling as the completion of true faith. Yet it is a fact that before the word of judgment he feared and was brought low.

The word of God brings a person low. Even a man as obstinate as Ahab, when the word of judgment came, tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. Today as well, a person must first see his sin and his wrong belief before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When one stands before the Word—that God had Jesus receive baptism from John so that He would take the sins of the world upon Himself, had Him receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by His

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rising again from death—man's self-righteousness and religious boasting can only be brought low.

Outward Humbling Is Not Everything

Ahab tore his clothes and fasted. But the Scripture does not record that he completely abandoned the golden calves and Baal at this time. Nor does it record that he fully left Jezebel's road. He was brought low in fear before the word of judgment, but his whole life had not completely returned to God.

Therefore this passage makes us think about the difference between outward humbling and true turning. A person can be brought low for a while when he meets something fearful. Hearing the word of judgment, he can grieve and fast. But true repentance does not end with merely sorrowing and fearing. True repentance is returning to the way God has appointed.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a person must not stop at grieving over his sins. He must believe the truth that Jesus took all my sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved me completely by rising again from death. Sin does not disappear merely because the heart is pricked and tears flow. The remission of sin is received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has accomplished.

God Saw the Humbled Appearance

"And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying" (1 Kings 21:28).

After Ahab was brought low, the word of the LORD came again to Elijah. God had been watching Ahab. God saw him tear his clothes, put on sackcloth, fast, and walk slowly. Man sees only the outward appearance, but God sees also the fear and the lowering of self behind that appearance.

God is righteous. He did not pass over Ahab's sin. He saw Naboth's blood and said He would judge the evil of Ahab and Jezebel. But God is at the same time longsuffering. When Ahab was brought low before the word of judgment, God spoke of that to Elijah.

In this we must see the character of God. God hates sin, but He wants the sinner to turn. That is why He has the gospel of the water and the Spirit preached today as well. If God had spoken to us only of judgment, no one could live. But God sent Jesus Christ, and opened the way of life for sinners: Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose again from death.

The Mercy of God, Who Deferred the Calamity

"'See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.'" (1 Kings 21:29).

God said to Elijah, "*See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me?" (1 Kings 21:29).* And because Ahab had humbled himself before Him, He said He would not bring the calamity in his days, but would bring it on his house in the days of his son. God did not treat Ahab's sin as if it had never been. The judgment itself was not canceled; it was deferred.

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This word shows together the mercy and the justice of God. God looks upon the one who humbles himself. But He also certainly carries out justice upon sin. The judgment on Ahab's house did not disappear. Only, God did not bring that calamity in Ahab's days but pushed it back.

This gives us an important lesson. A person's being briefly brought low does not solve the problem of sin forever. The problem of sin must be dealt with in God's righteous way without fail. That is why Jesus took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. And by rising again from death He gave us the complete salvation. Only within the gospel of the water and the Spirit is sin completely dealt with.

From the Humbling of Fear We Must Go On to the Turning of Faith

Ahab's humbling became the occasion of the calamity being deferred before God. But when we look at Ahab's whole life, he was not a man who fully obeyed the word of God to the end. Afterward, too, he did not listen to the word of God's servant Micaiah, and in the end he died on the battlefield just as the word of God had said. Therefore Ahab's humbling should be seen not as the completion of true faith, but as a temporary lowering of himself before the word of judgment.

Today as well, a person can fear when he hears the word of God. He can realize his sin and his heart can grow heavy. But he must not stop there. Fear must go on to faith, and humbling must lead to the true turning that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

What God wants is not merely the wearing of sackcloth.

What God wants is for a person to turn from his sins and his wrong faith and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ has accomplished. It is to believe the fact that through the baptism Jesus received our sins were passed on to Him, that those sins were judged on the Cross, and that the Lord who rose again from death has given us new life.

We Must Make God's Deferral an Opportunity for Salvation

That God did not bring the calamity upon Ahab at once was a deferral granted to him. But a deferral does not mean that the sin has disappeared. While God delays the judgment, man must turn. Ahab should have seized that opportunity with a true turning.

To us also God gives time to hear the Word. That He lets us hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit is His longsuffering. To the person who says he believes in Jesus yet still has sin in his heart, to the person who holds only to the blood of the Cross and does not know the baptism of Jesus, and to the person who follows worldly blessings and his own desires as if they were God, God still today lets the gospel of the water and the Spirit be heard. This is the mercy that turns us back before He judges.

Therefore we must not end, like Ahab, with only a brief show of humbling. We must make God's deferral an opportunity for salvation. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and turn from our sins and false faith. We must not spend in vain the time of grace God has given.

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True Humility Is Revealed in Believing the Righteousness of God

1 Kings chapter 21, verses 27 through 29, shows that even toward the evil Ahab, God saw his humbled appearance and deferred the calamity. God does not take sin lightly, but He is the One who looks upon the lowly. Yet, as in Ahab's case, being outwardly brought low is not enough. True humility is abandoning one's own way before the word of God and returning to the way of righteousness God has appointed.

The person who has truly been brought low before the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not assert his own righteousness. He does not say that he can wash away his sins by his own religious zeal. He believes only the righteousness of God: that Jesus took my sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved me wholly by rising again from death.

Therefore this word teaches us two things. God is the God of mercy who looks upon the humble. But He is not One who passes over sin without dealing with it righteously. We must go beyond Ahab's temporary humbling and stand before God with the true turning that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only in that faith are there the remission of sin and true life. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

If You Make the Church Your Own, the Curse of God Comes upon You

< 1 Kings 21:1-16 >

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!' So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'' Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' And she

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wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, 'Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.' And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.' So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

This passage is about something that happened in the days of King Ahab of northern Israel. Because of this affair, Queen Jezebel was killed in the end, and dogs tore at her corpse and dogs licked her blood. Northern Israel was the nation Jeroboam had founded. Jeroboam was a man who stood against God. God

entrusted the nation to him for a while, but he did not turn back and kept leading that nation in order to protect his own authority. After Jeroboam died his son became king, and after several kings Ahab became king. Ahab seems to have been a man who looked very weak-willed.

Why Ahab Coveted Naboth's Vineyard

Ahab coveted the vineyard next to his royal palace. Having no vegetable garden, he had the thought that he would like to plant vegetables and put them on his own table. So he went to Naboth, the owner of the vineyard, and negotiated with him. He would pay him plenty of money, so sell it. But Naboth said he could never sell it. For this land was the inheritance handed down from his fathers for generations, the land he had received in order to keep it. However much one might be a king, it was not land that could be bought and sold. The people of Israel each had land handed down from generation to generation. When one died he passed it on to his descendants, and even if he had sold it because his circumstances were hard, when the fiftieth year came, the Jubilee, he could get it back again. In that way the land always remained that family's own. Seen in the flesh, it is so. But seen spiritually, this vineyard points to the Church of God.

Naboth, Killed by Jezebel's Scheme

Ahab was the king, and yet he tried to make that vineyard into a vegetable garden of his own private possession. When Naboth would not listen, he took to his bed sick, not even

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eating, because things did not go as he wished. Queen Jezebel came near and asked. Was something wrong? Why was he not eating? When Ahab told her the story, Jezebel said, *"You now exercise authority over Israel!" (1 Kings 21:7)*. You are the king, so why can you not do as you please? If one of the people will not listen, can you not simply take it from him?—that was her point. Do not worry, she said; I will take that land and give it to you. And Jezebel wrote letters to the people under her. Their content was to frame Naboth with the sin of having cursed God and the king and to kill him. She stamped King Ahab's seal on them and sent them. The officials could not but do as they were told.

The content of that decree was this: proclaim a fast and appoint a day for worshiping God, and then seat Naboth in a high place among the assembly. He was to be seated like an elder of the faith. Then they were to set up two scoundrels—men who would bear false witness for a few coins—and have them say that they had heard that man curse God and the king. In Israel, if there were just two witnesses, a man could be put to death on the spot and there was nothing to be said. Moreover, since the two sins of cursing God and cursing the king applied together, it was carried out just so. When the scoundrels testified falsely, the assembly at once dragged Naboth out and stoned him to death. There, amid streaming blood, he died on the spot. When the news that he was dead reached Jezebel, Jezebel went straight to Ahab and told him now to take Naboth's vineyard. That is the content of today's passage.

"Have you murdered and also taken possession?"

Reading what follows, Elijah meets King Ahab and speaks.

It says, *"You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours"'" (1 Kings 21:19).* God was saying that because of this affair He would judge Jezebel and Ahab. In the end He made the dogs lick their blood and tear at their bodies. It was because they had killed their own people as they pleased and had tried to seize the vineyard. The reason the Bible has recorded this affair is to give us a truly precious lesson.

If You Make the Church Your Own, a Curse Comes upon You

Spiritually, the vineyard means the Church of God. This Word shows that if anyone tries to seize the Church of God by human ways and means, he is cursed. It was for this very thing that Jezebel was killed. When we look at those who stand against the Church of God, they are truly pitiful people. They treat the people under them carelessly and despise them, regarding them like slaves and creating an atmosphere of terror. But whoever does so is cursed. Whoever does not regard God's people as precious but treats them carelessly, thinking, 'I am the pastor of this church, I am the pastor's wife,' is cursed.

Neither must anyone try to make what belongs to the church his own. Everything is God's. We are only stewards entrusted with it for a while. We are only gatekeepers and keepers who keep it well and use it well; we are not the owners. The Owner is God. There are those who do not provide what the people under them need and who, if they do not listen, harass and threaten them. Who on earth can treat whom

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carelessly? Because one has become a leader of a church and a pastor, may one carelessly threaten those below? Upon those who do such things comes the stern judgment of God. I truly hate such a sight. And it is not only I who hate it. Whoever regards the people of God's Church as nothing, threatens them, and presses them down in the flesh is cursed. Who is with the people of God who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? God is with them. Though you and I are weak beings, because God is in us, we must see one another as precious ones, as those who have God dwelling in them. If instead anyone regards a person of God like his own slave, the curse is already fixed.

The Wretched End of Ahab and Jezebel

After this happened, God sent Elijah and rebuked Ahab. Did you kill a man as you pleased? Just as Naboth died and the dogs licked his blood, so the dogs will lick your blood also, He said. And it actually came to pass that way. Even after her husband died, Jezebel was still at the window, painting her eyes and adorning her head, looking down. Even as the army commander was coming to kill her, she asked, as if in mockery, "Is it peace?" The army commander said, what peace is there for you—who will throw Jezebel down from the wall, who will be on my side? Then the eunuchs who were beside Jezebel pushed her out of the window, and she fell and died. After she fell dead, the dogs came and tore and ate her whole body until nothing was left but her skull and her feet and the palms of her hands. The rest the dogs of the town ate up, licking even her blood, so that no corpse remained. That is God's will and God's Word. It means that if anyone despises the Church and

treats the workers of the Church carelessly like his own playthings, God punishes him like this.

Do Not Treat a Servant of God Carelessly

We must truly keep our wits about us. In the past, the house next door to the church once despised us severely. Though it was not even their own house, they would not let us drive in a nail or cut a tree. Unable to bear it any longer, I once asked in the name of God that a curse would come upon them. You may ask how a servant of God could do such a thing, but precisely because he is a servant of God, he can. We had never made enemies of them, nor done them any harm. Yet that house ended up suffering great hardship. The one who in earlier days would glare at me fiercely when he saw me on the street now lowers his head when he sees me and cannot even look at me. That attitude of treating people carelessly just because he had a house was broken like that. Such a thing is no more than what anyone can come to have.

Who Can Make God's Inheritance His Own?

Who can despise the Church of God and the people of God? Who can make the inheritance of God his own? Who can make you his own possession? We are all God's servants. Yet from time to time such people arise inside the church. If at the retreat we had not sifted out those who had fallen into a wrong path and were not saved, there would also have been those who would try to take the believers and leave. Who would follow someone out and earn money to hand over to him? It is because

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this is the Church of God that we earn material things and serve the gospel; who would earn money and bring it to offer to some other person? To think that such a thing could happen is itself foolish. Even one's own child—even a very young child—does not do such a thing. How much less would grown adults and young people do it? Who can make a person his own servant? To think so is itself foolish. Everyone, is it so, or is it not? —Yes, it is.—

King Ahab, Who Died in Battle

Because the king joined forces with his wife and killed one of his people, God judged that king. King Ahab, too, went out to war and died. He himself would have thought he merely died by ill luck, but in truth God judged him. What happened when Ahab died is this: Ahab joined hands with the king of southern Judah and went out to drive back the enemy. But Micaiah, the true prophet, told him not to go out, for God was not pleased. Around Ahab there were many prophets who flattered him, and Micaiah, who spoke the truth, was thrown into prison instead. As he was being imprisoned, Micaiah said that if the king returned in peace, the LORD had not spoken by him. This meant that he would not come back from the battle. Ahab was afraid, so he had the southern king wear his own royal robes, while he himself put on the clothes of an ordinary soldier and went out to the battlefield. But an arrow that some soldier shot without aiming happened to enter and lodge between the joints of Ahab's armor, and Ahab bled on his chariot and died. It was not even aimed; it was simply an arrow someone shot—yet the hand of God struck him.

The Virtuous Woman and the Foolish Woman

I do not like Jezebel. It is because she regarded her husband as nothing; though it is a wife's proper part to help her husband hold his head high and do his work well, she did not do so. We call a wife a helper within. It means one who helps from inside. But Jezebel played the king herself, killing people as she pleased and ruling the nation. As a result she killed her own husband, as it were; she herself died, and her children all died too. Of course a wife, too, must say what must be said, and so must a husband. In that way they must uphold the will of God together. But when the husband is reduced to counting for nothing, it is not right. Proverbs says that a virtuous woman turns the credit for her merit to her husband. Even when she has done well and receives praise, she turns it back, saying she did it because her husband told her how. A virtuous woman rises early at dawn and adorns herself before the family gets up; she prepares what her husband and children are to do, sets out the meals, and gives her family what she has made with her own hands. When something worthy of respect arises, she turns the credit to her husband. The Bible calls such a person a virtuous woman. What, then, is the foolish woman, her opposite? She says she herself did everything well. She says her husband is worthless and she did it all. The point is that we must not become like Jezebel. It may sound like someone else's story, but we must learn through this Word.

Do Not Steal the Glory That Should Return to God

We must all live for the glory of God. We must live so that the will of God is accomplished well. When some work has

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been achieved, we ought to give the glory, saying it was done by the faith and the wisdom God gave; yet when things go well, people swagger, saying it is because their own head is good. God blesses the person who gives honor and glory to God. But the person who takes for himself the glory that should return to God is cursed. Upon the person who makes the glory that should return to God his own private possession and lives only for himself, the curse of the LORD comes. Therefore we must be careful. There are such people inside the church too, and there are also those who imitate such a manner. When I see such a sight, it is truly pitiful. The head seems clever, but there is no wisdom. If one does not know how to honor the honorable, one is base. Money should be earned diligently and spent with dignity, on right things that benefit people. Both men and women must live that way. If you meet the wrong spouse, your life goes crooked. The one who has met a virtuous woman is a happy man.

Even with a husband who seems a little lacking, when the wife does some work well in the neighborhood and then says her husband told her to do it this way, people praise that husband. He receives respect: the man may seem a bit slow, but his thinking is sound; he is a man who cares for others. It is the same for a man. What is beautiful and what is personal, he turns over to his wife. When told that he dresses well, he says his wife did it for him; when told that his skin looks good, he says his wife has taken care of him. To do so is a great thing. When the husband is raised up, the wife is raised up together with him.

The End of a Minister Who Made Believers into Thieves

Sadly, there was such a case even among our ministers. One minister regarded his own wife as a holy person, but what that wife actually did was not so. That wife, it is said, ordered the believers to obtain expensive goods for her even by means that were not upright. She wanted to give her husband nice things, yet she would not buy them with money; she went so far as to teach the believers the method of secretly taking goods from a store, and had them do so. The believers, thinking it was right, did just so, several of them. Some, it is said, could not bring themselves to steal, so they worked and bought the items one by one to give her. I heard of this through a sister who was present there. Such a person is exactly like Jezebel. It is the attitude that her own people may go to prison or may even die.

If you make believers into thieves and kill them, you end up the same way yourself. In the end that minister left the church wretchedly. They demanded their offerings back, written out item by item. Our Church is a church that handed back even such offerings. Since Christianity came into being, the only ones who have taken back the offerings they gave are that family. Such people are, if anything, servile before the world. That minister's child was once injured on the head by glass at kindergarten, and over a matter in which they should rightly and openly have demanded compensation, they tried, it is said, to draw out state aid by making it look as though she were a widow without a husband. To avoid paying money, they went so far, it is said, as to take the form of a legal divorce. And that while the husband was alive and well. Such a sight is truly despicable. Why not do things that benefit others, instead of going so far as to turn a living spouse into a person who does not exist? Those

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who are like Jezebel tremble before the world, yet before the people of God they act without restraint, like a witch.

Where There Is a Cause, There Is a Result

Everyone, that is how it is. When we read the passage, it becomes a lesson at once. Why did it come to this? Because he seized the vineyard. Because he made what is God's his own, he received this curse. That is why he even killed a person. Where there is a cause, there is a result. Should a king, because he has no vegetable garden, seize another's land? God said, Did you kill as you pleased? I will judge you—and He judged the husband first, and the wife as well. I wanted to preach this sermon at the retreat, but I did not. It is because only a very small number of people do such things. When we read the passage, the cause, the process, and the result all appear. Because they did such things, such a result came out. Where is there a result without a cause?

All of us are insufficient, but we must seek the glory of God. Has God not blessed us? Has He not made us live well? He gives us the remission of sin, makes us His workers, and gives us the material things we need. What God gives us is truly much. If we are for God, God is also for us. *"Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12)*—this is the law of God. If someone says he wants to receive the remission of sin and receive God's blessing, and yet does not himself live for God, how could he receive blessing? When he tries to make what belongs to the church his own personal possession, what blessing would come upon him? Only a curse comes. There is what is called a holy thing—a holy object, an object offered to

God. We must not lay our hands on it. Whatever else one may do, if one makes what is God's one's own personal possession, one is cursed. We must make it clear whether a thing is common property or personal property.

The Church Is God's, Not Ours

I hope no such people will come forth. The reason I preach this sermon is that, granting that those who have already done so have done so, I want at least those who are now about to do so not to do it. There has been no one who did this and did not pay the price. I know beforehand. I know: that person, going on like that, will meet hardship. So I warn them. I tell them not to do it. For doing so is fatal to the person himself, to his children, and to his soul. Yet there are those who keep on. When I admonish a few times and then stop, those at their side who urge them on to do still more help them along. And then in the end they collapse greatly. I do not lay my hand on them. Even with one I would really like to deal with, I do not lay a hand on him but pray to God. God, please do according to Your justice. Please keep the church from suffering harm. Please keep the believers and the workers from feeling intimidated. Please handle it, God. So I pray. You also, look around you—whether there are such people or not. Such things are not many, but from time to time they arise even among our ministers, in particular cases. The ministers' wives and the brother ministers must also be careful. Do not mistake the church for your own. If you make the church your own, a curse comes. The church is God's, and we also are God's. Everything is God's. We are no more than those who are entrusted with it for a while, manage it profitably, and then go.

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When I die, do I take this with me? Can I pass it on to my child and go? I cannot. Long ago I declared plainly to my child: this belongs to the church, not to me; you, too, either work diligently and do God's work, or go out into the world, work uprightly, earn honestly, and live—your father has no inheritance to leave you. I am a man who from the first had nothing. I live with that made plain.

Our King Is Jesus

Because the believers and the workers of our Church obey well and say yes, yes, some take them for simpletons, but that is absolutely not so. They are God's people. Do not take them lightly. They live simply because they believe in God. What calculation is needed in believing in God? He is our Leader and our King, so it is the people's part to follow as the King leads and to obey as He commands. But would it do to scheme more cleverly than the King and try to drag the King along by one's own will? That is death itself. Jesus is our King. Would it do not to follow His commands and instead tell Jesus to follow us? Would it do for the church to tell Jesus to follow our will? We must follow the Lord. The Lord is the King.

There is a reason I preach this even though I seldom preach such sermons. It is to keep you from being cursed. If you do such things, a curse comes. Look around you once: see whether there is anyone who acts without restraint and yet receives blessing from God. They have all been cursed. Even if I name no names, you know them well. It is happening even now, in the present tense. To such people I would like to say: stop, while you are being told in kind words. I have finished the message. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

A Leader Fallen into Greed and the One behind Him

< 1 Kings 21:1-16 >

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!' So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'' Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were

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dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, 'Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.' And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.' So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Today is the Wednesday in the middle of the retreat. After just one more day passes, we will hold the Communion service and close. I know this retreat must have been hard for you. If you were so tired that you rested without knowing how the time passed, that too is good. The title I intend to preach on today is 'A Leader Fallen into Greed and the One behind Him.' In truth, I was very cautious about preaching this sermon. But

this is not a word aimed at any one individual; since the Bible speaks like this, it is that we should receive the lesson together. It by no means signifies that the sisters are like this or that the brothers are not. I only want to make this part clear in the light of the Scriptures.

The Reality of a Ministry That Indulges Greed

In this world there are pastors who are not satisfied even though their churches are large and great. Some set a goal of a hundred thousand church members, and some set smaller numbers as their goal. A church where ten thousand gather is by no means a small church. Even dividing into first, second, and third services with only three thousand gathering at each, that is roughly close to ten thousand. But when someone has set the goal at a hundred thousand and only three thousand are gathering now, he uses methods to inflate the numbers. He divides the worship into several services so that a thousand attend each, and keeps pressing the church members to bring in the people around them. He drives them on, saying there are many empty seats, and fills the place with people, handing out umbrellas or book coupons or even holding feasts. When ten thousand have gathered in that way, he tears down the existing sanctuary, buys the land next door, and builds bigger. Since the goal is a hundred thousand, he buys up the surrounding land and puts up a still bigger building. Then he increases the services to three, five, even seven, repeating the same sermon. And once he reaches thirty thousand in that way, he sets his goal at a hundred thousand.

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A Sanctuary Built by Mortgaging Church Members' Houses

To do that, money is needed—and how would he raise that money? Since he cannot bear it himself, he has the church members mortgage the houses they live in, take out loans, and give the money as offerings. If ten thousand people each offer ten million won, how much is that? It is a huge sum, as much as 100 billion won. He has them borrow that money from the bank and bring it all to the church, and with it he buys a large plot and builds the sanctuary. Someone like an elder mortgages his house and his business and gives several hundred million won. When that is done, a large building where thirty thousand can gather goes up, and the next hundred thousand they consider rather easy. It is because all they need to do is have people take out loans. My saying this is by no means a suggestion that we should do the same. I absolutely do not want to do that.

Most of the great sanctuaries of today were built by such methods. They were built not by saving up money, but by making people take out loans and give the money as offerings. It is much like the method of pulling out the lower stone to prop up the upper stone. Such a pastor throws his weight around even when pastors gather among themselves, and thinks nothing of money. At such a church, on Sundays a bank vehicle comes, and they even receive the offerings with money-counting machines set out. I am not trying to tell such a grandiose story today. The point is simply that such a sight is precisely greed. The heart is set only on material things. There were many greedy kings in Israel, and their representative is none other than King Ahab.

King Ahab, Who Coveted the Vineyard

King Ahab greatly coveted the vineyard beside the royal palace. He meant to buy that field, cut down all the grapevines, and plant vegetables. But Naboth the Jezreelite, the owner of the field, would not hand it over even when the king offered to buy it, even when he proposed to exchange it for a broader and better vineyard farther away. It was because the people of Israel had the custom of passing their land down from generation to generation. The land inherited from one's ancestors had to be passed on to one's descendants as well, so however much he was the king, it could not be handed over. So Naboth refused to the end.

Jezebel's Scheme and Naboth's Death

When things did not go as he wished, Ahab came home, wrapped his head, lay down, and would not even eat. Being the king, he must have had a lavish table set before him, yet he did not touch it but covered his face with the bedding and turned away. When his wife asked why he was not eating, he said that he wanted that vineyard but the owner would not sell it. That wife's name is Jezebel. Jezebel egged her husband on, asking whether he was not the king who ruled Israel. This was a jeer that he could not even play the king properly. Telling him not to worry, for she would obtain what the king desired, she wrote a decree in the king's name, stamped it with the royal seal, and sent it to the officials. It said to invite Naboth, proclaim a fast, seat him in a high place, and then set up two false witnesses to testify that he had cursed God and the king. In Israel there was the custom that once that happened, the man was stoned to

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death on the spot. It was carried out just so, and Naboth died. Then Jezebel told her husband to go quickly and take the vineyard, and Ahab arose and took possession of that field.

When Desire Has Conceived, It Gives Birth to Sin

We may look at this historical account and think, what great lesson could there be in it? But if we harbor greed, we are certain to commit sin, just as the Word says, *"When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15)*. Even if we long to possess something and it comes about just as we wished, it comes about together with sin. Some people, without even the capacity, only inflate their ambitions, building huge sanctuaries and trying to increase their numbers. And what moves a man like this is often the wife behind him.

Ministry Is Not Done Alone

When the wife eggs him on from behind and presses him, asking whether he cannot even do that much, he is often dragged along as she says and ruins things. Ministry is not done alone. It is not something the husband does alone, or the brother does alone; the minister's wife must be there together with him, the two adjusting each other, one holding the other up when one goes wrong, fitting themselves together to the will of God—that is ministry. But when a wife more greedy than her husband drives him on from behind, he often does as she says and comes to ruin. The man who does not listen to his wife's words at all is foolish, and the man who follows only

her words one hundred percent and goes only in that direction is also foolish. A man should hear out his wife's opinion, but first he must be without covetousness. Without covetousness he must weigh the matter publicly before God—whether this is something God will be pleased with, whether now is the time or it is a time to hold back—and examine it well. If it is not the will of God, he must refuse it resolutely.

In fact a man should listen to his wife's words, and things go well only when he listens to a great deal of them. In small and detailed matters, the women are far brighter and more sensible. Setting aside man or woman, he should accept them, saying, you are right—you are telling me what I had failed to think of—and adjust the timing and fit things to the will of God. But to go only in that direction unconditionally because she is right is not manliness. A man must have a firm center, and when great matters are decided he must hold the final say. It is because if he makes that decision wrongly even once, the whole household collapses. If it is truly the will of God and right, he must follow it; but if, looking far ahead and at the whole, he judges that this is not it, he must very resolutely say no. Even if the thing can be achieved for the moment, if it is a road on which one cannot succeed afterward, the very moment of achieving it is failure.

Being Ruined, Rather, by Succeeding

No one knows how many things there are in this world that are ruined, rather, by succeeding. For example, our soccer is not greatly ahead in skill; if, because we happened to beat a strong opponent once, we regard ourselves as the best in the world, we end up collapsing greatly because of that very victory. If we get

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drunk on success at the time when we ought to be building up more skill, there is no next time. What ought to be delayed must be delayed, and what cannot be carried must be laid down. Now Jezebel egged her husband on, seized the vineyard by her own ways and means, and presented it to the king as a gift. Is this success? That very moment Elijah, the servant of God, appeared and declared, you shall surely die. Jezebel died horribly, and the dogs tore and ate her whole corpse. It came to pass exactly as the prophecy—the dogs will eat the flesh of your body, and the dogs will lick your blood as well. The Bible shows in this way that filling one's greed is not succeeding.

Being Used Matters More than Office

The best thing for us is to carry out the work God has entrusted to us, offer it up to Him, and see His will accomplished. What matters is whether or not I am used here; whether my rank rises higher or I lord it over others has nothing to do with it. The person who thinks he has succeeded when he quickly becomes a pastor, quickly sits in a high place, and lords it over others collapses instead. In the early days circumstances left no choice but to appoint people hurriedly, but those who became pastors in haste and collapsed instead are not just one or two. As one's office rises and what one is entrusted with increases, one must anxiously watch over oneself, examining whether one is carrying it out properly. The person who, even when others exalt him, does not set his heart there, but humbly serves the Lord regardless of praise—that person is a truly decent person and a person without covetousness. When there is no covetousness in the heart, both body and mind are at ease; why then set the heart high on that

part and make things hard for oneself? Nor does being seated in a high place mean one does everything well. If one cannot do it oneself, one should pray, and join strength with one's fellow workers and the church family and do it together; if one lords it over the people below as if abusing them, and shouts loudly, that position does not last long.

Why I Do Not Put My Name Forward

In the early days, things like doctoral degrees were sent to me from abroad several times. I simply kept them without a word, meaning to use them if they were needed for spreading the gospel. I once thought this: who is supposed to be giving whom a degree? For it is not by having a degree that one preaches the gospel. A degree is of use only when it benefits the spread of the gospel; if it is not needed, it is of no use at all. As you know, I have not put my face in the overseas translated editions. People want to show their faces. If it benefited the gospel I would not refuse even to show my face, but I was concerned that the truth of the Bible might instead be taken for a story some one man told out of his own private understanding, and become a stumbling block. So when overseas coworkers wanted to see me, I sometimes asked Pastor Shin, who is better-looking, more generous, and faithful than I, to appear in my place. This was a request, not an order. If it does not benefit the gospel, it is better not to do it. If it seems that you and I being exalted will not benefit the gospel, it is better not to be exalted; and if it is a work one cannot carry out, it is better not to take on that office. Still, if the church entrusts it, one should carry it out; and if one cannot do it alone, one should cooperate and do it together.

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If You Cast Off Covetousness, You Are Truly Happy

It is truly good to live having cast off covetousness. Seeing the things arising these days inside our Church, I grieve—why harbor covetousness? Because one is a pastor, or a pastor's wife, or an evangelist, everyone inside the church calls them 'nim'—an honorific—and respects them. If you calmly carry out the work entrusted to you, they call you 'nim' here and 'nim' there—'nim' on every side. In the world, however high a seat one sits in, one is always criticized; who receives as much respect as our ministers do? A hundred and fifty people all call you 'nim'—how thankful a thing is that? Living like that is truly happy; why then insist on indulging greed and losing it? I gave this sermon its title because I heard that behind a wrong pastor there was a greedy wife. Thankfully, behind those among us now who are carrying out their ministry well, there are, rather, wives without greed. That the brother workers are serving the Lord well now is proof that the wives and the sisters and the family members behind them sincerely recognize them and push them forward. I do not wish to slander anyone's insufficiency carelessly. It is because I too have such weakness. The point is simply that we must not be excessively greedy.

We must reckon up what we are now enjoying—that He has given us the opportunity to serve the Lord and given us health. We must think how much we have received before God and how thankful a thing it is, and give thanks. Would happiness come by keeping on being greedy for a little more, and a little more? If, like a leech, one tries to grab hold of more, there can be no happiness. How precious is the work each of us has been entrusted with! We have only to carry it out with

thanksgiving. We have ministered for more than twenty years, and now a hundred and fifty gather. Is this failure? No. This is true success. I would not exchange you for six billion people. Though the number is small, here are God's workers who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. However many church members and pastors there are in the world, they are different from those who harbor greed and do this as an occupation. If a thief steals much, that may be success in its own way; but seen from God's perspective, it is not success.

There is a saying that the person who has truly emptied his heart is, rather, at ease. The beggar under the bridge has nothing to catch fire and no property to lose. When a great fire broke out in a village, the beggar father under the bridge, it is said, told his son this: know that you are rather at ease in heart because you met this father of yours well; look at that burning house over there; we have nothing to burn and nothing to lose—how good is that; and since every day we beg our food and eat white rice and glutinous rice and all kinds, you are eating five-grain rice, as it were. There is no worry about farming, and no worry about being swept away by the water, he meant. These days there are even beggars who are better off. There are said to be people who ride around in a fine car, change their clothes in a restroom, put on a beggar's appearance, sit at a good spot, and take in no small amount of money all day long. Such people, the story goes, have no taxes to pay and nothing to lose of their property. Of course this is not to say, become beggars. It only means that when you lay down greed from your heart, to that extent there is no anxiety. We serve the Lord inside the church, live our daily lives, and eat our meals—what more would we wish for?

These days we have received a few cows and are raising them. They are cows an elderly man used to raise, personally

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cutting good grass to feed them; but it became too much for his strength, so we have taken them on and come to raise them. I tend them dreaming a simple dream—that someday, when a calf is born and grows, we might slaughter one at the retreat and share it together as in the old days. We have given each of the cows a name; when you go there, two are gentle, and one steps forward and keeps watch as if to protect the herd. Even beasts know how to protect their own herd like that. When we eat, too, we need only eat suitably with thanksgiving, without indulging greed. In our congregation there is no one who looks after things separately for the pastor or for anyone else, so even the praises to be sung at worship, each must see to his own. That simplicity of each seeing to his own is truly good. Though our brothers and sisters may not have achieved anything great in the world, I know that living like this, serving this gospel, is truly happy.

I do not harbor any grand ambition. Nor do I wish for the numbers to grow. What I want is about enough to be able to remember your faces one by one. Only, the gospel is preached to the whole world. Person by person, sound people gather to become the church, and through that congregation the gospel is spread to the whole world. I think it is enough if, as God has allowed, we look after the workers within so that they can live with their minds at ease, treat those who are sick, and serve well until the day the Lord comes. Ahab, in the end, went out to war and died when an arrow the other side shot without aiming lodged in a joint of his armor; and Jezebel, behaving arrogantly even after her husband died, was killed by her own people, falling to her death below the window, and the dogs tore and ate her corpse until nothing was left but her skull and her feet and the palms of her hands. It came to pass exactly as God’s prophecy. Balaam, too, came to such an end by

indulging greed. Those who indulged their greed have all been ruined.

Preaching at length does not make a sermon good. With the title alone, everything has already been delivered. With this one phrase, ‘A Leader Fallen into Greed and the One behind Him,’ I trust that the ministers’ wives have resolved not to become such people, and I trust that the brother ministers have already realized that indulging greed is not good. Nothing good can ever come of covetousness. To serve the Lord without covetousness, just as the Lord has allowed, is true happiness.

Even though we do not indulge greed, I want the Lord to fill up everything we need and bless us. I believe that Christ our King, becoming our God and our Shepherd and our King, will become our Helper, keep our church and all our family, accomplish all the works of the Lord, and bless us. May the Lord work. I have finished the message. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Spoiling the Vineyard Is the Greatest Evil

< 1 Kings 21:1-19 >

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!' So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'' Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were

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dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, 'Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.' And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.' So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.''''

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As we have read in this passage, the king, trying to seize his own subject's vineyard to make it a vegetable field, failed to get his way, and so killed that subject and took it in the end. And the word is that right there the gospel of God is contained. Give the vineyard, that it may become a vegetable garden. Those who do not farm may not know it well, but to one who farms this is a serious matter. The vineyard was close to the royal palace, and he meant to buy it in and turn it into a field. He meant to plant things like lettuce and spinach.

Why would the Bible record such a thing? The people of Israel regard the faith or the field or the belief inherited from their ancestors as exceedingly precious. And unless one gives it up oneself, another cannot take it away at will. But Ahab, who had become king of Israel, tried to take the vineyard, and when it did not go as he wished, he came home and lay down, refusing all food and drink. Then Jezebel asked why he was not eating. Jezreel is the name of a region. There is a vineyard close to the royal palace belonging to a man named Naboth who lives in the region of Jezreel, he answered; I want to have that vineyard, but though I offered money and told him to sell it, he will not sell; though I proposed to exchange it for a better vineyard, he will not exchange it; and invoking the name of the LORD he says he cannot give it—so I am vexed and lying down like this.

Hearing her husband's words, what did Jezebel say? It is truly pitiable talk. Verse 7 says, "*Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.'" (1 Kings 21:7).* Are you really the king of Israel—can a king not do as he pleases?—so she pressed him. "*You now exercise authority over Israel!*" Are you really the one who rules the nation? You are not—that is what she

meant. Jezebel, as you know, is a Gentile woman. She is a woman who came in marriage into the royal house of Israel. That a woman of a Gentile nation opened the way of marriage with the royal house of Israel is a wrong that originally began in the days of Solomon. How could a woman of a Gentile nation and a king of Israel marry? It is a thing that makes no sense, and yet this was the plain reality.

Why I Preach This Word

What am I saying now? Since we have read this Word in full, we know its content and we also know its spiritual meaning. Then why do I preach this Word—is it to censure someone? Absolutely not. I mean to preach it so that you and I, hearing this Word, may receive a great lesson and not fall into this kind of error.

A Word for the Growing Young Sprouts

There are many young sprouts growing up inside our Church. They have inherited the faith through their parents and are growing. In the Bible we see the word that Timothy, too, inherited the faith of his mother and his grandmother and worked truly faithfully. Our growing young sprouts, while they were young, regardless of their own will, have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit just as we do, believed in God, and lived the life of faith. Doing so, they go on to middle school, go on to high school, and become young adults. And what kind of heart arises then? The point is that this is universal. It is not that only one or two are like this; it can

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appear in most of them. So the growing young sprouts must listen well to this Word. Whether Jong-man or Jong-hwan or Min-seok, or the sisters who do not come readily into my sight—though my eyes are dim and I cannot see well, I can still speak, so I ask you to listen well.

Everyone, let me first state the conclusion in a word: we must not become like Ahab or Jezebel. You may say, when did we ever say we would become like that?—we have made no such resolve in our hearts, and we have no such heart. Even so, why would the Bible have recorded this affair? Is it not recorded because such a thing actually happened? It means it is a thing that happened. Everyone, when it comes to the vineyard, Jesus said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5)*. It is a Word that points to the church. The vegetable garden, on the other hand, is just a vegetable garden. It is an individual's private property, farmed in order to make a living.

The Heart That Would Turn the Vineyard into a Vegetable Garden

Everyone, these children who have grown up in this way apart from their parents' faith—at first their faith grew up well and all was good. But as they get older, fleshly thoughts arise. What am I? Believing in God is good and all is good, but what am I?—the thought of their own flesh rises up. My parents' faith is my parents' faith; I have grown up to a degree, so what am I inside this church? I live this hard for the Lord, and yet it is not something I do because I want to, nor something I settled by faith and do; I do it because I cannot help it, since my parents do it—such a question arises, that is. They come to have an occasion to look back on themselves once and examine

themselves. Children are all like that. Do you think elementary schoolers would not be? Even in the third or fourth grade—no, even in the first grade—children think all the thoughts there are.

Only, having done much wrong to their parents, they are afraid and cannot express their opinions well; then, as they get older, they assert themselves strongly. In fact, when we put ourselves in their place and think about it, there is some reason in the children's claims too. The point is that the fleshly thought—what am I?—rises up in you and in me. Especially in the growing young sprouts it rises up all the more, because the thing called the self is being formed. And with it arises the heart that wants to become independent. So it is that, while being inside the church, they do not fix their hearts firmly and serve the Lord; they have not settled it by knowing and believing that it is right to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and live this way; rather, because it is an environment in which they live unavoidably by circumstance, in the course of living, these things spring up. The heart that would turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden comes to spring up, that is. Such people are those who follow the desires of their own flesh.

When the Work of God Becomes the Work of One's Own Flesh

Everyone, adult or child, where is there a person without fleshly desire? Everyone has a heart that wants to build his own world. But the point is that one can change the work of God into the work of one's own flesh. The work of God is strictly the work of God; yet if one does the work of God without fixing one's heart, holding fleshly greed, in the end one cannot

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but work for the profit of one's own flesh. It is not easy for me to say these things. It is uncomfortable for you who hear it, and it is not comfortable for me who says it either. But this is a plain fact. In the churches across the country there are now many growing young sprouts, and there are also children who have already graduated from high school and become young adults. In a few years there will be almost no Sunday school left in our congregation. Raising children is truly hard work.

So the point is that the work of God becomes the work of one's own flesh. One does the work of God, but in the end it becomes one's own work. The point is that serving the Lord and doing the work of the calyx become the work of one's own flesh. Then the fleshly heart rises up—I serve the Lord like this, but what comes back to me?—and it rises up in the adults too. The church does nothing for me, and rather only gives me more work and makes me do more, it goes.

The Worries That Come after Receiving the Remission of Sin

Everyone, how much conflict must those who minister full-time feel in their hearts? I spoke of it much in the old days. I said that after receiving the remission of sin, worries rather increase—the worries of getting through this world increase. For when we have received the remission of sin like this, come often to the church, and live united with it, the worry of how we will live through this world becomes a mountain. That is the thorny ground. Right after you first received the remission of sin, you had more worries, did you not? Is it so, or is it not? —Yes, it is.— I once told you frankly that I had meant to go into the business of selling cauldrons. After I met the Lord, I

could not bear the anxiety. Knowing and believing this gospel, I would have to serve this gospel, and would have to carry on life in society too, and would have to do still more of God's work—so the worries became a mountain. The thought came: living like this, might I not be weeded out in society and end up in hard circumstances—and then what glory would I bring before God?

You are all the same. After receiving the remission of sin, you are told to keep coming to church, told to come on Sunday, told to serve, told to do the work of the calyx; and the thought arises that, being united with the church like this, you will fail to do your own work and your circumstances will become difficult. The thought also arises: I was a decent person in our neighborhood—if my circumstances become hard, what will the people who know me say? Those who do the Lord's work without having fixed their hearts are caught in precisely this trap.

One Who Died with Christ and Rose Again

In following the Lord we fix our hearts: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The Word is that when we believe in the Lord together with Christ, the Lord already bore our sins by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and died hanging on the Cross. Therefore you and I hung on the Cross and died together with Jesus Christ. The one who has received the remission of sin is one who died together with Jesus Christ. But the person who supposes that Jesus died and rose again while he himself has merely received the remission of sin and is still alive—that person is misunderstanding. It is a delusion. He has

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already died, and then he has been raised again together with Christ.

Because you and I were those bound for hell, those who had to die, those who had many sins, the Lord embraced you and me, bore our sins on the Cross, died in our place, and rose again in order to bring us to life. Yet the point is that there are people who are alive all on their own. I am alive—I have received the remission of sin, but I am still I—there are such people. For such a person the life of faith does not work. For when a person does something, he naturally demands a price. When he works at a job he demands a price, and when he does more work he demands more—that is man; and we who work in God's vineyard come to work whether we want to or not. But in the heart, what the church does is uncomfortable, it goes. It gives no recompense, while as the years pass the work only increases, it goes.

Everyone, is it so, or is it not? The work does increase. And so evil piles up in the heart. What has the church done for me?—the thought arises that there is no hope ahead. While one does not know the work, one is busy learning it; after doing it a while, strength comes and one says, this much is all right; but later, when still more work is laid on, however strong a man may be, work he cannot bear rolls in like a mountain, it goes. Thinking of that, one comes to wonder when this road will ever end. In the praises this time, in the third verse of hymn 161, there is the passage, 'The narrow gate, the rugged road—though I wonder when it will ever end.' Those who wrote this praise had such an experience too, and the point is that believers also have much of that heart. It is so with the workers as well. We all have that heart too. Is it so, or is it not? —Yes, it is.— So the word is that we must not attack a person carelessly.

‘The road of righteousness is rough—though it seems I cannot go to the end,’ ‘The narrow gate, the rugged road—though I wonder when it will ever end’—what does this mean? It means that work rolls in like a mountain. Work has no end, however much you do. It keeps rolling in. A person calculates. Can I bear this? Granting that I have gotten by somehow until now, when I think of what is ahead—since they say we will challenge more new works and spread the gospel still more—the mere thought of it makes it seem endless. One wonders when it will ever end. When I calculate, the fleshly thought rises up—what comes back to me but work?—it goes. Such things are the thought of the flesh. Why do you not think of what is spiritual, and think only of what is fleshly? I said that even when we all gather at one site we are fewer than two hundred, and we are preaching the gospel to some two hundred nations—so it amounts to each one person taking charge of one nation and preaching the gospel. Why can you not do that spiritual calculation? And why can you not fix your heart?

Everyone, you died with Christ and lived with Christ—why do you not think of the positive side? Do we not also have many good things? Are there, or are there not? —Yes, there are.— Why do you think only of what is hard? You ought to think of what you have gained as well, weigh this side and that side together, and draw the conclusion; but the point is that you think of one side only. And why is that? It is because the fleshly heart is now captured by the thought of turning the vineyard into a vegetable garden.

Everyone, when we serve the Lord, we must clearly examine our hearts. And the parents must clearly teach their children. Whether they are young or not, they must teach them what the gospel of the water and the Spirit is, what kind of person the child is, and how the Lord has removed the child’s

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sins. However fully the Lord has removed our sins, only when we believe does that salvation come upon us and become ours; if on our side we do not believe, the sin is still there. Everyone, is it so, or is it not? —Yes, it is.— Then—believe; and even after one has believed, the insufficiency of the flesh still rises up as evil and shows itself. Each time it does, we must confirm the gospel, give thanks that the Lord has removed even this sin, overcome our own insufficiency by faith, and follow the Lord with a clean heart.

And when, while following the Lord, the desire of the flesh rises up and the self rises up, and you want to live only for yourself and to carve out your own separate way, you must look back on yourself: I am one who died with Christ and one who rose again with Christ—am I not now designing my life anew, apart from the church and from God? Is that not also sin? So you must enter into the gospel again and confirm the gospel, confirm again that you died with Christ and rose again, and, firming up your heart in that way, follow the Lord. This kind of thing happens often. Its happening is all right; the problem is that there are many in whom this part has not yet been put in order. When those in whom even the foundation has not been laid do the work of God inside the church, the result is that anger rises up in the heart. Compared with the work I do, nothing comes back—is it not too unfair?—so it goes.

The bigger the head grows, the taller one grows, the more the years pass, the longer one is within the faith, the more the resentful heart comes to rise up. Therefore we must examine it again within the faith and deal with it as we pass. We must know why such a heart rises up in us. It is because one does not believe in the Lord; and because, even after believing, one does not recognize and does not acknowledge in one’s heart that one died with Christ and lived with Christ—that we ourselves died

and, meeting Christ, live again together with Him—that, feeling wronged, resentment rises up in the heart.

Therefore, if only this part is put in order, though the flesh may labor, resentment does not enter the heart. When we suffer a wrong we may fume and even become enemies, but at the least that kind of heart does not rise up. That it is hard to endure, that the work has no end however much one does—that much there can be, and one can adjust it and live; but if one thinks, I do this much work inside the church, so why does nothing come back to me?—how much more must I work, and how much will return?—and, calculating, concludes that nothing will return, how despairing, how resentful and bitter the heart becomes! So one becomes a person who not only hates another in his heart but carries it into action; and after carrying it out, one blames oneself and falls into great error. Among the adults, too, there are many such people here. There are also many who cannot do full-time work because they have not fixed their hearts. I am not telling you all to become ministers. There must also be believers. But the point is that resentment rising in the heart has such a cause.

The Lord Is Our Bridegroom

The Lord is our Bridegroom. When the bridegroom is glad, the bride is glad; and when the bridegroom is ruined, the bride is ruined as well. Is it so, or is it not? Moreover, Jesus is our true Bridegroom and King; if the work Jesus desires goes wrong, we who are the bride grieve—how could we be glad? Right there is the focus. That you and I should become King Ahab and become Jezebel is no light matter. Is not King Ahab a man of the nation of Israel? He is the king of the nation of

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Israel, of the true line of Israel. You and I, too, are spiritually people of the nation of Israel and people of God. And yet, for one's own desire, one can try to cut down the whole vineyard and make a vegetable garden. I dislike grapes and like vegetables—so, according to one's own taste, one tries to make it one's own field.

Everyone, if you work without receiving the remission of sin, you are exactly the same as such a person. Even if you have received the remission of sin, unless you are one who acknowledges that you died with Christ and rose again, one for whom the Lord's joy has become your joy, one united with the Lord, you are likewise exactly the same as such a person. Living the life of faith in that state, it is not worthy of the life of faith; you want to do well, and yet it does not go well. It is because the basics have not been laid. Everyone, do you understand? —Yes.— There will be no one who cannot follow these words. But the point is that there can still be those who are in this state.

This time Jong-man had his physical examination for military service. When one reaches that age, one now stands at the crossroads. One runs up against the question of whether to continue the work of God under one's parents, or to go one's own way. In my case, there was nothing I could do apart from this work, so I simply had to do it; but the point is that those who think they could live well and succeed doing other work go their own way. But we are Christ's, whether we die or live. Whether one ministers full-time or not, the conclusion is exactly one: living for the spread of the gospel. Not living full-time does not mean not living for the spread of the gospel, nor does living full-time mean living apart from the spread of the gospel; the aim lies in the spread of the gospel. For the person who has received the remission of sin, there is exactly one

conclusion and no other.

Please examine yourselves once—whether such a thing is perhaps in you and me; especially you growing young sprouts, whether I am one who turns the vineyard into a vegetable garden, whether I am one who does the work of God for his own desire and then, when nothing comes back, resents it and harbors evil. Everyone, who is the most evil person? It is the one who changes the vineyard into a vegetable garden. He is an enormously evil person.

Why Naboth's Vineyard Was So Precious

It is not that King Ahab made an unreasonable demand. I want to have your vineyard, he said; I will give you a better one than yours, or else I will give you money worthy of it. Seen from a worldly point of view, what is there that is wrong? But seen from a spiritual point of view, it is different. The people of the nation of Israel did not obtain their land by buying and selling as we do; after the people of Israel occupied the land of Canaan, the leader distributed the land—this tribe, take here; that tribe, take there. The head of one's own tribe designated the land, and they cleared that land and made the vineyard, so it could never be bought or sold. In the old days farmland was life. Even if one had perhaps sold it or given it in pledge, an opportunity was given to buy it back after some years. That is how precious it was.

If, while being inside the church and having received the remission of sin, one tries to turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden and to take only the desires of the flesh—everyone, the point is that one is no different from Jezebel or Ahab. Do you see what this means? —Yes.— What did the Ahab couple do to

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Naboth? Jezebel used a scheme: she had the high men of Israel proclaim a fast, seated Naboth high among the people, making a show of respecting him, and set up false witnesses to say that he had cursed God and the king. Then he would be executed on the spot. In that way they killed Naboth off. There follows the Word that God, knowing this to be evil, sent Elijah: did you kill Naboth—did you stone him to death? In the place where the dogs licked Naboth's blood, the dogs will lick your blood as well. The point is that He regarded this deed as that evil.

The Sin of Trying to Make the Church One's Own

Everyone, the upshot is that if one is inside the Church of God and does not live with one's heart fixed, believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one comes to hinder the spread of the gospel of the kingdom of God. And one comes to try to seize the vineyard. You know that such things have actually happened inside our Church, do you not? Even without speaking concretely—trying to make the church one's own private church is precisely the same as trying to turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden. The Church of God is not mine, and not yours; it is God's. That is why we do not run the church privately. And yet the point is that one can fall into the sin of trying to make it one's own church in order to fill the desires of one's own flesh.

If one does not lay a clear foundation of faith oneself and serve the Lord, then as time passes, without even knowing it, one has become such a person. It is a fearful thing. Everyone, is it fearful, or is it not? —Yes, it is fearful.— If one tries to make the church one's own personal church, the believers too become one's personal possession—follow me, serve me, give

your offerings to me as well—and so one comes to fill one's own pockets. That is precisely the vegetable garden. I know that you know and believe that our Church is not such a church. And I know that you do not want it to become so. Those who have been long in the church will have folded away such a heart altogether, but the growing young sprouts can become such people. The point is that, coming to church and doing the work, one can hold such a heart—for myself, for my family. The point is that this is a fearful sin, that it is a curse, and that it ruins the Church of God.

God hates it. The word in the Song of Songs that says to catch the foxes that spoil the vineyard is exactly this word. Who is the fox that spoils the vineyard? It is the person who follows only the desires of his own flesh. Those who do the work of God inside the church and yet count the desires of their own flesh higher than God and follow them—they are the foxes that spoil the vineyard.

Draw the Blueprint of Your Life Anew

This road is not one of becoming rich, nor one of succeeding; it is a road on which both spirit and flesh are ruined. It is a road the Devil leads you down in order to ruin you. There are many who have already been ruined by following that road, and the Devil is still using that method now. But it hangs on your free will. If you judge that this is not right and say you will follow God, you must calmly examine yourself before the Word. If it is hard to examine yourself on your own, tell your parents; and if it does not go well even with your parents, you must ask the minister in charge to design your life together with you. If you have drawn the blueprint

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wrongly up to now, you must draw the blueprint again and live by faith just as it is drawn. When we do so, we receive blessing before God in both spirit and flesh, our descendants also fare well, and other people also come to receive blessing because of you and me.

Min-seok, do you understand? I consider a middle schooler a young adult. I believe that even in the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school, a child can think everything that can be thought. In the old days, people played the part of an adult even at a young age. I hope that at this retreat, fellowshipping with your teachers and the ministers, you will draw the blueprint of your life properly. The opportunity is not always there. If you once set your heart wrong and go out in a wrong direction, you throw your life away. If you draw the blueprint wrong and go out wrong, you squander decades of your life. Life is not that long.

You and I must believe in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and die with Him and live with Him, become those who have passed their sins on to Jesus Christ, become those who live again together with Jesus Christ, and—just as Jesus Christ lived the life of righteousness on this earth—we too must live the right life, the life that saves souls. Everyone, do you believe? —Yes.— Do not think that a young child is more lacking than an adult. If you teach a child properly and lead him properly, he can grow up properly. With an adult, rather, to teach him one thing properly you must draw out the ten things inside him—there is no telling how hard it is. Everyone, should your children become those who receive the curse of God? That is why I am telling you this Word.

If anyone has no heart to live wholly for the gospel and no heart to live united with Christ, it is rather better that he live his own life. If, while not even living his own life, he is inside the

church holding the heart that would turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden, only evil rises up in his heart, and a great quarrel can even arise inside the church. If he merely went through it alone and stopped, that might be one thing; but if he makes another member stumble, it is finished. The adults too must take this to heart, and those who have already become workers must also watch carefully.

I am going to carry on a doubling movement from now on. I will raise up coworkers all over the world and entrust them with the work of preaching the gospel to other nations as well. So do not be discouraged that the numbers are few. If we pray before God and go forward in faith, they multiply as much as you please.

Everyone, your children have now grown up to a degree, so do not think of them only as young, only as obedient. The point is that children too can turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden, and adults too can make the vineyard into a vegetable garden. The point is that we must know how evil this is and turn back. Do you see? —Yes.— Has there at times been such a heart in you, or has there not? —Yes, there was.— It was there, but you passed over it well; and even when one tried it, it was of no particular effect.

Jezebel was later truly killed, and the dogs tore and ate her corpse, so that not even a grave remained. They licked up all her blood as well. Reading the Bible, we find the passage that only her skull and her feet and the palms of her hands were found. As God prophesied, so it ended.

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The Blessing of Leaving the Vineyard as a Vineyard

It is because this is a grave matter that I am telling you this part. It is not that I do not love your children, or that I especially hate anyone; in my heart I want to live well with you, eating good things together, and to live well cherishing one another. I believe you are the same, and I believe we can live well. Do you think you would live especially well if you went out into the world? Do you think that out in the world you could earn money without working even this much? What is hard for us is harder because we have not fixed our hearts; if we only fix our hearts and live, there is joy. Though yesterday was hard, today can be joyful. And though we are joyful now, in a little while it can be hard. As the seasons keep changing, our life changes too; but as our height grows and our faith grows, we become those who receive more love from God, people who receive greater blessing, people who lead more people to the right place—people who shine like the sun in heaven.

God can bless us so that we become such people as much as He pleases, and God has already given us many blessings. I know there is a part where, having received too many blessings, we do not even know they are blessings, and so go down wrong ways and think wrong thoughts. We must keep on fellowshipping steadily, step by step, and come to our right senses. It is so with the adults as well. I want to ask how happy and how rewarding it would have been had you lived only your own life. And I want to ask as well how rewarding it has also been to do the work of God. I too, if I go wrong, am a person who can turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden. So, in order not to become so, in certain matters I react very sensitively. It

is because, if it becomes a vegetable garden, the curse comes not only upon me but upon you and upon your children.

That God has blessed us until now is because we did not turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden. Because we could have made it so and yet did not, but left the vineyard still a vineyard, gave it fertilizer, picked the grapes, and traded with those grapes, God enlarged the land so that more fruit would be borne there, gave more fertilizer, gave rain from heaven, gave the sun, regulated the wind, and kept it. Everyone, do you believe so? I want God to bless the Church of God in spirit and in flesh. I want Him to bless your health, and your homes, and the part where you are now ministering, and the businesses you do as a calyx. I want Him to keep us, and I want us to be those who are not used for evil. I want God to bless you and me in many ways. I have finished the message. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Heretics of Today Who Are like King Ahab

< 1 Kings 21:1-26 >

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!' So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'' Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were

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dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, 'Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.' And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.' So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.''' So Ahab said to Elijah, 'Have you found me, O my enemy?'

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And he answered, 'I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.' And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.' But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel."

You and I are thinking about the sin of Ahab and Jezebel. King Ahab—he comes to die struck by an enemy arrow in the midst of war with the nation of Syria; and before he went out to that war and died by the arrow, he had once caused an Israelite subject named Naboth to die. God said that in the place where he had made Naboth's blood be shed, his blood would be shed as well.

Ahab is the king of the northern nation of Israel. His wife is Jezebel, and Ahab was a man excessive in greed, who was following in Jeroboam's steps and incurring the wrath of God.

The Sin of King Ahab and Jezebel

The Israelite named Naboth had the duty of passing the vineyard he had inherited from his ancestors on to his own descendants. If, pressed by debt, one had turned over to another the field or the land inherited from one's ancestors and had no strength to recover it, one had to wait until the season called the Jubilee came around. In the nation of Israel there was a season that came around once in fifty years, at which one could recover the land one had lost. When the seventh year came, the people of Israel let the land rest, and they called that year the sabbatical year; and the fiftieth year, which came when the sabbatical year had passed seven times, they called the Jubilee, and at this time there was the season at which lost land was given back.

Naboth said that the vineyard inherited from his ancestors could not be given even to the king. When King Ahab so wanted the vineyard Naboth had, and was told it could not be given, he lay down, having refused all food and drink, staging before Jezebel what was a protest in all but name. Seeing this, his wife Jezebel asked why he was lying there refusing all food and drink; and King Ahab answered that there was a vineyard belonging to a man named Naboth beside the royal palace which he wanted to have, but the man would neither sell the field nor give it, and so he was refusing all food and drink like this. Hearing these words, Jezebel promised that she would seize Naboth's vineyard and give it to him. Seeing her husband's behavior, she felt pity, and it also seemed pathetic that one called a king could not freely have even that one thing; so she made up her mind—I will seize it for you, so do not worry—and put it into action.

To give Naboth's vineyard to her husband, Jezebel plotted

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together with the king's officials, framed Naboth by slander, killed him, and had the vineyard given to Ahab. Afterward, hearing that Naboth was dead, Ahab rose at once and went down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.

God Sent Elijah to Rebuke Ahab

God knew the evildoing of Jezebel and Ahab, and He called Elijah and had him deliver His will. "*Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.''''" (1 Kings 21:17–19).*

After this man Ahab killed Naboth, God sent His servant Elijah and rebuked him. Have you killed again—have you murdered and also taken possession? He said. What was the greatest of the sins Ahab committed against God? It was that he made the people of Israel forsake the LORD God and serve Baal and Asherah, deceiving the people in that way and making them sin. King Ahab—he was the very man who provoked the wrath of God and made the nation of Israel sin against God, so that both their spirits and their bodies were put to death. The kings of the northern nation of Israel, beginning from Jeroboam, all committed that kind of sin, and made their own people sin against God as well. The strange thing is that, once King Jeroboam had committed such sin before God, the

kings who came after him committed the same sin without hesitation.

The sin the kings of Israel committed against God was a sin that killed the whole nation of Israel. The greatest sin among them was deceiving the people that a golden calf was the LORD God of Israel. Therefore, when Ahab killed Naboth, God said that He would kill that Ahab too, and said that He would bring the same curse also upon the children of that house and kill them. And of Ahab's dying He spoke thus: *"Because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin" (1 Kings 21:22)*.

The people of Israel had seen it all—that the LORD God their fathers believed in was alive and working then as now; and only a little before, Elijah had waged a contest of faith against the eight hundred and fifty prophets who served the foreign gods Asherah and Baal, and had let them see with their own eyes that the LORD God is the God of Israel; and yet they served a golden calf as the God of Israel—a truly lamentable and sorrowful thing. It grieves the heart still more to see this kind of wrong faith inside Christianity today as well. King Ahab, following the sin of Jeroboam, was serving Baal and Asherah and killing the whole nation of Israel; that sin alone was outrageous, and yet he killed even Naboth besides—an enormous sin before the LORD God, and a sin of defying God to His face.

Beside the royal palace of the nation of Israel there was a vineyard; when spring came, flowers bloomed; when summer came, fruit set; and when autumn came, the fragrance of the ripened grapes was wonderful. Naboth, the man who tended that place, was a sincere farmer, so he farmed well and the grapes also bore abundantly. But King Ahab's wanting to seize and have it was his sin. If Naboth would not sell, he could

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simply have given it up; is Naboth's the only vineyard in this world? But Ahab, once he desired to have something, tried to take it by whatever method. So, trying to take the vineyard and failing, he killed Naboth's life and roused the great wrath of God. King Ahab, not content with the sins he himself had committed, now killed even Naboth, one of God's people.

So the LORD God determined to kill King Ahab. Have you so killed My people? Then I too will kill you; I will kill every male in your house; I will not leave even one alive, He said. He said that from of old there had been no one who so actively served and submitted to idols as Ahab, and that this was because King Ahab had been stirred up by Jezebel.

Ahab, Stirred Up by Jezebel

It was Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, who made King Ahab serve foreign gods like Baal and Asherah all the more. The point is that King Ahab had become a slave to his own wife.

In this world the righteous form families, and if a family believes in the righteousness of God and lives by faith, it is right to gather their hearts and live in union. But King Ahab always lived exactly as Jezebel provoked him to. To this Ahab He said that in the place where he had made Naboth's blood be shed, the dogs would lick Ahab's blood as well. This was the righteous judgment of God. In the very place where Naboth bled, Ahab's blood would flow and the dogs would eat that blood, He said.

And God speaks a word of curse to Jezebel as well. It is 1 Kings chapter 21, verse 23. He said, *"And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel'" (1 Kings 21:23)*. Of Jezebel's body only

the skull and the feet and the palms of the hands were left, and the rest the dogs came and ate up entirely. The Word of God's prophecy was fulfilled exactly as it was.

God said that He would not leave alive even one of the males among Ahab's children but would kill them all. This was the wrath of the LORD God against their sin. The righteous curse of God came upon that family.

The Lord Who Is the Vine and We Who Are His Branches

In this way, through this Word of God today, He has shown that the LORD God is angered like this at the adversaries of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must know rightly that the wrath of God is upon those who follow the sin of Jeroboam.

The Lord said of Himself, *"I am the vine, you are the branches,"* and that vine pointed to the Lord Himself, and those branches pointed to the members of the Church of God, that is, to us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Noah, too, when he had been saved by grace from God's judgment and was beginning a new life, farmed a vineyard. That is, the people of God have spiritually led the Church of God. But a man like King Ahab, spiritually speaking, tried to buy the Church of God with his own money and then persecuted it, and so received a great punishment before God. Such people tried to do away with the Church of God, and tried to spread what is not the gospel of the water and the Spirit as though it were the gospel of truth. Those who today hinder the spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, those who try to seize the Church of God by force and do away with it, will receive the judgment of justice that God brings down. It is

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because they do not know the Lord and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and hold the faith of heretics who replace the LORD God with a golden calf and serve it.

Just as King Ahab, trying to seize Naboth's vineyard, suffered such death and received such a curse before the LORD God, so also in this world the Word is saying that the righteous judgment of God will surely come upon the crowd who would in days to come hinder the Church of God—upon those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and who stand against God and God's people and try to destroy them. Those now serving a golden calf as their own god are those who do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit God gave to mankind, and therefore those who are like Ahab are heretics. Even now there are many people who say they believe in Jesus as the Savior, but the Word is telling us that in days to come there will be many who belong to the Antichrist.

This man Ahab was one who, stirred up by his wife, would do whatever work his wife told him to do; and such an Ahab showed what the heretics are like who, following the sin Jeroboam committed, forsake the LORD God and serve Baal and Asherah. And he served his wife Jezebel to excess. God calls such people heretics. If it was his wife's word, he accepted even wrong faith, and so incurred the wrath of God.

Those Who Collapse, Swayed by Their Wives' Words

Now, if a wife speaks the right truth, we must receive it fully into our hearts; and if not, we must reject it and correct it with instruction. If she speaks what benefits the spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must accept it—that is

the point. But words other than those we must receive only to a degree. If the wife says to serve an idol that is not the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the one who is her husband obeys her in that, it is evil. He becomes like King Ahab, so he must beware and reject it.

Among us too there are those who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and there are people who, listening too well to their wives' words, were ruined in both spirit and flesh. Some men listen to their wives' words one hundred percent, entirely; such a man is, spiritually, a man like Ahab in this age. Among the righteous, too, there are many brother ministers who have been swept up by someone like Jezebel. Among the people I know there were also many such men. Try as I may to understand such people, I cannot. Living within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, I also meet many who are like Ahab.

Such men, if the wife says something that stirs the husband's thinking, will carry it out just so even if it is wrong. So they must beware.

Some man, they say, calls his own wife a holy woman. When I heard that, I was astonished. Where in this world is there a man who calls his wife a holy woman? Unless he is one who loves his wife so much that he serves her as an idol, how could he say such a thing? Between husband and wife each knows all the other's faults—who would be a holy man, and who a holy woman? Then what does it signify to open one's mouth and call one's wife a holy woman? Such men are mostly those who are stirred by their wives in every matter and live wrongly. Therefore the servants of God counsel such people: if you speak so and believe so, both spirit and flesh die; come to your senses even now; we will forgive all that you have done wrong, so do not worry; we will tell you all that is right, so listen well to the words of the servants of God who have gone

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before, keep them in mind, and live. But with those already sunk in their wives, even that is of no use.

We see that with some men, even though the servants of God have fellowshipped with them spiritually in faith, once they receive one round of fellowship from the wife, all the fellowship shared until then comes to nothing. How can a man listen so well to his wife's words? The servants of God explain for hours at length what is right, and he even says that he too now understands the will of God; yet after fellowshipping for an hour with his wife, he turns one hundred and eighty degrees. But the Church of God, since it has no such people, does the work of God all the better.

The LORD God, who knows all these circumstances, was truly greatly angered. The point is that God determined to kill Ahab and Jezebel.

God called His servant Elijah and told him to deliver these words: *"I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.' And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel'" (1 Kings 21:21–23).* Spiritually, this is as much as God calling Jezebel a dog. Because she stirred up her husband and made him do such a deed, in God's sight Jezebel was the more hateful. Even while declaring that He would destroy even the children, He was giving an opportunity in case they might perhaps turn back; but far from turning back, they killed Naboth, and so by the city of Jezreel the dogs tore and ate all of Jezebel's flesh.

The Greatest Sin of Replacing the LORD with a Golden Calf

The sin by which King Ahab made Israel sin is the sin of serving idols, following Jeroboam. They switched the LORD God for golden calves. What is the greatest of sins? It is serving a golden calf, having replaced the LORD God with it. However insufficient we may be in the flesh or in our thinking, we can never exchange the holy LORD God for a golden calf or for something of the world and serve it. Our Lord is our true Savior and our Master. The Lord is the Savior who saved us from all the sins of the world by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus Christ saved us eternally from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. How then, because one's feelings are hurt, could one forsake Jesus who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe in something else, grieving the heart of God and committing sin that will be cursed before God? That cannot be.

But now this king called Ahab did such a thing before God. Jeroboam did so, Baasha did so, and the kings and the people of the northern nation of Israel all committed that kind of sin. And so countless people, not knowing the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are dying in both spirit and flesh. The nation of Israel, too, by God's allowing, ended up being taken by the nation of Babylon.

However much we lack before God, we must not follow the sin of Jeroboam. We must know what fearful punishment awaits before God those who have followed that sin, and turn back. If we forsake Jesus Christ who came to us by water and the Spirit, and believe in and serve a golden calf as God, in the end not only does one die oneself; the whole family comes to be killed. Not only is one killed in the flesh; one comes to

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receive God's eternal spiritual curse. What is the greatest of sins? It is replacing the Lord who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit with a golden calf and serving it. Such faith is a betrayal of the Lord. If one simply does not know, one can learn; but knowing halfway, they betray the Lord. The sin of knowing the Lord who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet betraying Him—that sin is the greatest.

The Sin One Does Not Turn From Comes Even upon the Descendants

If Ahab and Jezebel and the people of Israel had only turned back from what they were doing wrong, it would have been enough; but they did not turn back from serving Baal and Asherah, and such sin comes even upon the descendants. So the one who commits such sin becomes unable to turn back the fearful judgment of God. When it would suffice for a man to believe in an idol by himself alone, to make other people believe so as well is an irreversible great sin that piles up the wrath of God upon other people too. It is because those who make other people fall into the sin of serving the golden calf are seeking to fill the desires of their own flesh. The people of Israel and their leaders who followed the sin of Jeroboam received judgment from God for that sin. God did not leave alive even one of the kings and leaders who followed the sin of Jeroboam. Now as well, those inside Christianity who follow the sin of Jeroboam are ruined in both spirit and flesh. They are not those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, nor are they God's people. They are God's enemies, and no more than false prophets who serve a golden calf. It is because they believe differently from the holy people of God that they

are called heretics.

The Heretics of Today Who Are like Ahab

Among those in this world's Christianity who say they believe in Jesus, those who, like King Jeroboam, believe in a golden calf as God are heretics before God. In this age there are all too many inside Christianity who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Unless I speak from the root, you will not be able to understand it all. At this time the people and the kings of northern Israel had already all become so before God, and the people and the kings of southern Israel were also nearly becoming so. It was because they had become spiritually the same as those with the faith of Jeroboam. Originally, such wrong faith must be cut off so that it does not mix in. The southern and the northern nations of Israel are spiritually enemies to each other. Therefore each must believe in the righteousness of God differently from the other. The people of Israel had to cut themselves off decisively, and if anyone tried to cross over, they had to refuse that faith. The people of northern Israel had now set up a golden calf and were calling it the LORD God—what people of God are such people? They are God's enemies. Their knowing that this was wrong before God and yet not rebuking one another's sin was their enormous mistake.

In the same way, in this age too there are many who, while saying they know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do not actually serve it by faith, but rather go out into the world and serve a golden calf as their own god, living for the lusts of the flesh. When these people meet the righteous who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit inside the

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Church of God, they mock them like this: they say that though they do not serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they live well without being punished by God. When we meet such a person, we must know that he is one like Jezebel and one like Ahab, and keep him at a distance. They must know that, if not now, then in days to come they will receive from God the fearful punishment of sin. They must know that they are receiving the spiritual curse from now on, and will keep on receiving the curse in the flesh as well. Are they living the life of righteousness now? They are not—that is the point. Therefore, though their flesh is alive, they live a life like the dead spiritually. God told us to commit our enemies to God; so we must leave them in God's hands and keep far from their faith spiritually. If the righteous who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit sit together with those who hold faith like Jeroboam's, they are ruined together. It is because the filth of their evil rubs off.

Looking lately into wrong faith, I have seen that among the Christians of today there are all too many heretics like King Jeroboam. And I could see that the Old and New Testaments record how many such people there are, just as there are today. But because we must save them out of that sin, we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them as well. We must preach this gospel to save out of the sins of the world even those who do not believe in Jesus at all; but the point is that, among those who already say they believe in Jesus as well, we must have them truly know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved from sin.

Now we must examine ourselves, asking whether in this age we are truly believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and preach the true gospel of salvation to the Christians of the world. And we must also make intercession in order to

save from their sins those who believe in Jesus as the Savior. It is because there are many who say they believe in Jesus as the Savior, yet are not truly believing in Jesus who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who say they believe in Jesus as the Savior and yet do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord gave us are heretics before God; and those who say they know this gospel but do not serve it by faith and serve only their own desires are also heretics before God, and so they must be saved out. We must save such people from the sins of the world by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Gospel We Must Preach in the Age of Disasters

Now, with little time remaining, disasters befitting the age of disasters are occurring in every part of the world. We are seeing with our own eyes the people of the world living in that age of disasters recorded in Matthew chapter 24.

This time, they say, a strong earthquake of magnitude 7.6 struck at the border between the nations of Pakistan and India. The people living there died in great numbers in this earthquake. As I watched on television, the buildings in the region where the earthquake struck had been built of concrete, constructed with very thick steel bars in them, and yet they all collapsed. With an earthquake of magnitude 7.6, this church building too would all collapse, and you and I would not survive—not even one—but all die. It is that strong an earthquake. Right now, across the whole world, countless people are dying from earthquakes.

Now, in the whole world, a few people dying from such

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earthquakes and floods and disasters of every kind counts as nothing. Even a few hundred dying in a disaster is nothing; ordinarily, when they say people have died, they die a few thousand, a few tens of thousands at a time. Now it seems we see such disasters all the time. It seems we come upon such news several times even in one week. In our country, it seems that if such an earthquake came even once, countless people would die; but God has been protecting us until now, and there has been no such thing yet.

At this time when such disasters are occurring so much in the world, we who now believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must preach the news of salvation to those inside Christianity who have fallen into wrong faith like Jeroboam, and save them out at once. In the old days, too, I would sometimes preach about such people, but not as much as now. Now, however, because we must save them out, I must preach more sermons that save, and must also work to make known who is a heretic before God.

Are there many heretics like Jeroboam inside Christianity today? There are truly many. Yet these people live without knowing that they are heretics before God. Strangely, more of them, far from knowing they are heretics, rather think themselves orthodox. But those who say they believe in Jesus without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit can know for themselves that, having sin in their hearts, they themselves have not received the remission of sins and have nothing to do with God. It is because, having sin in their hearts, they are those who have nothing to do with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are hypocrites who only cultivate the rites of religion inside the Christian world. They are people who speak well and pray well, saying, “O Lord—holy, merciful, omniscient and omnipotent, omnipresent, living forever, who

have become our Shepherd—we thank You"; but in the end, because they do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord gave, they have become heretics before God.

That they are heretics is because sin always remains in their hearts. And yet they do not know that they are heretics. They wrongly know that if they only believe in the blood of the Cross, all is well. They wrongly know that if they recite the Apostles' Creed, recite the Lord's Prayer, and believe only in the blood of the Cross, they are not heretics even though there is sin in their hearts. But however well they recite the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer before God, however well they pray and sing praises at the hour of worship, and however well they believe in the blood of the Cross, if there is sin in their hearts, they are heretics. That is because all people, if they know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, can receive the remission of all their sins. It is because the people who believe in Christianity today do not know this gospel that they have not received the remission of sin and are waiting for the love of God with no promised day—and so they have become heretics before God.

This is the problem of Christianity today. It is the same not only with our country but also with the people of the whole world and the people of Europe. So I mean to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Word of God, steadily, step by step. You and I are not short-distance runners in the spiritual war. We are long-distance runners of faith. Therefore, in preaching too, we must watch how the currents of the people of the world change, and preach the Word of God ceaselessly in due season. I am now continually preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to Christians. And, making it into literature and spreading this gospel, I mean to have those who believe receive the remission of sin, and to nurture them with the Word

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of faith in due season. Then the believers and the workers of God receive change in their hearts little by little, and, as the gospel keeps being preached in due season, they come to live spiritually set apart. Then the kingdom of God is expanded on this earth. We are not those who go abroad once, hold a rally, and are done. We must remain as the light of the world on this earth until the day we die, by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I will keep on doing this work of saving souls together with you from now on as well.

The Sin of a Leader Who Leads His People Wrongly

I said that Ahab's sin was the sin of making the nation of Israel sin. Jeroboam's sin also made the nation of Israel sin. For a leader inside Christianity to make his own people believe wrongly is the greatest sin. An individual's insufficiency is also a problem, but greater than that is leading one's own church members wrongly, and that sin cannot receive remission before God. Before God, if one dies alone, that might be borne; but the sin of killing other people's souls—that sin is the more fearful sin. We must not commit this kind of sin before God.

It is right for leaders not to be double-tongued, but to hold themselves up to the light within the gospel of the water and the Spirit and judge whether, before God, they are actually believing rightly or believing wrongly. Those who minister inside Christianity must not minister delighting in the fact that the people of the world recognize them.

There are heretics inside Christianity now who follow the sin of Jeroboam, and if we believe as they do, we become heretics before God. We must show them our faith. The Lord

said, woe to you when all men praise you; and it is said that friendship with the world is enmity with God. We have no need to go out of our way to become enemies of the people of the world; but if, while we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they still recognize us, then they and we are spiritually the same—that is the point. We must testify of our faith by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore I believe that the Word that said to beware of false leaders and keep far from them is right.

This man Ahab, by so sinning before God, in the end as good as killed all his own children. If Ahab loved himself and his wife and his children, he ought not to have followed the sin of Jeroboam like that. Even if he were reviled for the moment, he ought to have believed according to the law of sacrifice of the truth that God had established, and stood firm before God. Then he could have saved his wife, saved his children, and saved his own people as well. In the seat called king there is that responsibility. It is because, when the one king goes wrong, the people also go wrong. Today too, if the person called the leader inside a church goes wrong spiritually, the church members who attend that church also go wrong. That responsibility is immense. That is why the servants of God are called public persons, entrusted by God with a public duty. A spiritual public person must deliver the spiritual part clearly. He must not make the people of God fall into the sin of Jeroboam and make them sin.

By all means, let us give thanks that He saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and that the LORD God has become our God; let us give thanks to God who has entrusted this work to us; and, by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, let us also carry out all this work of saving those who have fallen into wrong faith from all the sins of the world. ✉

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CHAPTER

22

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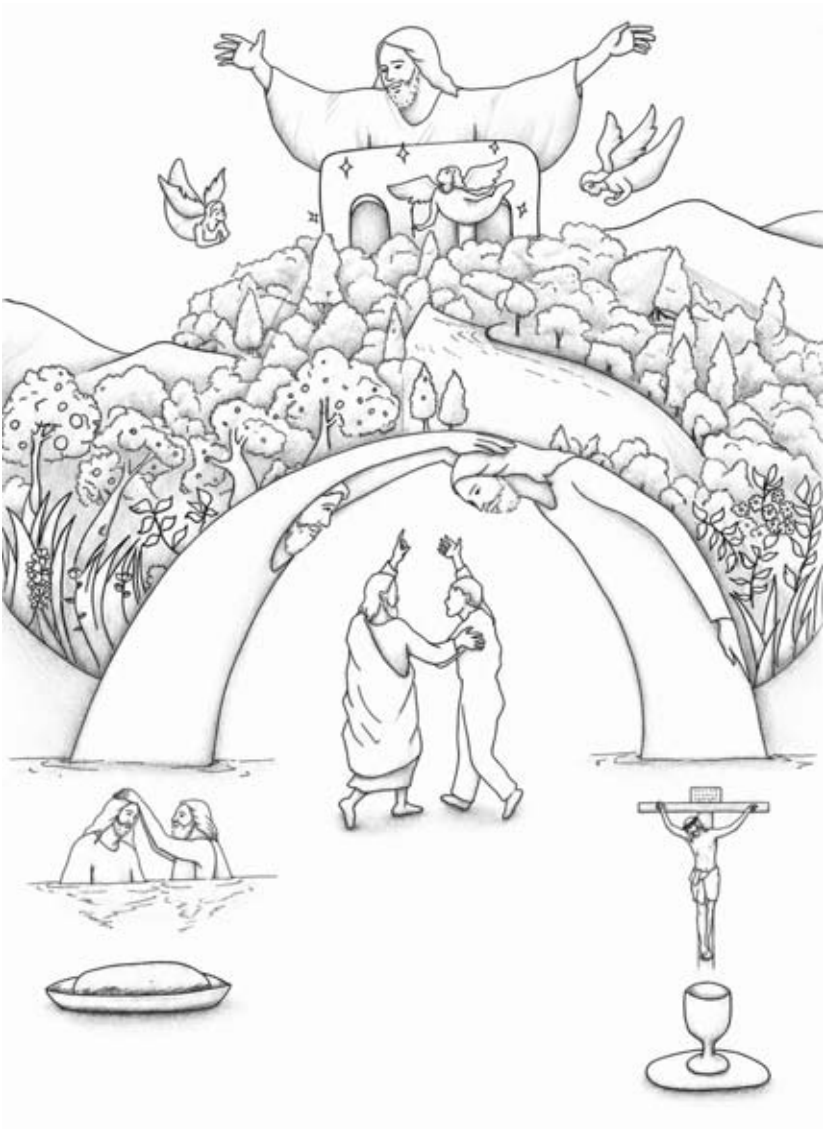

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1 Kings Chapter 22

1) Summary of the Entire Content

1 Kings chapter 22 records how Ahab, in order to recover Ramoth Gilead, allied himself with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and how, rejecting the word of God delivered by Micaiah rather than the words of victory spoken by a great number of prophets, he went out to war and died. It then briefly evaluates the reigns of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Ahaziah king of Israel as well.

1. Ahab Seeks to Recover Ramoth Gilead (Verses 1–4)

For three years there was no war between Israel and Syria. At that time Jehoshaphat the king of Judah visited Ahab the king of Israel.

Ahab made an issue of the fact that Ramoth Gilead, though originally a city of Israel, was under the rule of Syria. After telling his servants that Ramoth Gilead had to be recovered, he asked Jehoshaphat to go out to war together with him.

Jehoshaphat answered that he himself, his people, and his army would be with Ahab. With this, a military foundation was laid on which northern Israel and southern Judah could unite and attack Syria.

2. Jehoshaphat Has the Will of God Sought (Verses 5–9)

Before beginning the war, Jehoshaphat proposed that they first ask the will of God. Ahab gathered about four hundred prophets and asked whether he should attack Ramoth Gilead.

The prophets foretold victory with one voice, saying that if

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he went out to war, God would hand the city over into the king's hand. But Jehoshaphat, even after hearing their words, asked whether there was not another prophet who would deliver the will of God plainly.

Ahab said that there was Micaiah the son of Imlah, but that he hated him because he did not prophesy good things concerning him but only bad. Jehoshaphat pointed out that the king should not speak so, and Ahab had Micaiah brought.

Ahab, while claiming to seek the will of God, liked only the words he wanted to hear. What mattered to him was not the will of God itself, but words that supported his own plan.

3. Zedekiah and the Prophets Prophesy Victory (Verses 10–12)

Ahab and Jehoshaphat, wearing their royal robes, were sitting in the open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and the prophets were prophesying before the two kings.

Among them Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron and prophesied that Ahab would drive back the Syrians with them. All the other prophets also said that Ahab would triumph at Ramoth Gilead.

The horns made of iron were a symbol displaying mighty victory, and about four hundred prophets were saying the same thing. But the fact that many people agree and put on an impressive performance does not necessarily make their words the will of God.

4. Micaiah Foretells Ahab's Death (Verses 13–18)

The man who went to bring Micaiah demanded that, since all the other prophets were prophesying the king's victory, Micaiah too should speak the same words as they. But Micaiah showed his resolve to deliver only what God spoke to him.

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When Micaiah arrived before Ahab, at first he said, like the other prophets, to go out to war and triumph. But Ahab perceived that those words were not Micaiah's real intent, and demanded that he speak only the truth in the name of God.

Then Micaiah said that he had seen the people of Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. This meant that Ahab would die in the war and the army of Israel would be scattered, having lost its leader.

Hearing this, Ahab complained to Jehoshaphat that, just as he had said, Micaiah did not prophesy good things but only bad. Rather than examining whether Micaiah's words were true, he took issue only with the fact that the words were unfavorable to him.

5. Micaiah Explains the Scene in Heaven (Verses 19–23)

Micaiah related the scene of God sitting on His throne with the beings of heaven standing before Him. In that place, the way to make Ahab go up to Ramoth Gilead and die was being discussed.

A spirit said that he would lead Ahab into the war by making Ahab's prophets speak false words. Micaiah revealed that the prophecies of victory Ahab had been hearing were leading him to judgment, and that God had determined calamity for Ahab.

It is not that God made falsehood into truth. Ahab had repeatedly rejected the word of God from before, and had chosen only the words he wanted. In the end, drawn by the false words he loved to hear, he came to walk toward the place of judgment.

6. Micaiah Is Struck and Imprisoned (Verses 24–28)

Zedekiah came up to Micaiah and struck him on the cheek.

With the attitude of asking how the spirit that had been speaking through him could have moved over to Micaiah, he mocked Micaiah's words.

Micaiah answered that on the day Zedekiah went into an inner chamber to hide from danger, he would come to know that his words were true.

Ahab put Micaiah in prison and ordered that he be given only a small amount of food and water until he himself returned safely from the war. But Micaiah declared that if Ahab returned in peace, then God had not spoken through him, and told all the people to listen to his words.

Micaiah did not change the word he had received for fear of the king's anger or the prison. The true Word is not decided by whether it is welcomed by men; it is revealed through whether that word actually comes to pass.

7. Ahab Goes into Battle in Disguise (Verses 29–33)

Despite Micaiah's warning, Ahab and Jehoshaphat went up to Ramoth Gilead. As he entered the battle, Ahab disguised himself and told Jehoshaphat to remain in his royal robes.

The king of Syria commanded the captains of his chariots not to fight with anyone else but to attack only the king of Israel. The Syrian chariot captains, seeing Jehoshaphat in royal robes, took him for the king of Israel and attacked him.

When Jehoshaphat cried out, they realized that he was not Ahab and stopped their pursuit. Ahab's disguise let him escape the enemy's eyes for the moment, but it put Jehoshaphat in great danger.

8. Ahab Dies by an Arrow Shot at Random (Verses 34–38)

A man shot his bow without setting any particular target, and the arrow struck between the joints of Ahab's armor. Ahab

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told his chariot driver that he was wounded and asked to be taken out of the battlefield.

But the battle was fierce, and Ahab could not get out of the battlefield. Wounded, he held himself propped up in his chariot until he died toward evening, and the blood from his wound pooled on the floor of the chariot.

Around sunset, the order was passed through the army for every man to return to his own city and his own homeland. Just as Micaiah had seen, the people of Israel lost their king and were scattered.

Ahab's body was buried in Samaria, and when his chariot was washed at the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked his blood. With this, the word of God that had been declared to Ahab was fulfilled.

To human eyes it looked like an arrow that flew without a target, but that arrow passed through the narrow gap in the armor. Ahab took off his royal robes and disguised himself, but he could not escape the outcome fixed by the word of God.

9. Ahab's Reign Comes to an End (Verses 39–40)

The record of the rest of Ahab's deeds, the ivory house he built, and his various cities remained in the history of the kings of Israel. After Ahab died, his son Ahaziah succeeded to the throne.

Ahab was a king who possessed political power, military strength, and splendid buildings. But the final evaluation of his reign was decided not by his outward achievements but by how he had acted before God.

10. Jehoshaphat's Reign Is Evaluated (Verses 41–46)

Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king of Judah at thirty-five and reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. He walked

in the way of his father Asa and did what was right before God.

But the high places were not completely removed, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places. Jehoshaphat kept peaceful relations with the king of Israel, and he also removed from the land the sodomites who had remained since the days of Asa.

Jehoshaphat was evaluated on the whole as a king who acted rightly before God, but his reform was not complete. Moreover, his alliance with Ahab put him in danger of dying in the war at Ramoth Gilead.

11. Jehoshaphat's Maritime Venture Fails (Verses 47–50)

At that time there was no independent king in Edom, and an official appointed by the king of Judah governed that region. Jehoshaphat built ships of Tarshish in order to bring gold from Ophir.

But those ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber and never sailed. Ahaziah the son of Ahab proposed to have his own servants board the ships together with Jehoshaphat's servants, but Jehoshaphat did not accept it.

After Jehoshaphat died, his son Jehoram succeeded to the throne of Judah.

12. Ahaziah Follows the Evil Way of Ahab (Verses 51–53)

Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king of Israel during the period when Jehoshaphat was ruling Judah, and he reigned in Samaria for two years.

Ahaziah did evil before God and followed the way of his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel. He also walked in the way of Jeroboam, who had made the people of Israel fall into sin.

He served and worshiped Baal, and provoked God to anger just as his father Ahab had done. Ahab's death did not end the

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evil reign; as his son followed the same way, that sin was carried on to the next generation.

The Core Gospel Meaning of 1 Kings Chapter 22

First, the will of God must be sought before a decision is made, and once it has been heard, that Word must be obeyed. Jehoshaphat asked the will of God, but he had already promised to be with Ahab, and even after hearing a plain warning he took part in the war.

Second, the fact that many people say the same thing does not necessarily make it the truth. About four hundred prophets prophesied victory, but what actually came to pass was the prophecy of Micaiah, who alone spoke the opposite word.

Third, the heart that wants to hear only what it desires makes a person captive to falsehood. Ahab did not fail because he did not know the word of God; he came to judgment because he hated the Word that was unfavorable to him.

Fourth, the one who delivers the word of God must not change its content according to people's reactions. Micaiah delivered the word he had received just as it was, even before the pressure of the majority, the king's threats, violence, and imprisonment.

Fifth, a man cannot escape the judgment of God by his own methods. Ahab took off his royal robes and disguised himself, but he was struck by an arrow that seemed to fly at random and died just as the word Micaiah had delivered.

Sixth, outward success cannot take the place of being right before God. The ivory house and the cities Ahab built could not cover his evil, and in the end his life was evaluated around his disobedience to God.

Seventh, even a good man can fall into danger through a wrong alliance with an evil man. Jehoshaphat was a king who

acted rightly before God, but by uniting with Ahab and taking part in the war, he went through a crisis of his life.

Eighth, the wrong faith and life of one generation can be carried on to the next. Ahaziah followed the way of his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel just as it was, serving Baal and doing evil before God.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 22 shows, through Ahab, who chose the words he wanted to hear rather than the word of God and, rejecting the warning, went out to war and died, the fact that the word of God is surely fulfilled; and it records together with this the incomplete reform of Jehoshaphat and the evil of Ahab's house carried on to Ahaziah.

2) Chapter 22 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

1 Kings chapter 22 shows the course by which Ahab, who rejected the true word of God and chose only the words he wanted to hear, came at last to judgment. Seen from the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this chapter reveals that we must accurately believe the Word of salvation God has accomplished rather than man's thoughts and the claims of the majority, and that with another gospel or one's own conviction no one can escape the judgment of sin.

1. Ahab, Who Put His Own Plan before the Will of God (Verses 1–4)

Ahab set up a plan to recover Ramoth Gilead and asked Jehoshaphat to go out to war together with him. He did not first seek the will of God; he fixed his own aim and then gathered the people and the army to carry it out.

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This shows the figure of a man who puts his own thinking before the way of salvation God has accomplished. A person easily thinks that if he lives well by his own effort or shows religious zeal, he can solve the problem of his sin. But by methods man has made, all the sins that come out of the heart and one's deeds cannot be washed clean.

To save sinners, God had Jesus receive baptism from John the Baptist and so bear all the sins of the world, and Jesus, carrying those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross and then rose again from death. Therefore the standard of salvation is not a plan man has set up, but the righteous work God has accomplished by the water and the Spirit.

2. Ahab, Who Asked the Will of God yet Sought Only the Words He Wanted to Hear (Verses 5–9)

At Jehoshaphat's request, Ahab asked about four hundred prophets about the outcome of the war. They all said that Ahab would triumph. But Jehoshaphat, even after hearing their words, looked for another prophet who would deliver the will of God.

Ahab said that he hated Micaiah because Micaiah did not speak good words concerning him. He did not want to know the will of God; he wanted to hear words that supported his own plan.

Today as well, a person can prefer words that set his heart at ease over the Word that plainly exposes his sin. The claim that one must resolve one's sins daily even while believing in Jesus, or that one gradually becomes clean by doing many good deeds, puts human effort at the center.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not place the center of salvation in human effort. It leads us to believe the fact that by the baptism Jesus received from John all one's sins were passed on to Jesus, and that Jesus completed salvation by

carrying those sins, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again from death.

3. The Difference between the United Words of Many and the True Word (Verses 10–12)

Zedekiah made horns of iron and prophesied that Ahab would drive back the Syrian army. All the other prophets also assured him of victory. Their words carried the force of numbers and splendid expressions, but the true will of God was not in them.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise does not become truth according to the number of people or a long tradition. However many people accept a certain claim, if it does not agree with the salvation of God recorded in the Scriptures, it cannot save sinners.

The baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross are not events separated from each other. Jesus bore the sins of mankind through His baptism, paid the wages of those sins by His death on the Cross, and completed the righteousness of God by rising again from death. This whole gospel is the power of God that washes people's sins clean.

4. Micaiah, Who Delivered Only the Word of God (Verses 13–18)

The man who went to bring Micaiah demanded that he speak the same words as the other prophets. But Micaiah did not fit himself to people's expectations; he meant to deliver only the Word God gave him.

Micaiah revealed that Ahab would die and the people of Israel would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd. To Ahab it was a word he hated to hear, but that was precisely the true Word he needed to hear.

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The true gospel likewise is not a word that props up human pride; it first reveals the fact that all men are under sin and cannot escape from sin by themselves. And it testifies that God sent His only begotten Son Jesus to bring sinners to life, and that Jesus took over all sins by receiving baptism from John the Baptist.

If men's sins had not been passed on to Jesus, the death on the Cross could not have been the judgment of sin. Because Jesus bore the sins through His baptism, He could pay the wages of those sins in full on the Cross.

5. The Judgment of Ahab, Who Chose False Words (Verses 19–23)

Micaiah explained through the scene in heaven that Ahab, following the false prophecy he himself wanted, would go out to war and receive judgment. Ahab had rejected the word of God for a long time, and in the end, captured by words that pleased him, he walked toward the place of death.

This shows how a person who has rejected the true gospel comes to follow other words of salvation that fit his own thinking. Because a person feels that sin remains in him, he may repeat religious acts, tears, and resolutions, trying to wash away his sin. But man's emotions and deeds cannot remove the sins he has already committed.

The power that washes sin away completely is in the baptism Jesus received from John and in the blood of the Cross. Since Jesus bore the sins of the world through His baptism and shed His blood and died on the Cross, that work of salvation is complete, needing nothing to supplement it. The one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin by believing not his own feelings but the fact of the salvation God has accomplished.

6. Micaiah, Who Did Not Change the Word Even under Persecution (Verses 24–28)

Zedekiah struck Micaiah on the cheek, and Ahab shut him up in prison. Micaiah came to receive only a small amount of food and water, but he did not retract the word he had delivered.

Whether Micaiah's words were true would be confirmed by whether Ahab returned from the war. The word of God shows its truthfulness not by whether it is welcomed by men but by whether it is actually fulfilled.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise does not deliver words that came from human wisdom; it delivers the event of salvation God actually accomplished through Jesus. The baptism of Jesus, His death on the Cross, and His rising again from death are not man's ideas or feelings but the salvation of God accomplished within history.

Therefore the one who preaches the gospel must not leave out the baptism of Jesus or emphasize only the blood of the Cross to suit people's reactions. Only when the testimony of the water and the blood and the Spirit is delivered whole can sinners accurately believe the salvation God has accomplished.

7. Ahab, Who Tried to Escape Judgment by Disguise (Verses 29–33)

Ahab went out to war even after hearing Micaiah's warning. He disguised himself to hide the fact that he was the king, yet he had Jehoshaphat wear royal robes. As a result the Syrian army mistook Jehoshaphat for the king of Israel and attacked him.

Ahab's disguise is like the figure of a sinner trying to hide his sin. A person can behave piously on the outside, conceal his faults, and think himself more righteous than others. But before God the heart and deeds of man are all laid bare, so no one can

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escape the judgment of sin by outward appearance.

The way to become righteous before God does not lie in hiding one's sins. One must believe the fact that all one's sins were passed on to Jesus and that Jesus bore the whole wages of those sins. The person who has this faith does not put forward his own goodness, but receives the righteousness Jesus has accomplished as his own righteousness.

8. The Arrow That Pierced Ahab's Armor and the Judgment of Sin (Verses 34–38)

An arrow shot by a man who had set no particular target entered between the joints of Ahab's armor. Ahab wore sturdy armor and even disguised himself, but he could not escape death. In the end he died bleeding in his chariot, and the word of God delivered by Micaiah was fulfilled exactly.

Ahab's armor shows all the means man relies on to escape the judgment of sin. Good deeds and religious zeal, knowledge and social standing can make a person look righteous for a while, but they cannot deliver him from death, the wages of sin.

The way out of the judgment of sin is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus received baptism from John, He bore the sins of all the people of the world. And carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of sin, and by rising again from death He gave new life to those who believe.

Therefore, for the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no sin remains to be judged. All his sins were passed on to Jesus, and the wages of those sins were paid in full by the blood of Jesus.

9. Ahab's Sin, Which Even Splendid Achievements Could Not Cover (Verses 39–40)

Ahab built the ivory house and raised various cities. He left many achievements as a king, but such achievements could not cover his sin and disobedience. His reign was in the end evaluated as a life that had defied God.

A person too can accomplish much in the world and do good works. But by these he cannot become a person without sin before God. It is because human merit cannot become the price that washes sin away.

The righteousness God acknowledges is the righteousness Jesus has accomplished. When a person believes that by the baptism of Jesus his sins were passed on to Him and that by the blood of the Cross the wages of those sins were completely paid, he can stand before God not by his own deeds but by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

10. Jehoshaphat's Faith and His Incomplete Discernment (Verses 41–50)

Jehoshaphat was a king who acted rightly before God, but he did not completely remove the high places. He also went through a crisis of his life by uniting with Ahab and taking part in the war.

This shows that even one who claims to serve God can undergo spiritual danger if he unites with false faith. If, while believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one goes along with the claim that sin can be washed away by human deeds, the plain truth of the gospel can be blurred.

Salvation was completed by the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death. If human merit or religious acts are added to this, the ground of salvation shifts from the righteousness of Jesus to human effort. Therefore the

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believer must stand firm in the gospel accomplished by the water and the Spirit and hold fast in full the salvation God has completed.

11. Ahab's Evil Way Carried On to Ahaziah (Verses 51–53)

After Ahab died, his son Ahaziah became king, but he followed the evil way of his father and mother just as it was. He served Baal and led the people of Israel down the wrong way.

Wrong faith does not end with one person; it can be carried on to the next generation. In particular, if one leaves out the baptism of Jesus and speaks only of the blood of the Cross, or teaches that sin still remains even after one is saved, the next generation also remains within a notion of salvation that has not been completed.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be delivered accurately to the next generation. It must be plainly preached that Jesus bore all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, paid the wages of those sins on the Cross and rose again from death, and that the one who believes this has been made clean from all sins.

The Core of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit Seen through 1 Kings Chapter 22

First, we must believe the Word of salvation God has accomplished rather than the words a man wants to hear. Ahab chose the prophecy that pleased him, but those words led him to death.

Second, the claims of the majority or religious tradition cannot become the standard of salvation. The standard of salvation is the righteousness of God accomplished by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and

His rising again from death.

Third, a sinner cannot escape judgment by his good deeds or religious efforts. Just as Ahab could not escape death by disguise and armor, human righteousness cannot save a person from the judgment of sin.

Fourth, the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes the fact that by the baptism Jesus received from John all his sins were passed on to Jesus, and that Jesus completed salvation by carrying those sins, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again from death.

Fifth, the true gospel does not change according to a person's feelings or circumstances. Just as Micaiah's words were fulfilled through Ahab's death, the salvation Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood also rests on the unchanging word of God.

Sixth, human merit must not be added to the gospel God has completed. Since Jesus bore all the sins of the world and paid their wages in full, the believer becomes a person without sin not by his own deeds but by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To sum it up in one sentence, 1 Kings chapter 22 shows, through the event in which Ahab, who chose the false words he wanted to hear, came to judgment, the fact that not man's thoughts and deeds, but only the gospel of the water and the Spirit—completed by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death—saves sinners from all sins and judgment. ✉

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1 Kings Chapter 22

Hear the Word of the LORD, Not the Words of False Prophets

Introduction

1 Kings chapter 22 is the Word that shows Ahab's last days, the problem of Jehoshaphat's discernment, and the succession of evil faith carried on to Ahaziah. For three years there was no war between Syria and Israel, but outward peace did not make Ahab's faith right. He still followed the way of Jeroboam, and did not fully turn from the sin of the golden calves and Baal. A time of peace is not a time to set up one's own will, but an opportunity to return to God.

Ahab put forward the cause of recovering Ramoth Gilead, but he did not first look back on his own sin before God. A greater problem than the lost land was the lost faith. The spiritual order had collapsed because northern Israel had abandoned the law of sacrifice God had established and gone the way of the golden calves and Baal; yet Ahab did not look at that cause and thought only of outward recovery. Today as well, if anyone tries to recover only scale and influence while having lost the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is the same as Ahab's Ramoth Gilead.

In this chapter Jehoshaphat shows a hasty agreement to go along with Ahab. He belatedly proposed to inquire for the word of the LORD, but he had already said, *"I am as you are" (1 Kings 22:4)*. A person of faith must first ask the will of God, and then decide on union and action. God's people who believe

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in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must love people and deliver the truth, but they must not mix into one road with the incomplete faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, or with the faith that makes worldly blessings its center.

Before Ahab, four hundred prophets spoke favorable words. But the fact that many people say the same thing does not make it the will of God. Micaiah did not fit himself to the mood of men or the king's wishes, but said, *"Whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kings 22:14)*. A true servant of God delivers not the words people want to hear, but the Word God has given. Today the true Word is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Ahab heard Micaiah's word and yet did not turn. He shut Micaiah up in prison, and he himself went out to the battlefield in disguise. But by disguise he could not escape the word of God. An arrow that one man happened to draw struck the joints of Ahab's armor, and he died shedding his blood in his chariot, just as the word of God had said. To men it looked like chance, but before God it was the fulfillment of the Word.

Ahab's ivory house, his royal power, and the favorable words of the false prophets could not save him. Only the Word God had determined was surely fulfilled. This Word teaches us to hear the Word of life rather than religious comfort that is pleasant to hear. Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death. Only the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit can live before the justice of God.

The latter part of 1 Kings chapter 22 also shows the ways of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah. Jehoshaphat did what was right in

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the sight of the LORD, but he could not completely abolish the high places, and he also experienced the dangerous alliance with Ahab. Ahaziah, on the other hand, carried on the way of Ahab and Jezebel and Jeroboam and did evil in the sight of the LORD. Therefore this chapter teaches us to cast away the high places that remain in us, not to launch a ship together with false faith, and to be cut off from wrong belief handed down from generation to generation. We must live by a faith that stands only on the gospel of the water and the Spirit and knows how to hear the word of God.

Even in a Period of Peace, Faith Must Stay Awake

"Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel" (1 Kings 22:1).

1 Kings chapter 22 begins with the word that for three years there was no war between Syria and Israel. Before this, Syria had often invaded and afflicted Israel. Whenever Israel fell into hardship, God sent the prophets so that they might see the way to turn back and have their problems resolved. But this time it was different from before. It was not Syria that invaded first; Ahab himself set out to stir up a war.

The fact that there were three outwardly peaceful years does not mean that Ahab's faith had become right. Nor had the sin of northern Israel disappeared because there was no war. Ahab was still a king following the way of Jeroboam, and he was not a man who had fully turned from the sin of the golden calves and Baal. So this period of peace was an opportunity for Ahab to return to God, but he failed to make that time into true turning.

Today as well, outward peace does not guarantee that one's

faith is right. Even if things go well for a while, no problems appear, and one is stable in worldly terms, the soul is in danger if it does not stand on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. True peace exists only when one stands on the faith that Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again from death.

Jehoshaphat Went Down to Ahab

"Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel" (1 Kings 22:2).

In the third year, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was the king of southern Judah. Southern Judah, unlike northern Israel, was still preserving the sacrificial system and the statutes God had established. Northern Israel, on the other hand, was a nation that since Jeroboam had changed the law of sacrifice God had appointed, served golden calves as though they were God, and made the people sin.

Therefore Jehoshaphat's going down to Ahab cannot be seen as a mere diplomatic visit. Spiritually it was a very dangerous approach. Drawing near to Ahab, who walked the way God hates, could harm the faith of southern Judah as well. When one who serves God rightly joins hands too easily with faith that stands against God, he ends up being influenced by the current of that sin.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must discern this point as well. It does not mean to hate people. But we must not join hearts with faith that blurs the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit. We cannot become one within the truth with a faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, a faith that seeks worldly blessings and material things as though they were God, or a faith that speaks of the remission of sin while holding on to its own righteousness. True union must be made within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Ahab Spoke of War with His Own Cause

"And the king of Israel said to his servants, 'Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?'" (1 Kings 22:3).

Ahab told his servants that Ramoth Gilead was originally the land of Israel. And he asked how they could keep silent without taking it out of the hand of the king of Syria. If we hear only his words, he seems to have a just cause. It is because he was saying he would recover the land that originally belonged to them.

But the problem lies in the fact that Ahab did not first ask the will of God. He put forward the fact that Ramoth Gilead was originally their land, but he did not consider why Israel had come to such a state. Because northern Israel had forsaken God and served the golden calves and Baal, God had allowed various hardships. Therefore what Ahab had to do first was not to plan a war to recover the land, but to look back before God on his own sin and the sin of the people.

Today as well, a person easily puts his own cause forward. He can say, "This was originally mine. I must get it back. I cannot stay still." But a person of faith must first look at the word of God. However just the thing I want may look, I must

discern whether it is a thing God is pleased with within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If one puts forward only one's own cause without asking the will of God, one can end up, like Ahab, on the road to judgment.

The Lost Faith Matters More than the Lost Land

Ahab saw the loss of Ramoth Gilead as the problem. But the greater problem was that Israel had lost God. After Jeroboam changed the law of sacrifice of God and set up the golden calves, northern Israel departed from the way of faith God had appointed. In Ahab's day that sin grew still deeper, until they served even Baal and Asherah.

Losing the land was the result. Losing the faith was the cause. Yet Ahab did not look at the cause and clung only to the result. He thought that if he recovered Ramoth Gilead the problem would be solved. But a recovery that does not return to God is not true recovery.

Christianity today can also speak of outward recovery. It can say that the church must recover its scale, its finances, its influence, its institutions, and its social standing. But if it tries to recover only the outward form while having lost the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is the same as Ahab's thought of recovering only Ramoth Gilead. What must be recovered first is the faith that believes the righteousness of God completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

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Union without Discernment Is Dangerous

"So he said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?' Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.'" (1 Kings 22:4).

Ahab asked Jehoshaphat whether he would go with him to fight at Ramoth Gilead. Jehoshaphat answered, *"I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."* This was a very hasty agreement. Jehoshaphat said he would become one with Ahab before first asking the will of God.

Jehoshaphat would go on to say that they should first inquire for the word of the LORD. But already in verse 4 he had said that he himself, his people, and even his horses would be as one with Ahab. To promise union first and ask for the Word afterward is not the right order. A person of faith must first ask the will of God, and then decide whether to go together.

This order is important for the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well. Relationships with people, cooperation in ministry, the union of churches, and the fellowship of faith must all be built on the word of God. If we say "we are one" without discerning the truth from a faith that does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can end up swept along by the current of false faith.

True Union Is Made within the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Jehoshaphat's words look generous and peaceful on the outside. But spiritually they were dangerous. Northern Israel

had departed from the law of sacrifice God had established, had served the golden calves, and Ahab together with Jezebel had brought Baal worship deep into the land. To say to such a king, "I am as you are," was conduct lacking the discernment of faith.

The union God is pleased with is not made simply because people are of the same nation. Nor does it come about because they bear the same religious name. True union is made on the righteousness of God. To speak of it in today's terms, it is the union made within the gospel of the water and the Spirit—the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and saved us by rising again from death.

If the faith that believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not the same, then however close a relationship may look on the outside, spiritually the two cannot walk the same road. We must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to every soul, but we must not mix with false faith as though we believed the same thing.

We Must Return to the Faith That First Asks the Will of God

1 Kings 22:1–4 shows Ahab's war plan and Jehoshaphat's hasty agreement. Ahab set up the cause of recovering Ramoth Gilead, but he did not first ask God about his own sin. Jehoshaphat said he would go along before discerning the state of Ahab's faith. This whole flow reveals the need for Micaiah, the true prophet who delivers the word of God, in what follows.

We too must set the order right before this Word. We must first ask for the word of God. We must first stand on the gospel

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of the water and the Spirit. We must first believe the righteousness of God—that Jesus bore my sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified me by rising again from death.

On that faith our judgments, our unions, our battles, and our ministry must be built. More important than the lost Ramoth Gilead is the lost word of God. More important than the recovery of the outward form is the recovery of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore we must not follow Ahab's cause, but live by the faith that first asks the will of God.

We Must First Inquire for the Word of the LORD

"Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.'" (1 Kings 22:5).

Jehoshaphat had already said to Ahab, *"I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses" (1 Kings 22:4).* But immediately afterward he said, *"Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."* This is an important word. It means that before deciding on the war, they must ask the will of God.

But in terms of order, Jehoshaphat proposed asking for the word of God only after he had already said he would go with Ahab. A person of faith must first ask the will of God, and then decide on union and action. The word of God comes before relationships with people, national causes, or political necessity.

Today as well, the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must look first at the word of God. However profitable a thing may look, however peaceful a union may look, and however right a claim may sound, we must first see whether it agrees with the gospel of the water and

the Spirit, completed when Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Even When Many Say the Same Thing, It May Not Be True

"Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, 'Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?' So they said, 'Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.'" (1 Kings 22:6).

Ahab gathered about four hundred prophets. They all said with one voice, *"Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king" (1 Kings 22:6)*. In terms of numbers it was overwhelming. Many prophets standing before the king said the same thing. But the fact that many people say the same thing does not make it the will of God.

These four hundred prophets said what Ahab wanted to hear. Ahab wanted to recover Ramoth Gilead, and they spoke of victory to match that desire. Their words were pleasant for the king to hear, but they were not the true Word given by God.

Today as well, the fact that many people profess the same faith does not necessarily make it the truth. Many people may say that it is enough to believe only in the Cross of Jesus. But if the work by which Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John is left out, there is no knowing how the sins judged on the Cross were passed on to Jesus. True salvation becomes plain only within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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There Must Be a Heart That Seeks the True Word

"And Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?'" (1 Kings 22:7).

Jehoshaphat was not satisfied even after hearing the words of the four hundred. He asked, *"Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?" (1 Kings 22:7)* Jehoshaphat felt something lacking in their words. There were many words that pleased the king, but he had not yet heard the words of a prophet delivering the true word of the LORD.

This question is very important. Even among many religious words, a person must seek the true word of God. However many words there are that are pleasant to hear, that set people at ease, that promise worldly success, if they do not testify of the righteousness of God, they are not the Word of life.

It is the same with hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if someone speaks the name of Jesus, speaks of the Cross, and speaks of grace, if he does not deliver the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, the way of the remission of sin is not fully revealed. With the heart that asks, *"Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here?" (1 Kings 22:7),* we must seek the Word that plainly preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Ahab Hated the True Word

"So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the

king say such things!' Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!'" (1 Kings 22:8–9).

Ahab said that there was one man, Micaiah. But he said that he hated him. The reason was that Micaiah did not prophesy good things concerning him but only bad. This is Ahab's problem. He did not want to know the will of God; he wanted to hear words favorable to himself.

The true word of God sometimes pierces a person's sin. It rebukes the wrong way and shows the way one must turn. Therefore the person who holds on to sin is made uncomfortable by the true Word. Ahab thought Micaiah spoke bad words out of ill feeling toward him, but in fact Micaiah was delivering the will of God that Ahab hated to hear.

Today as well, the gospel of the water and the Spirit exposes people's wrong faith. It exposes the faith that believes only in the blood of the Cross while sin remains in the heart, and the golden-calf faith that seeks worldly blessings as though they were God. But this Word is not a Word meant to harm anyone. It is the Word that would save people from sin by leading them to believe the truth that Jesus bore all sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

False Prophets Inflate a Man's Desires

"The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said,

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‘Thus says the LORD: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.’’ And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, ‘Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king’s hand.’” (1 Kings 22:10–12).

Ahab and Jehoshaphat put on their royal robes and sat on their thrones. Before them all the prophets prophesied. Zedekiah made horns of iron and showed them, saying that with these horns the king would gore the Syrians until they were destroyed. He even used a visible symbol to try to assure the king of victory.

But this was not the will of God. Outwardly they said, “Thus says the LORD,” but in reality their words incited Ahab’s desire. A false prophet does not turn a person’s heart back to God. Rather, he justifies what the person wants in the name of God.

Today as well, false teaching can feed the desires of a person’s flesh. It can keep repeating only that if you believe in God you will prosper in the world, be healed of disease, succeed materially, and be exalted before men. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit speaks first of the remission of sin. It first delivers the truth of salvation—that God had Jesus receive baptism from John so as to bear our sins, accomplished the judgment on the Cross, and justified us by His rising again from death.

A True Servant Speaks Only What God Has Spoken

“Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, ‘Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the

word of one of them, and speak encouragement.' And Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.'" (1 Kings 22:13–14).

The messenger who went to call Micaiah told him to speak favorable words to the king like the other prophets. Since all the prophets were speaking good words to the king with one voice, Micaiah should do the same, he said. This is pressure. It was the demand to fit in with the words of the majority, to suit the king's mood, and not to break the atmosphere.

But Micaiah answered plainly: *"Whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kings 22:14)*. This is the attitude of a true servant of God. A true servant is not one who manufactures the words people want. He is one who delivers what God has spoken.

The one who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit must have this attitude as well. Whether people like to hear it or not, he must deliver just as it is the Word of salvation completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death. Even if human tradition and the faith of the majority say otherwise, he must not blur the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has revealed in the Scriptures.

Israel Scattered like Sheep without a Shepherd

"Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?' And he answered him, 'Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!' So the king said to him, 'How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that

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have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" (1 Kings 22:15–17).

At first Micaiah said, as though it were the word Ahab wanted to hear, *"Go and prosper" (1 Kings 22:15)*. But when Ahab told him to speak the truth, Micaiah delivered the will of God. He said that he had seen all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. This means that the king would die in the war. Israel would be scattered like sheep that had lost their shepherd.

Ahab was a king, but he was not a true shepherd. He did not lead the people to the LORD God. He led them into the way of the golden calves and Baal. Therefore, when he died, the people could not but scatter like sheep without a shepherd.

Today as well, a true shepherd is one who leads souls with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A leader who does not speak of the baptism of Jesus but speaks only of the Cross, leaving sin in people's hearts, cannot lead souls to true life. A true shepherd leads people to God with the Word—that Jesus bore sin by the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death.

A Lying Spirit Was in the Mouths of the False Prophets

"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?' Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at

Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.'" (1 Kings 22:18–23).

Micaiah delivered a deeper spiritual reality. He saw the LORD sitting on His throne with all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. And a spirit came forward and said he would become a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets. Micaiah declared that as a result all of Ahab's prophets were speaking falsehood, and that the LORD had declared disaster against Ahab.

This Word shows a fearful fact. When a person does not love the truth and follows his own desires, he ends up hearing lies as though they were true. Ahab hated the word of God and wanted only words favorable to himself. So his surroundings became full of prophets who spoke falsehood.

Today as well, if a person does not love the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he can be deceived by false teaching. He can be set at ease by teaching that says he is saved though sin remains in his heart, teaching that says receiving many worldly blessings is the aim of faith, and teaching that says believing only in the Cross without the baptism of Jesus is enough. But the salvation of God is within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only when we love the truth can we discern falsehood.

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The One Who Delivers the True Word May Be Persecuted

"Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, 'Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?' And Micaiah said, 'Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!'" (1 Kings 22:24–25).

Zedekiah struck Micaiah on the cheek. He could not bear the charge that his own words were false. The false prophet, rather than hearing the true Word and repenting, attacked the one who delivered that Word. But Micaiah was not shaken. He said that Zedekiah would see the truth of his words on the day he went into an inner chamber to hide.

The true word of God may not receive the recognition of the majority right away. It may rather be persecuted. But the truth is fulfilled in the end. False words look splendid and powerful for the moment, but they are exposed before the judgment of God.

Preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit also meets opposition at times. But the Word of salvation completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death does not change according to people's reactions. The one who believes this truth must stand not on people's recognition but on the word of God.

Ahab Shut the True Word Up in Prison

"So the king of Israel said, 'Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; and say, 'Thus says the king: 'Put this fellow in prison, and

feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.'" (1 Kings 22:26–27).

Ahab heard Micaiah's words and did not repent. Instead he ordered that Micaiah be shut up in prison. He said to feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction until he himself returned in peace. He heard the word of God but did not receive it, and he oppressed the man who had delivered that Word.

But the word of God cannot be shut up in prison. Micaiah could be locked up, but the Word God had spoken could not be locked up. If Ahab failed to return in peace from the war, it would be revealed that Micaiah's words had been the word of the LORD.

Today as well, a person may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and feel uncomfortable in his heart. But pushing the Word away and hating the one who delivers it does not make the truth disappear. The Word of salvation God accomplished by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death remains as it is. A person only believes or refuses before that Word.

Only What the LORD Has Spoken Is Surely Fulfilled

"But Micaiah said, 'If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.' And he said, 'Take heed, all you people!'" (1 Kings 22:28).

Micaiah spoke plainly to the very end. *"If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me" (1 Kings 22:28).* He entrusted the truth of his words to God. And he cried out, *"Take heed, all you people!" (1 Kings 22:28).*

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The true Word does not try to prove itself by human strength. It is proved by God's fulfilling it. Micaiah held on to the word of God alone before the crowd of prophets, the royal power, and violence. This is the attitude of a true servant of God.

1 Kings 22:5–28 teaches us to discern between the true Word and lies. However many words there are that please people, the Word that delivers the righteousness of God is the true Word. Today the true Word is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completely saved us by rising again from death—this Word is the Word of salvation God has given.

Therefore we must not, like Ahab, seek only words pleasant to hear. Like Micaiah, we must hold on only to what God has spoken. We must love the gospel of the water and the Spirit, discern falsehood by that Word, and stand firm on the righteousness God has accomplished.

He Went Up to the Battlefield, Rejecting the Word of God

"So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead" (1 Kings 22:29).

Ahab heard the plain word of God through Micaiah. Micaiah spoke of the vision of all Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and delivered the word that if Ahab went up to Ramoth Gilead he would die. But Ahab did not receive that Word. Instead he shut Micaiah up in prison, and he himself went up to the battlefield together with Jehoshaphat.

This was Ahab's spiritual state. He asked for the word of

the LORD, but he did not ask in order to obey it. He had fixed his own will, and wanted words that would approve that will. When the four hundred prophets said, "Go up," he was glad; but when Micaiah delivered the will of God, he hated him.

Today as well, a person may claim to hear the word of God and yet not lay down his own thinking. It is the same when hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Before the Word—that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again from death—one must lay down one's own religious ideas. But if a person holds on to his own righteousness and his own tradition, then like Ahab he hears the true Word and still does not walk that way.

By Disguise No One Can Escape the Word of God

"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle" (1 Kings 22:30).

Ahab disguised himself as he went out to the battlefield. He made himself look like an ordinary soldier, and told Jehoshaphat to go into the battle wearing his royal robes. This shows that Ahab, while seeming to ignore Micaiah's words entirely, was inwardly afraid. He did not believe the word of God, yet he disguised himself for fear that the word might fall on him.

But disguise is of no use before God. The eyes of men can be deceived, but the word of God cannot be escaped. Ahab thought that if he took off his royal robes he would be hidden,

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but the judgment God had already spoken was not something that could be escaped by clothing.

In faith as well, a person may try to cover himself with outward appearance. He may think that if he puts on the appearance of attending church, a church office, religious language, and pious forms, he will be all right. But if sin remains in his heart and he does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he cannot stand justified before God. True righteousness does not come from outward appearance. It comes from believing in the Lord who bore all our sins by the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Union without Discernment Leads to a Perilous Place

"Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.' So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'Surely it is the king of Israel!' Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out" (1 Kings 22:31–32).

The king of Syria commanded the captains of his chariots not to fight with small or great, but only with the king of Israel. But Ahab had disguised himself, and Jehoshaphat was wearing royal robes. So the Syrian captains mistook Jehoshaphat for Ahab and moved to attack him. Jehoshaphat cried out, and only then did they see that he was not the king of Israel and stop pursuing him.

Jehoshaphat should not have stood in the place of going

along with Ahab. He was the king of southern Judah, the nation that remained within the order of sacrifice God had established. Ahab, on the other hand, was a king who followed the sin of Jeroboam and walked the way of the golden calves and Baal. To say to such an Ahab, *"I am as you are" (1 Kings 22:4),* and to join him in war, was spiritually a dangerous thing.

This scene is a warning to the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well. If one hastily unites with false faith, one can be exposed together to the danger that person is to receive. It does not mean to hate people. But we cannot walk the same road with an incomplete faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, a golden-calf faith that seeks worldly blessings and material things as though they were God, or a religious faith that holds on to its own righteousness. True union must be made within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God Showed Mercy Even in the Wrong Place

"And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him" (1 Kings 22:33).

The Syrian captains meant to kill Jehoshaphat, but when they saw that he was not the king of Israel, they turned back. Jehoshaphat met great danger within a wrong alliance, but God preserved his life. This does not mean that Jehoshaphat's judgment was right. Rather, it shows how perilous a place he had been standing in.

The fact that God showed mercy cannot justify our dangerous alliances. Jehoshaphat had to learn through this how dangerous the road of going along with Ahab was. God's

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mercy is not permission to keep walking a wrong road; it is grace that gives an opportunity to turn back.

It is the same with us. If God has borne with us long and delivered us, we must not make that grace a reason to keep going our own way. Having heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not remain in our former incomplete faith and worldly desires. If we have received the grace by which God spares us, we must stand upright on the righteousness of God completed by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Even What Looks like Chance Fulfills the Word of God

"Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.'" (1 Kings 22:34).

The Scripture records that a man drew his bow "at random." That arrow struck between the joints of the armor of the king of Israel. Ahab was in disguise, and he was wearing armor as well. Seen with human eyes, to find him and strike him was a very difficult thing. But the judgment God had spoken was fulfilled precisely.

To men it looked like chance, but before God it was not chance. The word Micaiah had delivered had to be fulfilled. Though Ahab disguised himself, though he took off his royal robes, though he wore armor, he could not escape the word of God. That a single arrow found the gap in the armor shows how precisely the word of God is fulfilled.

Today as well, the word of God does not disappear because

a man avoids it. It is the same with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The way of salvation God has appointed is plain. Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. Refusing to believe this Word and seeking another way does not solve the problem of sin. Only the way God has appointed brings a person to life.

The Battle Was Fierce, and Ahab Could Not Get Out

"The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot" (1 Kings 22:35).

After he was wounded, Ahab told his chariot driver to take him out of the battle. He wanted to live. But the battle that day was so fierce that he could not get out. He was propped up in his chariot, holding off the Syrians, until he died at evening. The blood of his wound pooled on the floor of the chariot.

This scene is very wretched. Though he was a king, he could not protect his own life. The false prophets' words that he would return in peace were of no use at all. He had shut Micaiah in prison and ordered him fed with bread and water of affliction, but he could not stop the word of God. Ahab went up to the battlefield to accomplish his own will, but in the end he died just as the word of God had said.

When a man rejects the word of God, in the end he cannot protect his life by his own strength. It is the same with the problem of sin. People try to solve sin with prayers of repentance, religious zeal, and their own efforts, but they

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cannot escape the judgment of sin. Sin is dealt with only in God's righteous way. That is why Jesus bore our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and opened the way of life for us by rising again from death.

The Word of the Sheep Scattered without a Shepherd Was Fulfilled

"Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!'" (1 Kings 22:36).

Around sunset a cry went through the army: *"Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!"* This is the fulfillment of the word Micaiah had spoken before. He had said that all Israel would be scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd, and that each would return to his own house in peace. When the king died, the war ended, and the people were scattered.

Ahab was not a true shepherd. He did not lead the people to the LORD God. Rather, he followed the sin of Jeroboam and dragged the people down the way of Baal worship. So when he died, the people scattered like sheep without a shepherd. This shows not merely the death of one king, but the spiritual outcome that a leader and a people who do not hear the word of God must meet.

Today a true shepherd is one who leads souls to God with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A leader who leaves out the baptism of Jesus and speaks only of the Cross, so that sin remains in people's hearts, cannot be a true shepherd. A true servant of God preaches the gospel of the water and the

Spirit—that Jesus bore the sins of the world by the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death.

Only the One Who Knows How to Hear the Word of God Lives

1 Kings 22:29–36 is the scene in which Ahab, who rejected the word of God, dies just as that word said. He disguised himself, wore armor, and tried to get out in the middle of the battle. But he could not escape the word of God. An arrow one man happened to draw struck the joints of his armor, and he died shedding blood in his chariot. And the people were scattered like sheep without a shepherd, each to his city and his homeland.

This Word teaches us plainly. A man cannot live on words that are pleasant to hear. Nor does he gain life because many people say the same thing. Only the one who knows how to hear the word of God delivered by God's servant lives.

The Word of life God has given us today is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completely saved us by rising again from death. The person who believes this Word escapes the judgment of sin and gains life. But if one rejects this Word and follows one's own thoughts and false comforts, one ends up unable to escape the word of God, like Ahab.

Therefore we must stand before God without disguise. We must not cover ourselves with our own righteousness and religious outward appearance, but see our sin and our faith

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rightly before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The one who hears and believes the word of God is the one who lives.

Ahab Died according to the Word of God

"So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria" (1 Kings 22:37).

Ahab died in the war at Ramoth Gilead. He had heard the plain word of God through Micaiah. Micaiah had delivered that Ahab would not return in peace from the war. But Ahab did not receive that Word. Instead he shut Micaiah up in prison, and went out to the battlefield in disguise.

But the word of God could not be escaped. Ahab took off his royal robes and disguised himself, but the arrow a man happened to draw struck the joints of his armor. To human eyes it looked like chance, but before God it was the fulfillment of the Word. In the end he bled in his chariot and died at evening.

This Word shows that the word delivered through the servant of God is surely fulfilled. The word of God does not vanish because people hate to hear it. Though many prophets spoke favorable words, the word God spoke through Micaiah was the truth.

Today as well, a person must lay down his own thinking before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Though many speak only of the blood of the Cross, if the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John is left out, the salvation of God cannot be known in full. The Word of salvation God has appointed is not changed by majority opinion or tradition.

The Dogs Licked Up His Blood

"Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken" (1 Kings 22:38).

After Ahab died, his chariot was washed at the pool of Samaria. Then the dogs licked up his blood. The Scripture records that this happened *"according to the word of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:38)*. At the affair of Naboth's vineyard, God had spoken judgment to Ahab through Elijah. Ahab had committed the sin of murdering Naboth and also taking possession, and God had said that the dogs would lick his blood as well.

Now that word was fulfilled. The king's blood pooled on the floor of the chariot, and at the place where the chariot was washed, the dogs licked that blood. Moreover, that place was where the harlots bathed. Ahab lived as a king and enjoyed power splendid enough to build an ivory house, but his end was wretched, just as the word of God had said.

This scene shows the justice of God concerning sin. God was longsuffering. He sent Elijah to Ahab, and He sent Micaiah as well. In the wars with Syria too, He let him know that He is the LORD. But Ahab did not lay the word of God to heart to the very end. In the end he was judged according to the word of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also shows us God's justice and mercy together. God is not One who passes over sin. So Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and gave us complete salvation by rising again from death. The place where sin was righteously dealt with is not human effort or religious form, but within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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The Glory of the World Could Not Stop the Judgment

"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:39).

The Scripture mentions the rest of Ahab's deeds, the ivory house he built, and all the cities he built. Seen in worldly terms, Ahab was a king who did many things. He raised a palace and built cities, and enjoyed great power and wealth as king. The ivory house shows his splendid life.

But none of it could save him before the judgment of God. Neither the ivory house, nor the royal power, nor the army, nor the disguise, nor the favorable words of the four hundred false prophets could deliver Ahab from death. However much a man builds up in the world, if he rejects the word of God, he collapses at the last.

Today as well, people can regard outward success as the evidence of faith. They can mistake a great building, many people, abundant finances, and social influence for the sign that God is with them. But what God looks at is not what a man has built, but whether he believes the righteousness of God.

If one clings only to worldly glory without believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is like Ahab's ivory house. However splendid it looks, it cannot give life. True life is in believing the Word of salvation completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Ahab's Way Was Carried On to His Son

"So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place" (1 Kings 22:40).

Ahab died, and his son Ahaziah became king in his place. But this does not speak merely of the succession to the throne. The Word that follows shows that Ahaziah also followed the way of his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel, and walked after the sin of Jeroboam. The way of sin does not end in one generation; it influences the next.

While Ahab lived, he heard the word of God many times. But he did not turn. As a result his house entered the current of judgment, and even his son carried on that way of sin. A leader's wrong faith does not ruin only himself. It harms his family, his people, and the next generation as well.

Therefore we must think of the inheritance of faith with fear. What we must leave to the next generation is not worldly success or religious form. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must deliver this Word—that Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death.

The One Who Hears the Word of God Comes to Life

1 Kings 22:37–40 records Ahab's end. He lived as a king, but he did not hear the word of God. He built an ivory house, but that house could not save him. He went out to the battlefield in disguise, but he could not escape the word of God. In the end the dogs licked his blood, and the word the LORD

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had spoken was fulfilled just as it was.

This Word teaches us plainly. The person who rejects the word of God cannot escape judgment at the last, however splendid a life he lives. But the person who hears and believes the word of God lives. The Word of life God has given us today is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

By the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore our sins; on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins; and by rising again from death He delivered us from sin and judgment. The person who believes this Word is not afraid even before the justice of God. It is because his sins have already been passed on to Jesus, and the judgment of those sins was carried out on the Cross.

Therefore we must not push away the Word that is hard to hear, as Ahab did. We must humble ourselves before the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe the righteousness of God. More precious than a king's ivory house is the word of God. What gives life is not men's favorable words but the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jehoshaphat Became King of Judah in the Days of Ahab

"Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel" (1 Kings 22:41).

Jehoshaphat became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. This one verse makes us think of the spiritual difference between southern Judah and northern Israel. Ahab of northern Israel was a king who had inherited the sin of Jeroboam and, together with Jezebel, had brought the worship of Baal and Asherah deep into the land. Jehoshaphat king of

Judah, on the other hand, was the son of Asa, and is evaluated as a king who did what was right in the sight of the LORD.

But the fact that Jehoshaphat became king in the same age as Ahab shows that there were trials for his faith as well. He was the king of southern Judah, which kept the temple and the order of sacrifice God had established, yet he had dealings with Ahab of northern Israel and even tried to fight a war together with him. In the earlier passage he said to Ahab, *"I am as you are" (1 Kings 22:4)*. This was a figure whose discernment of faith had grown weak.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also beware of this point. Even while standing in the place of right faith God has given, if one easily joins hearts with false faith, one becomes spiritually endangered. We cannot walk the same road with a faith that speaks only of the Cross while leaving out the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, a faith that seeks worldly blessings and material things as though they were God, or a religious faith that holds on to its own righteousness. We must love people and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but we must not mix truth and falsehood.

God Records a King's Life Precisely

"Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi" (1 Kings 22:42).

The Scripture records Jehoshaphat's age when he became king, the length of his reign, and even the name of his mother. He became king at thirty-five and reigned in Jerusalem twenty-

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five years. This is not mere historical information. God sees the whole of a man's life and reign, and records precisely what way he walked.

A person may think of his life as something that passes by roughly. But before God, our faith, our choices, our alliances, and our disobedience are all laid bare. Ahab's life was recorded before God, and Jehoshaphat's life was recorded before God. Ahab refused to hear the word of God and went the way of death; Jehoshaphat acted comparatively uprightly, but his incompleteness in failing to remove the high places was recorded as well.

Our faith today is not hidden before God either. God knows whether we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, or whether we believe in Jesus only outwardly while leaving sin in our hearts. The faith that believes the righteousness of God—that Jesus bore our sins by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified us by rising again from death—is the true faith before God.

He Acted Uprightly, Yet a Problem Still Remained

"And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places" (1 Kings 22:43).

Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of his father Asa and did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. This is a precious evaluation. Compared with the kings of northern Israel, who followed the sin of Jeroboam,

served the golden calves, and made the people sin, Jehoshaphat was clearly a king who sought to go the right way before God.

But the Scripture at the same time records that *"the high places were not taken away" (1 Kings 22:43)*. The people still offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places. This shows that Jehoshaphat's reform was not complete. He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, but he did not completely remove the place of wrong worship that remained among the people.

The high places show a problem more subtle than not knowing God at all. It was a place where people claimed to serve God, yet sacrificed not in the way God had appointed but in the way convenient for man. This becomes an important lesson for faith today as well. If one says one believes in God but does not fully believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has appointed, one can remain in an incompleteness like the faith of the high places.

If one leaves out the work by which Jesus bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John, and speaks only of the blood of the Cross, one cannot know how the sins judged on the Cross were passed on to Jesus. If one tries to obtain the remission of sin by adding one's feelings, zeal, and prayers of repentance, that is not the way of salvation God has appointed. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the complete Word of salvation that believes the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death as one.

If the High Places Are Left, the People Keep Going There

When Jehoshaphat did not abolish the high places, the

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people kept sacrificing and burning incense at the high places. Even if the king acts uprightly, if the place of wrong worship is left standing, the people still go there. This shows how great a leader's responsibility is. If one knows the right way and yet does not clearly remove the wrong place, the people keep following their old habits.

It is the same in faith. If one claims to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet leaves in the heart one's own righteousness, religious tradition, and the golden-calf faith that seeks worldly blessings, a person keeps returning to that place. Even while saying, "Jesus bore my sins," if one does not believe the baptism of Jesus and tries every day to wash one's sins again, the heart cannot enjoy true freedom.

Therefore the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must remove the high places of the heart. He must plainly believe the fact that by the baptism Jesus received from John all his sins were passed on to Him, that those sins were judged on the Cross, and that the Lord who rose again from death has justified him. When this faith stands firm, a person escapes from the high-place faith that tries to solve sin by his own righteousness and repeated prayers of repentance.

Peace Does Not Always Mean a Right Union

"Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel" (1 Kings 22:44).

Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. Seen from the outside, peace between the southern and northern kingdoms looks good. But within the flow of 1 Kings chapter 22, this peace cannot be seen simply as positive. Jehoshaphat had

already gone out with Ahab to the war at Ramoth Gilead, and in that place his life was threatened. Ahab was a king who did not hear the word of God, and following the words of the false prophets, he went the way of death.

Therefore the word that Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel makes us consider that the peace of a relationship cannot take the place of the discernment of faith. Not fighting with a person who has left God may be necessary. But joining hearts with him as though of the same faith, and walking the same road, is another matter. Jehoshaphat should have kept peace with Ahab, yet discerned Ahab's faith and way.

Today as well, the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must do good to all and pursue peace. But he cannot become spiritually one with faith that blurs the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He cannot walk the same road with a faith that speaks only of the Cross and leaves out the baptism of Jesus, a faith that claims to be saved while sin remains in the heart, or a faith that makes worldly success the center of belief. True peace does not come from abandoning the truth; it is made on the righteousness of God.

Upright Faith Must Remove Even the Remaining High Places

1 Kings 22:41–44 evaluates Jehoshaphat positively while recording his shortcomings together. He followed the way of Asa and did what was right in the sight of the LORD. But he did not abolish the high places, and he made peace with Ahab and even stood in the place of a dangerous alliance. The Scripture does not view a person only favorably or only unfavorably. It reveals his way precisely before God.

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This Word applies to us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well. We must not stop at saying that we believe in Jesus. We must cast away the high places remaining in the heart—our own righteousness, religious tradition, and an incomplete view of salvation. We must stand wholly on the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death.

The faith God is pleased with goes beyond a faith that looks upright on the outside; it is the faith that believes the way of salvation God has appointed just as it is. We should learn Jehoshaphat's good points, but we must also remember the problem of the high places he left standing and the danger of peace without discernment. Only within the gospel of the water and the Spirit can our faith return to its complete place.

God Records Even a King's Might and Wars

"Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the might that he showed, and how he made war, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" (1 Kings 22:45).

The Scripture mentions the rest of Jehoshaphat's acts, the might that he showed, and how he made war. Jehoshaphat exercised might as king of Judah, governed the nation, and fought wars as well. To human eyes, a king's achievements, his power of rule, and his military record look important. But the Scripture shows that all of it is being recorded before God.

Jehoshaphat, unlike Ahab, was a king who did what was right in the sight of the LORD. But not all his ways were perfect. He made peace with Ahab and even joined him in the

war at Ramoth Gilead. In that war, because of Ahab's disguise, he was mistaken for Ahab and nearly killed. God showed mercy and delivered him, but that event became a great warning to Jehoshaphat.

So in a man's life there remain not only his power and achievements, but also whom he united with, what words he heard, and what dangerous places he stood in. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also look at his own life before God. He must look back on whether he is living on this Word—that Jesus bore our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again from death.

He Banished the Filthy Custom That Had Remained

"And the rest of the perverted persons, who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land" (1 Kings 22:46).

Jehoshaphat banished from the land the sodomites who had remained in the days of his father Asa. The sodomites spoken of here must be understood not as a matter of mere private conduct, but as a remnant of the abominable custom connected with idol worship. A pagan and lewd custom of belief that God hates had remained in the land of Judah.

Because Jehoshaphat sought to do what was right in the sight of the LORD, he removed that filthy custom from the land. This is a precious thing. Within a nation that serves God, the remnants of sin connected with idol worship must not remain. Though he had the shortcoming of not completely abolishing the high places, Jehoshaphat at least did the work of

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driving out the abominable custom that had remained from the days of Asa.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also drive out the filthy remnants of belief remaining in the heart and in the church. We must not take it for granted that sin remains in the heart while professing to believe in Jesus, nor seek material things and worldly blessings as though they were God, nor hold on to the thought of solving sin by our own righteousness and religious zeal. Before the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus bore all our sins by the baptism He received from John, that those sins were judged on the Cross, and that He justified us by rising again from death—we must cast away such incomplete faith.

Even When the Way of Outward Rule Opens, the Discernment of Faith Is Needed

"There was then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king" (1 Kings 22:47).

At that time there was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. This word shows that in Jehoshaphat's day Judah held influence over the region of Edom. Edom was connected with the southern trade routes and the way out to the sea. So in the word that follows, Jehoshaphat builds ships of Tarshish at Ezion Geber, meaning to send them to Ophir for gold.

Outwardly, a way lay open before Jehoshaphat. Since Edom had no king and a deputy ruled there, the conditions were in place to use the southern sea route. But the fact that a way is open does not mean that everything is fitting before God. Even what looks like a good opportunity to human eyes must be discerned—with whom the work is done, what it is for, and

whether it lies within the will of God.

It is the same in faith. However possible a thing looks, however profitable it seems, and however open the way appears, it must be discerned within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must beware of the heart that seeks gold apart from the will of God, the heart that thinks first of worldly expansion, and the heart that would join hands with false faith for profit. For the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, what matters is not whether the way is open, but whether it is the way God is pleased with.

The Ships Built to Get Gold Were Wrecked

"Jehoshaphat made merchant ships to go to Ophir for gold; but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber" (1 Kings 22:48).

Jehoshaphat built ships of Tarshish, meaning to send them to Ophir for gold. Ophir was a place famous for gold. In Solomon's day as well, the gold of Ophir symbolized great wealth and glory. Jehoshaphat too built ships to obtain gold, but the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber and could not go.

This event shows that however great a man's plan looks, it cannot be accomplished unless God allows it. One can build ships. One can calculate trade routes. One can draw up plans to obtain gold. But if God blocks the way, the ships are wrecked without even setting out.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this teaches that the will of God comes before plans aimed at worldly profit. The most precious treasure God has given us is not the gold of Ophir. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed when Jesus Christ bore the sins of the

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world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. If the heart arises that counts gold greater than this gospel, God may even break the ships.

He Refused the Partnership with Ahaziah

"Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, 'Let my servants go with your servants in the ships.' But Jehoshaphat would not" (1 Kings 22:49).

Ahaziah the son of Ahab told Jehoshaphat to let his servants go in the ships together with Jehoshaphat's servants. But Jehoshaphat did not consent. This scene is important. Jehoshaphat had gone through great danger by drawing near to Ahab. He had nearly died in the war at Ramoth Gilead by joining Ahab, and Ahab had died wretchedly according to the word of God. Now, when Ahab's son Ahaziah proposed a partnership, Jehoshaphat refused it.

Ahaziah was a king who had inherited the way of Ahab and Jezebel. He would go on to follow the sin of Jeroboam and serve Baal. Therefore the venture of boarding ships with him to obtain gold was not a mere economic cooperation. It was a spiritually dangerous association. That Jehoshaphat did not consent this time can be seen as discernment learned from the dangerous alliance before.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must have this discernment as well. We must not stand on the road of seeking gold together with false faith. We cannot launch a ship together with a faith that denies or blurs the baptism of Jesus, a faith that claims salvation while sin remains in the heart, or a road that sets worldly blessings at the center

of belief. God's people must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to everyone, but they must not go into partnership with false faith for a common goal.

At the Last He Was Buried in the City of David

"And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place" (1 Kings 22:50).

Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. And his son Jehoram became king in his place. So the life of a king comes to its close. In Jehoshaphat there were deeds done uprightly, and there was also the shortcoming of not abolishing the high places. There was the deed of banishing the filthy custom, and there was also the danger of drawing near to Ahab. There was the failure of the wrecked ships, and there was also the discernment of refusing the partnership with Ahaziah.

So the Scripture does not paint Jehoshaphat simply as a successful king. It shows his way as a whole before God. What a man leaves at the last is not merely the record of his power and his wars. How he treated the word of God, with whom he united, what he cast away and what he left standing—these remain together.

We too must think of our last day. More important than what and how much we have achieved in the world is whether we stood on the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only with the faith that Jesus bore my sins by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and justified me by rising again from death can we stand before God.

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Right Faith Discerns What to Cast Away and What to Refuse

1 Kings 22:45–50 teaches the discernment of right faith through the rest of Jehoshaphat's deeds. He banished the filthy custom that had remained. But his plan to build ships and obtain gold was wrecked. When Ahaziah the son of Ahab proposed to join him, he did not consent. All these things make us consider what must be cast away, what must be refused, and what must be held fast before God.

It is the same for the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must cast away the high places and the filthy remnants of belief remaining in the heart. We must not launch a ship together with false faith out of a heart that would obtain worldly gold. We must not go together with the way of the house of Ahab—the way that follows the sin of Jeroboam and replaces God with a golden calf.

What we must hold fast is the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given. It is the Word of salvation completed when Jesus bore our sins by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. On this faith we must cast away what must be cast away, refuse what must be refused, and walk the way God is pleased with.

The Current of Sin May Not End in One Generation

"Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel" (1 Kings 22:51).

After Ahab died, his son Ahaziah became king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned over Israel for two years. His reign was not long, but the Scripture evaluates that short period very gravely. It is because Ahaziah, after coming to the throne, did not turn to a new way of faith, but carried straight on in the evil way his father and mother had walked.

Ahab had refused to hear the word of God's servant Micaiah, gone out to the battlefield, and died according to the word of God. Jezebel too was an evil woman who stood against God and served idols. Ahaziah should have seen what end his parents' way had brought. Seeing his father die wretchedly for rejecting the word of God, he should have turned, resolving not to commit such sin before God.

But Ahaziah did not do so. This is the fearfulness of sin. When wrong faith takes root in a home and a nation, the next generation can inherit it as though it were natural. Therefore the inheritance of faith is exceedingly important. What must be left to the next generation is not golden-calf faith or a religion that seeks worldly blessings, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed when Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Ahaziah Did Evil in the Sight of the LORD

"He did evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:52).

The Scripture first evaluates Ahaziah's reign: he *"did evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:52)*. To human eyes, the succession to the throne may have seemed natural. He became king after his father and governed the nation from Samaria. But God looked at his faith rather than his political position. And

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He judged that faith to be evil.

To be evil before God does not mean merely that one has done a few things wrong morally. Ahaziah's evil lay in not serving God as God. He forsook the LORD God and followed the golden calves and Baal. Rather than hearing the word of God and turning, he imitated the wrong faith he had seen in his parents just as it was.

Today as well, what matters before God is not what religious name a person bears. Even if one says one believes in Jesus, if one does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has appointed, the problem of sin in the heart is not solved. If one speaks of the Cross of Jesus but leaves out the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by the baptism He received from John, one cannot fully know why the judgment of the Cross came upon Jesus. The right faith God looks for is the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

He Followed the Way of His Father and the Way of His Mother

"In the way of his father and in the way of his mother" (1 Kings 22:52).

Ahaziah followed the way of his father Ahab and the way of his mother Jezebel. Ahab had inherited the sin of Jeroboam, had not cast away the faith of the golden calves, and together with Jezebel had brought the worship of Baal and Asherah deep into Israel. He hated the words of God's servants Elijah and Micaiah, and wanted only words pleasant to hear.

Jezebel stood against God still more openly. She raised up the prophets of Baal, killed the servants of God, and, to seize Naboth's vineyard, set up false witnesses and caused an

innocent man to die. Ahaziah saw the way of such parents and yet did not depart from it. He did not reflect on his parents' wrong faith, but made it, rather, the way of his own faith.

This Word shows us the importance of spiritual environment and teaching. What a person sees and hears from childhood greatly influences his faith. But having seen the wrong faith of one's parents does not mean one must follow that way. One can turn before the word of God. If a person has heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he must return, not to the religious tradition or the family's way of belief he inherited, but to the way of salvation God has appointed in the Scriptures.

The Way of Jeroboam Is the Way That Makes the People Sin

"In the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin" (1 Kings 22:52).

Ahaziah did not only follow the way of his father and mother; he walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The sin of Jeroboam was the root that broke down the whole of northern Israel. To keep the people from going up to the temple in Jerusalem to serve God, he set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan. And he said, *"Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28)* He changed the order of sacrifice, the priesthood, and the appointed feasts God had established, according to his own will.

The reason this sin is fearful is that he did not sin alone but made Israel sin. When a king sets up wrong faith, the people follow that way as well. Ahaziah did not cast this way off either. He could have known that the faith of the golden calves

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was the way that stands against God, yet he still followed it.

To speak of it in today's terms, the way of Jeroboam is the work of changing the way of salvation God has appointed into a religion of man. If one leaves out the truth that Jesus bore the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, and speaks only of the Cross, or tries to wash away sin by one's own effort and prayers of repentance, that is the work of corrupting the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has established. A faith that cannot lead people to the remission of sin ends up making souls sin.

Serving Baal Is the Idol Faith That Seeks the Blessings of the Flesh

"He served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done" (1 Kings 22:53).

Ahaziah served and worshiped Baal. Baal was the idol people of that day served for the sake of farming and abundance. The people of Israel should have returned to the LORD God, but instead they sought the blessings of the flesh from Baal. Though God is the true God who rules the body and the soul and all of life, they bowed down before an idol made by man.

Ahaziah provoked the LORD to anger according to all that his father Ahab had done. Just as Ahab served Baal and refused the servants of God, Ahaziah carried that way on. This was not a mere personal mistake, but the succession of a faith that stands against God.

Today as well, Baal faith can appear in other forms. If one claims to believe in God, yet the aim of one's faith lies only in

material blessings, the success of the flesh, and worldly prosperity, it is no different from Baal faith. It is making God a means for fulfilling one's own desires. The gospel of the water and the Spirit turns us from such faith. The blessing God has given us first is not worldly abundance, but the remission of sin and new life accomplished by the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death.

Only by Hearing the Word of God's Servant Can One Turn

Ahaziah should have learned a lesson through his father Ahab's death. Ahab did not hear the word of God's servant Micaiah, and though he went out to the battlefield in disguise, he died according to the word of God. The dogs licked his blood. Ahaziah, seeing that, should have returned to God. But he walked the same way as his father.

The flow of the passage also shows that if Ahaziah did not know the will of God, he could have asked the servant of God, but he did not do so. Israel had the word of God and the book of the Law, and there were servants of God. Yet the kings did not cast away the golden calves. This was their obstinacy.

Today as well, if a person wants to receive blessing from God, he must first hear the word of God. He must hear the Word that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He must hear the Word that Jesus bore sin by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again from death. When he hears and believes this Word, a person can turn from wrong faith.

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We Must Be Cut Off from False Faith Handed Down through the Generations

1 Kings 22:51–53 is a short passage, but a very weighty Word. Ahaziah ruled Israel for two years. But the Scripture records his evil faith before his achievements of rule. He followed the way of his father, the way of his mother, and the way of Jeroboam, and served Baal, provoking the LORD to anger.

This shows that wrong faith can be handed down from generation to generation. But the Scripture does not speak of it as fate. It speaks of it as sin from which one must turn. Ahaziah should have seen the end of Ahab and Jezebel and turned back. But he did not turn, and in the end he was recorded before God as an evil king.

Today we also must not follow, just as they are, the religious traditions and the incomplete faith handed down through the generations. We must turn from the faith that clings only to the Cross without knowing the baptism of Jesus and so leaves sin in the heart, the faith that counts worldly blessings greater than God, and the faith that tries to solve sin with its own righteousness and prayers of repentance. We must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The true way God has given us is plain. Jesus bore all our sins by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completely saved us by rising again from death. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the one who has escaped from the way of Jeroboam, the way of Ahab, and the way of Ahaziah, and has returned to the true God. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Servants of God Remain on This Earth

< 1 Kings 22:1-40 >

"Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel. Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, 'Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?' So he said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?' Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.' Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.' Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, 'Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?' So they said, 'Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?' So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the king say such things!' Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!' The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on

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their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'' And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, 'Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand.' Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, 'Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.' And Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.' Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?' And he answered him, 'Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!' So the king said to him, 'How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'' And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?' Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.' Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, 'Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?' And Micaiah said, 'Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!' So the king of Israel said, 'Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; and say, 'Thus says the king: 'Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.'''' But Micaiah said, 'If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.' And he said, 'Take heed, all you people!' So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.' So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'Surely it is the king of Israel!' Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the

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driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.' The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot. Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!' So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place."

Looking at the Word we have read, 1 Kings chapter 22, verses 1 through 40, it shows that King Ahab died, and whose words he refused to hear so that he died.

At this time King Ahab is the king of the northern nation of Israel, and King Jehoshaphat is the king of the southern nation of Judah. Israel was originally one nation, but after Solomon it was divided into south and north. As we know, the southern nation is called the nation of Judah because only the tribe of Judah carried the royal bloodline of the true house of David.

As we know well, after Jeroboam became king in the northern nation of Israel, in order to protect his own royal power and fill the desires of his flesh, he became a heretic who exchanged the LORD God for golden calves, changed the

priests of God as well, and even changed the date of the sacrifice of atonement offered to God. Therefore the people of Israel committed the enormous sin that heretics commit before God, and could not but receive the righteous judgment of the LORD God.

There was a reason God was angry with the people of Israel, and that sin was precisely following the sin Jeroboam had committed. God determined to judge in spirit and in flesh those who follow the sin Jeroboam commits. Whenever people followed the sin of Jeroboam, one could always see God judging them. Yet within the nation of Israel there were many kings who followed the sin of Jeroboam, and countless people as well. So God would allow hardships in order to turn such kings and peoples back from that sin.

King Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Who Started the War

The nation of Israel and the nation of Syria had fought frequent wars, but for three years there had been no war at all. Usually the nation of Syria would invade Israel at will and plunder what belonged to the people. Whenever the people of Israel fell into distress, God would send the servants of God and resolve those hard problems for them. But this time King Ahab himself stepped forward and waged war against the nation of Syria.

The background of that war is this. King Jehoshaphat and King Ahab are the kings of the south and the north of Israel. At this time Ahab, king of northern Israel, said to Jehoshaphat, king of southern Judah, “Was not Ramoth in the region of Gilead originally our land? Yet that land is in the nation of

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Syria—how can we stay still? King Jehoshaphat of Judah, is it not so?" King Jehoshaphat heard King Ahab's words, agreed, and they started the war.

The Wrong Fellowship of Two Nations That Joined Hands

And yet we see conduct of the two kings that is hard to understand. Once, Jeroboam king of Israel, to protect his royal power, had committed an enormous sin before God and become a heretic. King Jeroboam and the people of Israel were in the position of having to live under God's hatred, serving a golden calf as God before the LORD God. Even so, the southern nation of Judah was still being maintained as a nation that kept the law of sacrifice of the Tabernacle God had established and believed in the LORD God.

In the southern nation of Judah, the priesthood God had established and all the appointed feasts were still being kept as they were; therefore it was not committing the outrageous sin of northern Israel, exchanging the LORD God for a golden calf. It was a nation that offered sacrifice to God on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, and so it still remained a nation and a people that could receive the love of God.

And yet the fact that Jehoshaphat king of Judah, knowing that the northern nation of Israel had committed an enormous sin before God and fallen into the faith of heretics, was keeping company with its kings was a thing that became a great sin. That is why we find it somewhat hard to understand the conduct of the two kings. Northern Israel was serving a golden calf, which God hates, in place of the LORD God, and it was

not turning back from having changed the office of priest from the sons of Levi to common people.

That the people of Israel replaced the LORD God with a golden calf and worshiped it was a sin deserving the punishment of hell before God. The starting point of this sin lies in the old days, when King Solomon brought in foreign women and made them his queens. Because of the women who came into Israel with them at that time, the king and the people came into much contact with the idols they served; and so, as the punishment for that sin King Solomon committed, the nation of Israel was divided in two. The kings and the people of northern Israel now did not know that they were people serving a golden calf as though it were the LORD God, and so they could not fully repent and turn from that wrong.

In this way the king of southern Judah, though he knew well that the people of northern Israel were following the sin King Jeroboam had committed, kept fellowship with them in heart; and that these two nations kept company was the evidence that they were coming to resemble each other. What is good is hard to imitate, but what is bad one imitates even when told not to. So the fact that this wrong faith had now become taken for granted by the kings and all the people of both nations, and that they were exchanging their faith with one another, was precisely the great sin the nation of Israel was committing.

The Servants of God Who Remained in This Land

But in the nation of Israel there were servants of God whom God had raised up. They knew that the nation of Israel would perish in the end because it followed the sin of Jeroboam, and

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they cried out for repentance. The servants of God were always standing on God's side, rebuking the sins the kings committed like Jeroboam, and carrying out the precious ministry of delivering the will of God without change.

Yet since the faith of the people and the kings of the two nations was so nearly the same, it was not difficult for the king of southern Judah to join hands with the king of northern Israel and wage war against the nation of Syria on a common front.

Jehoshaphat, king of southern Judah, was not yet a king who believed in a golden calf as the LORD God, so he said, "Before we fight the nation of Syria, let us ask the servants of God whether this battle is fitting or not." So the two kings decided to ask the servants of God for the will of God.

Where Was the Will of God?

In the northern nation of Israel there were living at this time as many as four hundred prophets. Before going out to this war, King Ahab had to ask those four hundred prophets what the will of God was. The representative of these four hundred prophets was Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah. Even before the king asked them for the will of God, Zedekiah had already made horns of iron and was saying that the king would win this war.

Zedekiah prophesied before the two kings that if they invaded the nation of Syria this time, God would make them win this war as though smashing it with these horns. Apart from Zedekiah, the remaining four hundred prophets all prophesied exactly the same. Their words were so much of one voice that there hardly seemed any need to ask further for the will of the LORD God.

But Jehoshaphat king of Judah said, “King Ahab, is there not another prophet to ask besides these prophets?” and King Ahab said, “There is one more.” “Who is he?” “A prophet named Micaiah, but he has never once prophesied favorably for me. So asking him is pointless. Let us not ask him.” But Jehoshaphat said that would not do, and proposed asking the prophet Micaiah as well for the will of the LORD God.

Only the Prophet Micaiah Delivered a True Prophecy

The king sent his man to Micaiah. The man who was sent met the prophet Micaiah and asked him, “Four hundred men have already prophesied victory in this war before the king with the same words. So you also go and prophesy like them that he will win.” But Micaiah said, “Before the LORD God I cannot do that. I will prophesy just as the LORD God has spoken.”

King Ahab seemed to want the prophet Micaiah always to prophesy only favorably. When Micaiah first said, “Go up,” it was not a true prophecy. So Ahab said, “Do not prophesy like that—tell us properly what the LORD God has really said about this battle,” and, “Micaiah, how many more times must I ask before you deliver the will of the LORD properly?”

So the prophet Micaiah prophesies truly. *“Then he said, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace’’” (1 Kings 22:17)*. Hearing this, King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “Look. Does that man not again prophesy nothing good for me, but speak something very bad?” But the prophet Micaiah said, “O king, hear my words. If

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you go out to this war, you will be killed. God has determined to kill you." That is, he let him know that God had a will to kill King Ahab.

Looking at 1 Kings 22:19–23, it says, *"Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you" (1 Kings 22:19–23).* The prophet Micaiah delivered the will of God plainly to King Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

The prophet Micaiah saw the throne of God spread out in heaven and the hosts of His army on both sides. And when the LORD God said, "Who will persuade Ahab to go up to Ramoth Gilead and fall?" one said he would do this and another said he would do that, deliberating; and one of the spirits God commands came forward and said, *"I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."* That one spirit said, "I will entice King Ahab to covet Ramoth Gilead, make him start the war, and have him die there"—and this is what Micaiah made known to King Ahab.

The prophet Micaiah knew what had been deliberated in heaven like this and delivered the will of the LORD God plainly to King Ahab: "If you go out to this war, O king, you will not come back alive. That the four hundred prophets of

Israel speak falsehood with one voice is also because a spirit of God became a lying spirit and entered those men's mouths, making them speak falsehood to King Ahab."

Then Zedekiah, the representative of the four hundred prophets, came out and struck Micaiah on the cheek, rebuking him: "When did the LORD God leave me and go to speak to you?" And Micaiah prophesied, "You shall see on the day you go into an inner chamber to hide. You will see whether my words come true or not. When the war breaks out, you who call yourselves prophets of God, being false prophets, will have to go into an inner chamber and hide."

Believing Only in the Blood of the Cross and Zedekiah's False Prophecy

Hearing these words, King Ahab was very angry. Four hundred prophets of Israel were all prophesying favorably for the king, and the prophet Micaiah alone prophesied unfavorably for King Ahab, so he was furious. Here is something we must know. In this world now more than a billion Christians say that one is saved from sin by believing only in the blood of Jesus' Cross, but the true truth of salvation God gave to mankind was the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God gave true salvation by the gospel of the water and the Spirit; He did not give salvation by believing only in the blood of the Cross.

Therefore Jesus said in John chapter 3, verses 1 through 16, that unless a person is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God and cannot see the kingdom of God. Today a person who believes in Jesus without the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be

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saved from his sins; only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can one be saved. He was saying that before receiving the washing of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one can neither receive the Spirit of God nor go to the kingdom of heaven.

On this earth, the words of those like us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are different from the words of Zedekiah. God is One who shows mercy even in the midst of wrath, but He says that the person who believes in another gospel besides the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot receive the remission of sin. Today people believe only in the blood of the Cross, not the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and say they have received the remission of sin in their hearts—but the question is whether the sin in their hearts has really disappeared. God judges those who speak such empty words. If a person believes only the blood of the Cross as salvation, the sin in his heart has not disappeared white as snow but plainly remains. It was the will of God that we receive the remission of sin by believing not in the Cross alone but in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God is One who at all times shows the mercy of salvation even in the midst of wrath. Therefore He gave us the faith that believes in the baptism by which Jesus Christ bore our sins and in the blood of the Cross—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In this age there are many who say they believe only in the blood of Jesus' Cross and have been saved from sin. But the real gospel was the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished once for all for all mankind. The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not put forward the Cross alone; it binds into one the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross and delivers them to us. The Lord says that He saved us from all the sins of the world by the

gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God wanted King Ahab to repent and turn back so as not to lose his life, and to lead the people of Israel rightly as well, so that they would return before God and live. God kept laboring and enduring through the prophet Micaiah to save the king and the nation of Israel. But King Ahab did not receive into his heart the word of God the prophet Micaiah delivered; rather he stood against him. In his heart there was no room to receive the word of God. He was interested only in serving the golden calves and keeping his own honor and power. He did not lay to heart the words of God's servant the prophet Micaiah, but rather ordered him shut up in prison. A prophet like Zedekiah is a prophet like the heretics of today.

King Ahab's Death and the Blood the Dogs Licked

When King Ahab heard the prophet Micaiah's words, his heart was uneasy, so before going out to the war he disguised his appearance in the dress of a common man and went out. King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "You go out wearing your royal robes," and he himself went out wearing commoner's clothes. At that time the king of Syria, Israel's enemy, commanded that they attack only Ahab king of Israel and be sure to kill him. So the commanders of the Syrian army, their eyes blazing, were searching for King Ahab, when a man in royal robes riding a chariot caught their eye. When they chased after him to kill him, Jehoshaphat was startled and cried out.

The Syrian soldiers, going to kill the king of Israel, would have said, "Kill King Ahab!" When Jehoshaphat looked back, the Syrian army was rushing upon him to kill him. So he said, "I am not King Ahab. I am Jehoshaphat," and when the Syrian

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soldiers came close and saw that he was not King Ahab, they turned back.

But the will of God was fulfilled like this: *"Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.' The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot. Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!'" (1 Kings 22:34–36).* An arrow one man shot without thinking, which would ordinarily glance off the armor, happened to fly in and lodge in the seam where there was no armor. So Ahab said, take me out of this army, but that day the fighting was so severe that even the chariot driver had to fight where the chariot stood.

They fought until evening, and King Ahab, holding out with the arrow lodged in him, bled until the blood pooled on the floor and he died. When King Ahab died in the war, the nation of Israel was wholly defeated. When the time came to end the war, someone cried, *"Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!"* announcing that the whole war was over. The Syrian army returned to Syria, the army of Israel to Israel, the people of Judah to Judah—and King Ahab was dead.

The army of Israel, seeing that the king was dead, brought his body back and buried him. When the people came to the city of Samaria and washed the blood Ahab had shed, the dogs licked that blood. That is, it came to pass according to the word of the LORD God. And that place was where the harlots bathed.

"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are

they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:39) it says. Seeing that King Ahab built his palace as an ivory house, he built his royal palace luxuriously with elephant tusks and lived so. And all the while he served golden calves instead of God and set up common people as priests. Heretics usually draw out the money of their church members and live in luxury until they die.

The dogs licked that King Ahab's blood. This came to pass according to the word of the LORD God. God spoke concerning those who follow the sin of Jeroboam, and especially concerning the sin King Ahab committed before God, saying that those who, like Ahab, commit and follow the sin of Jeroboam would receive this curse: *"The dogs shall eat whoever dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field" (1 Kings 21:24)*. When Jezebel the wife of King Ahab died as well, the dogs tore and ate her corpse.

What we must know here is that today as well there are so many who follow the sin King Jeroboam commits. And we must take interest in the question of why people who hold the faith of such heretics are killed like this.

Why Was King Ahab Killed So Wretchedly?

King Ahab died because he did not listen to the words of the prophet Micaiah. For the sins he himself had committed he deserved to die hundreds of times over, but even so, if he had only listened well to the word of God's servant and followed it in faith, he could have lived long, enjoying riches and glory. God is One who is pleased to show great mercy even to those who must die for the sins they have committed, and to spare

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them. But if one resists to the end before the mercy of God, refusing to believe and standing against Him, then exactly what God has spoken as a curse is surely fulfilled. That is, the justice of God is carried out. God is the God of justice and also the God of mercy. Therefore He gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this age the false prophets testify only of the blood of the Cross as salvation. But the servants of God testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Who in this age is the servant God has truly raised up? Is it the one who testifies only of the blood of the Cross, or the one who testifies of the gospel of the water and the Spirit? In this age the true servant of God is the one who testifies of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Know this fact, and by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, repent of your wrong faith. King Ahab died because he did not listen to the words of the prophet Micaiah. I hope you will not become like him.

King Ahab was a very wicked king who wholly followed the sin of Jeroboam. In the nation of Israel at that time there were the prophet Micaiah and as many as four hundred prophets. But the four hundred, ruled by a lying spirit, prophesied falsehood with one voice, and only God's servant the prophet Micaiah prophesied the true word of God. At that time the four hundred false prophets did not know that King Ahab would die. King Ahab deserved to die for the sins he had committed, but the reason he died was that he did not listen carefully to the word of God delivered by the prophet Micaiah and ignored it.

If he had only listened to the prophet Micaiah's words—if, knowing that God had determined to kill him, he had turned, saying, "God, I have done wrong. Following the sin of Jeroboam was wrong. Please spare me"—God would not have

killed him but would have spared him. But though God had delivered to him through the prophet Micaiah what He meant to do, Ahab ignored that Word. Therefore he could not but be killed in spirit and in flesh.

The Same Thing Repeated inside Christianity Today

This is being fulfilled just the same inside Christianity today in the form of ignoring the word of God, and it is spreading. You will know how many organizations there are in this age throughout the world that call themselves Christianity. Among them, some people believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given and are receiving all the blessings of God. But some, rather, are serving Jesus Christ while following the sin Jeroboam committed.

When these people worship, they worship in the name of Jesus Christ and call on the name of God the Father, but what they ask of God is only material blessing, the health of the flesh, and the riches and power of this world. In the end, though they say they believe in Jesus and call on God the Father and praise and adore Him, theirs was a fortune-seeking faith that wanted only the blessings of the flesh. Those who hold such faith are believing in the religion called Christianity; they do not hold right faith before God.

That is why Christians today cannot escape from the fortune-seeking faith that has spread everywhere and are being deceived by the words of false prophets; they lend their ears to those false words, are taken in by that belief, and follow it. They are interested in receiving all the blessings of the flesh by believing in Jesus as their Savior, and rather had little interest

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in receiving the complete washing of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord gives. They were, one and all, believing in Jesus as their Savior for the purposes of the flesh.

From the word "Beloved, *I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers"* (3 John 1:2), they were wanting only the so-called threefold blessing. They were offering worship to God in order to receive only such blessings as the health of the flesh, wealth, honor, and long life in this world. Holding such faith, not even knowing that they were people following the sin of Jeroboam, they were those who would be destroyed by God.

What we must know is that the Lord said first, *"just as your soul prospers."* For our souls to prosper before God is first to believe in Jesus as our Savior and, in order to know that our sins have been washed, to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord has given and receive the washing of sin. Only after we receive the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit should the things of the flesh also prosper and blessings also be received.

But how does Christianity today believe? Christians of the whole world have fallen into the fortune-seeking faith delivered by false men; they do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the true truth of salvation; even when it is delivered to them they have no interest, and instead they cling only to the blood of the Cross and believe it unconditionally. Everyone, do you really believe that the blood of Jesus' Cross has washed away all your sins? Do you not know for yourselves that your sins have not all been washed away? Therefore they were failing to believe the truth of the baptism Jesus Christ received and the shedding of the blood of the Cross, by which He fulfilled the righteousness of God.

Among those who believe only in the blood of the Cross there are also many famous pastors. But they were those who did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so they were unable to deliver to their church members the truth by which one can be born again of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore we can say that they are those not yet born again. It is only natural that you cannot be truly born again if you learn Jesus Christ from such people. Not born again of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are leading their church members down the wrong way of Jeroboam.

Just as King Ahab was killed for not listening to the words of the prophet Micaiah, Christians now, not believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are dying spiritually as wretchedly as Ahab. Even if Christians today, believing only in the blood of the Cross, recognize one another's faith, such faith is not truly recognized within Jesus Christ who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Though they now possess much wealth and glory and the things of the world, they are placed in the position of being killed in spirit and in flesh. Because they do not try to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, such people are dying spiritually, and with sin in their hearts they will go wretchedly before God.

Now, for them to receive the remission of sin before God and live a true life, they must, like the words of the prophet Micaiah, receive in faith the words and the faith of those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Whoever has not received the remission of his sins before God must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart through its evangelists. Only then can he truly become a holy people of God. Those who hold heretical faith now talk loudly of healing the bodily diseases of their church members and taking them to heaven, but unless they truly believe in the gospel of the water

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and the Spirit, they must know that in the end they are destroyed in spirit and in flesh. The reason is that they did not know the baptism of Jesus and the precious blood of the Cross, which fulfilled all the righteousness of God, as one connected truth, and could not deliver it properly.

The Reason We Believe in Jesus as Our Savior

We believe in Jesus as our Savior in order that our souls may receive the washing of sin before God, that by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given we may become those without sin in our hearts and become the children of God. The aim of our souls being saved from the sins of the world, from all sins, is to obtain true eternal life. We believe in Jesus who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit as our Savior; we do not believe in order that, as believers in Jesus, we may prosper fleshly on this earth and be healthy.

Originally Jesus came to this earth to *"save His people from their sins."* The Lord came to save us from the sins of the world by the gospel of the water and the Spirit; He did not come to give blessings of the flesh and make us live luxuriously and well while we live on this earth. That every person in this world is born once and dies once is the appointed order, and after that comes the judgment, it says. However we may live on this earth, this earthly life is the period in which we gain the opportunity to be saved from all the sins of the world; it is time given us to know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit before God.

We must know that when we know and believe the righteousness of God and live for that righteousness, He gives riches and glory in the world to come. The purpose for which

God had us believe in Jesus was not to make us live well on this earth, but to have us believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain eternal life. That the righteous also live well in the flesh has its true purpose in preaching to all people the gospel of the water and the Spirit He has given us.

The final purpose God has given those who believe in Jesus is to remove our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, make us God's children, and have us enjoy the riches and glory of God in the world to come. Yet countless Christian believers were believing today like King Jeroboam. Christians now, like the people of northern Israel, like King Ahab, were hoping only to prosper on this earth.

Why the Evil One Has Come into Christianity

The New Testament records the coming of the evil one into Christianity like this. It is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 9 through 12. *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:9–12)*. God's sending the evil one is to punish the sin of Christians who follow the sin of Jeroboam. That God has allowed the evil one to come into Christianity is because inside Christianity they are already committing the sin Jeroboam commits.

Christian believers today, meeting those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, were being robbed of

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all the possessions they had and of their lives, and falling into destruction. How does God work through the evil one inside Christianity? He permits evil spirits and false prophets to enter into the hearts of church members and work there.

Why does God the Father permit that to the church members who believe in Jesus? He says it is because they do not believe the truth of the remission of sin revealed through the gospel of the water and the Spirit He has given us—that love. God did not stop the evil ones from working inside Christianity, but rather allowed it and left it as it is.

The spirit of Satan leaves alone those who do not believe in Jesus, and was left to work within those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. We must know and believe firmly how God the Father saved us from the sins of the world through His Son Jesus Christ. We must know and believe through the truth whether the Lord saved us from our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit or by something else, and whether He removed all our sins or not.

For ordinary people to know whether the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, they must know how wrong the Cross-blood-only gospel is that those who believe in Jesus inside Christianity now hold. That is why it is not so easy to know which is the true gospel of the water and the Spirit. But once one knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is not so hard to know what the false gospel is. You must truly want to know properly what the true gospel of the water and the Spirit is and what the false gospel is, and who the heretics inside Christianity are. God is pleased to teach the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit to anyone who wants to know it. We must know that He has saved us from all the sins of the world by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Yet it is grievous that those who say they believe in Jesus

today are following and believing, inside Christianity, the sin Jeroboam commits. The purpose for which they believe in Jesus as their Savior is simple. First, they say they believe in Jesus to be saved from their sins, but they have not received the remission of all their sins once for all, forever, by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So these people, for such purposes as being healed of disease and becoming rich on this earth, want and believe in Jesus rather as the God of power, the God of blessing, the God who heals disease, the God who makes them rich.

Therefore we must know that because many Christians today believe in Jesus wrongly for such purposes, Christianity has failed to become the light of the world and is rather casting darkness on the world. Christians today must truly believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive true salvation, and become those who deliver the true light of salvation to the sinners living in the world. When God looks at those who pursue only material things, they are truly heretics.

The Lord spoke to us all. *"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)*. In order that we who believe in the Lord may enjoy the remission of sin and riches and glory before God forever, He tells us first to receive the washing of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that He might first wash away our sins. Our God meant to remit our sins once for all by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and save us from all sins.

We are those who live on this earth a little while and then go; when this worldly life is over, it is the will of God thereafter to give true eternal life to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to have them enjoy the riches and glory of heaven, and to have them live forever with

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God the Father and Jesus Christ. If we refuse this will and believe in Jesus as our Savior in order to obtain what our flesh needs while living on this earth, we end up like the kings of Israel—like those who serve a golden calf before God.

So when God looks at Christians who believe in Jesus and pursue only the world of material things, they are by no means believing according to the will of God. He says, "If I make your bodies healthy and heal your diseases, will you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Is it not really otherwise? If I heal the diseases of your flesh, you do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; next you want to become richer, and when you become rich you wish to become richer still, and to become happier. In the end, are you not believing in Me for your own sakes?"

"If you would truly fear Me, you must truly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit I have given you. So you must receive the washing of all your sins by faith. You must not follow the golden calf like Jeroboam and receive My curse," He said. The faith of those who believe in Jesus today is not the faith God truly wants. The will of God was to save us from the sins of the world by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, make us at once the children of God, and have us live for the righteousness of God while we live on this earth. The blessing God has given us is to live well not on this earth but in the eternal world; yet on this earth countless people are asking wrongly, saying only, make things go well for us, heal our diseases.

"In God's sight such Christians are not those who believe united with the will of God. The will of God, He said, is 'your sanctification.'" When God looked at Solomon serving idols, He saw it as utterly wretched, and to bring him to repentance He sent the discipline of dividing the nation; but Solomon's

descendants rather nursed a grudge over that discipline and committed the sin of standing against God still more to His face. They called a golden calf God, changed the priests God had established, changed the Day of Atonement to an ordinary day—changed it all. In the end man left God and committed the crime of standing against the righteousness of God. Therefore God could not tolerate their sin.

Upon such people the curse of God comes. He leaves alone those who do not believe in Jesus; but among those who believe in Jesus, upon those who want only to prosper on this earth, who leave the sin in their hearts as it is, refuse the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and want only the things of the flesh to go well—upon them comes not blessing but curse. People today do not seek to receive the washing of sin by believing in Jesus who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit; instead, they must strive to know how Jesus washed away the sins of mankind. But Christians for the most part are not so, and are chasing only the wealth of the flesh; so, when Jesus looks at them, they have become heretics who followed the sin of Jeroboam.

Who are the representatives among them? The leaders inside Christianity. Christian leaders today must truly examine before God whether they know well and rightly believe in Jesus Christ who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In the Old Testament, Jeroboam and his sons and the kings of Israel became the heretics. Those who, like Jeroboam, counted a golden calf as God, offered idol-serving sacrifices, changed the priests, changed the date of the Day of Atonement, and changed the temple were exterminated generation after generation. Today as well, such people are exterminated by God. King Ahab too was destroyed by God.

What does this Word say to us? That God will judge like

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this those among Christians who have become heretics. Those inside Christianity today who, like Jeroboam, believe in Jesus yet do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; who do not believe the love and salvation of God given through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, His plan to deliver them from judgment and give them eternal life in the world to come, but instead, while believing in Jesus on this earth, pursue only the things of the world like material wealth and health, exchanging God for a golden calf—such people, like King Ahab, will be destroyed forever: this was the will of God.

If Christian believers today refuse the gospel of the water and the Spirit and stand against the righteousness of God, they end up cursed like King Ahab, like the house of Ahab. God the Father still gives those who do not yet believe in Jesus the opportunity to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; but upon those who now believe in Jesus while pursuing only material things and health and refusing to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He brings down the eternal curse He has prepared. Knowing that God has spoken this, we must be believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit without change.

These days I am preaching about heresy. Now I am preparing two books in English. When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit it will be spread to people, but after that we must let all people know who the heretics are before God. So we had to make known what will become of those who now believe in Jesus if they do not return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Those who do not now believe in Jesus who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit as their Savior are rather better off, since they will yet have the opportunity to hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is because they

need only believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit properly in days to come. But what is the faith of most Christians today? They do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so they cannot believe that gospel of truth; and they even block those who would believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit from believing it. So we must know that God has permitted the evil ones to work inside Christianity.

Therefore it says, *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10)*. The unrighteousness and all the deception arising inside Christianity throughout the world today are precisely the working of the evil one. What is working now within those who call themselves spiritual leaders inside Christianity? The working of false signs and deception is being carried on. They deceive people, saying they have received the Holy Spirit though there is sin in their hearts, and falsely preach that if you believe in Jesus the diseases of your flesh are healed, you become healthy, you become the head and not the tail on this earth, and your business prospers. In this age the true servants of God are those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

They say, "Because you believe in Jesus as your Savior, God the Father helps you. God helps the children of God. Therefore, even with sin, if you believe in Jesus you are God's people, and if you pray faithfully and devote yourselves, you will be blessed in spirit and in flesh and live well."

At revival meetings they speak like this. They tell whoever wants to be healed today to lay a hand on the part of his body that hurts. And they pray: "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you, all spirits of disease, depart. All curses, depart. I want God the Father to bless these people. I want Him to heal

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all their diseases." And they end the prayer asking that all be blessed with material things and become rich. Then they say the diseases of countless people are healed. There are some who are healed, but most of it is deception. Such things are false miracles, an exploiting of crowd psychology, the working of the spirit of the evil one.

Christians who now believe superstitiously offer worship fervently in the name of Jesus Christ. We can see them believing in Jesus fervently. But when we deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them, they call it strange and reject it. They have fallen in with false men and do not know the true truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and so we must know that they are calling down on themselves the fearful curse of God.

Christianity today has already flowed in the direction of believing in Jesus to become rich on this earth, to have business go well, to be healed of disease. And that wrong faith is reaching its highest point. The working of Satan is now reaching its very peak.

People in the old days, whether pastor or layman, regardless of office, all agonized over their sins, and when they came out to the hour of worship they sought to have their sins resolved. I am not saying that people in the old days knew and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But when even a half gospel was delivered, they shed tears of repentance and said, "What shall I do?" and believed in Jesus as their Savior—yet these days it is not so. These days many come to church to become rich in worldly terms, to do good business.

Today the purpose for which many people believe in Jesus is to be healed of disease. Not all, but not a few come to be healed, to become rich, and to become richer still. And Christian leaders today preach to their members like this: "As

your soul prospers, your flesh will prosper; if you believe in Jesus your diseases will be healed and what you did not have will come to be; if you give many tithes you will be repaid nine for ten, and if you serve in faith you will receive many blessings and become rich on this earth."

This is how the Christianity of the world, how the leaders of Christianity, have been corrupted. In the days of the early church, the gospel of the water and the Spirit removed people's sins, made hearts clean and without sin, made people God's children, caused the Holy Spirit to come into their hearts, and made them live following the will of God. But Christianity today, corrupted from the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is preaching only the blood of the Cross as salvation. Pastors who believe only in the blood of the Cross were pursuing only the fleshly wealth of their church members. They come before God the Father and preach only about the prosperity of their members' flesh, and demand, make our business prosper, make us healthy.

Of course, since the person who believes in Jesus as his Savior also has a flesh, he can pray for the things of the flesh. But God said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. He said that we must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of our sins, and then, since we need health of body and material things in order to follow the will of God who came to us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we should pray for them in that way.

But those who do not know and do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; they do not set their aim on believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receiving the remission of sin, and becoming God's children; they cut off the original purpose of

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believing in Jesus and set their interest only on gaining the material things of this world. They have no interest in believing the righteousness of God and offering the sacrifice of faith, but are interested only in the sacrificial food set out on the table. There are many leaders ministering like this inside Christianity throughout the world today.

How Did Jesus Remove Our Sins?

Because we must let Christians of the whole world know who the heretics are inside Christianity now, we are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Everyone inside Christianity now must know who the real heretics are. When we hold the faith of Christians up to the word of God recorded in the Scriptures, we can see that many inside Christianity have fallen into heresy.

Now the servants of God who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must tell them that they have fallen into the faith of heresy. We must let it be known that many leaders inside world Christianity have already become heretics. So those who have fallen into heresy must realize that they had become heretics before God. Though Christians today call one another heretics, they do not properly know who is a heretic according to the Scriptures, so the heresy they speak of is not spoken from a proper knowledge of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We truly believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, wash the sins of our hearts, receive cleanness, and call God our Father. But the person who rejects the gospel of the water and the Spirit and says he has washed his sins believing only in the blood of the Cross has sin remaining in his heart, and so he

himself ends up confessing that there is sin in his heart.

Today I ask Christians: has the Lord really washed your sins with the blood of the Cross alone? The true washing of sin is not that gospel; it is that our Lord washed our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the New Testament age, He bore our sins once for all. The Lord washed our sins with the water of the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

Therefore, if those who believe in Jesus do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, their conscience becomes corrupted and they come to say of themselves that they have sin. Those who today believe only in the blood of the Cross, keeping far from the truth of salvation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord has given, and claim to have washed their sins with the blood of the Cross—their hearts are now rotting away. They are now becoming spiritual lepers.

Those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit end up confessing of themselves that with the blood of the Cross they could not wash their sins. God the Father has already accomplished our salvation through Jesus Christ by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so that He has removed all the sins of whoever believes this truth of the gospel of salvation. Yet many Christians, not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are refusing it. That is precisely falling into the sin of condemning oneself. The one who refuses the truth that He has saved us from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit is precisely the heretic who is committing, before God, the sin of not believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Then how did Jesus Christ come to this earth and remove our sins? When Jesus was in the flesh on this earth and turned

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thirty, He went to John the Baptist and said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and by receiving baptism He fulfilled all the righteousness of God. God the Father had His Son baptized by John the Baptist, had Him hang on the Cross, and raised Him from death, fulfilling all the righteousness of God. Jesus received the sins of the world by His baptism, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, rose again from death, and became our Savior.

Most Christians today do not know well the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given us and refuse it, and say they have no sin believing only in the blood of the Cross—a greatly mistaken faith. So even now countless people who believe in Jesus have remained sinners for thousands of years while believing only in the blood of the Cross. Yet they ask what is wrong with believing only in the blood of the Cross. Then are all the countless people who believe in Jesus going to hell? they ask. I speak not from emotion, but from the faith that believes the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They now believe in Jesus and yet have sin in their hearts, and so have become heretics before God. Even Luther, it is said, prayed every morning, "Lord, lead me not into temptation and wash away my sins." Therefore he too did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Everyone, those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit but believe only in the blood of the Cross always remain sinners with sin in their hearts. But only the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit obtains salvation from sin. However lacking we are, we obtained salvation from all sins by holding in our hearts the truth that the Lord has removed our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. By the gospel of the water and the Spirit the sins of our hearts have vanished white as snow. Therefore,

in the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no sin remains in the heart.

Because the Lord has removed our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are at all times without sin in their hearts. So it is not that our sins are washed because we believe in the blood of Jesus' Cross and ask Him to wash our sins. The Lord bore the sins of this world once for all by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, washed them once for all, and received once for all the judgment for the sins of this world, saving those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

If we had not received the washing of sin in our hearts by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—the baptism Jesus received and the precious blood of the Cross—those sins would have no way to be washed. Jesus Christ came to us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore we say that Jesus Christ is our true Savior. Jesus Christ came to this earth to save us from the sins of the world, bore all our sins by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment on the Cross, rose again from the accursed death, and saved us once for all; therefore He is our true Savior. The name Jesus Christ means He *"will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*.

All we mankind are people made in the image of God. All people now are those qualified to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become the children of God. God made us for that purpose. That is why God the Father sent His Son to this earth, had His Son receive baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River so as to take over the sins of the world, and let us know and believe that Jesus, carrying the sins of this world, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again,

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becoming our eternal Savior. We must all know and believe the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Do Not Be Deceived by the False Prayers of Heretics

We must not be deceived by the prayers heretics make today either. They pray, “In this hour, please lay your hands on the parts of your bodies that hurt. Our Lord hung on the Cross, bore all curse and pain and death, healed all our diseases, made us rich, and blessed us.” Do not be deceived by such prayers and false words.

King Ahab died because he did not listen to the words of the prophet Micaiah. Ahab did not die alone; he caused countless deaths among his own soldiers and the soldiers of his neighbor Jehoshaphat. When the king of Israel was dead, how could they fight on? Once the enemy knows the king of Israel is dead, the battle is already lost. When even the army commander knows the king is dead, his legs give way and he can do nothing; he is busy finding his own way out. However much one may win in the fighting, if the king of the nation is dead, that war is already lost.

Because of King Ahab and King Jeroboam, how many people of Israel were deceived by their faith and killed! Countless people of Israel, deceived by them, died in spirit and in flesh. How many of the people of northern Israel died fighting the armies of Syria day after day! Today as well, if Christian leaders refuse the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe and preach only the blood of the Cross, they send that many of their own church members to hell.

Is there any guarantee that a person who believes in Jesus

will not fail in business on this earth? Does God keep him from failing because he believes in Jesus? It is nonsense.

The false prophets inside Christianity today are exactly like the four hundred prophets in the nation of Israel. But we are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them. With the faith that unites the heart to the gospel of the water and the Spirit God speaks today, we must stand against those who preach a false gospel. Do you think it is enough for us only to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit? To deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to all people, we must know the faith of heretical Christians—as the saying goes, know your enemy and know yourself, and you win a hundred battles out of a hundred—then we can prevail with the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Only when the person who believes in Jesus as his Savior knows whether he himself has been saved from sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can he deliver the gospel to another. An evangelist must deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit even when he meets someone who does not believe in Jesus. So he must always keep his mouth open.

We must now save with the Word of truth those inside Christianity who have fallen into heresy. There are countless people inside Christianity now fallen into heresy. Is this fact not truly staggering? Then someone may ask whether the reformers who arose from the sixteenth century did not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit either. They also did not fully know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And if you ask whether only those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are truly saved—yes, it is so. Only those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receive salvation.

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And if you say, then are there not too many inside Christianity in this world fallen into heresy?—yes, it is so. Because the heretics are so many, it is a little hard to speak of. But since my crying out with a microphone in hand does not make it heard in all the world, I will make known through literature who the heretics are.

The Servants of God Remain on This Earth

We deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to people, and those who will believe, believe; those who do not believe need only repent and believe. If they believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they receive the blessing God gives; if they do not believe, they pay the wages of their own sins. We must properly deliver and teach this gospel of truth even to those who believe in Jesus, and we must properly know and properly teach who the heretics are inside Christianity now.

Many leaders who believe in Christianity today are leading countless church members into hell with them. That is why I am preaching the word of God—to save those who have fallen into heresy out of that place.

You and I know it well, but we must know how many people are following the sin of Jeroboam, serving as God the golden calf Jeroboam served, and being cursed before God—and they must come back. They are those who will be cursed forever in the world to come as well. Therefore we are placed in the position of pitying them, praying for them, and having to save them out of sin and heresy.

We must never turn our eyes away from them. We must pity them, pray that He will save them from their sins, and deliver to them the sure truth of salvation, the gospel of the

water and the Spirit. I hope God will keep us so that we may carry out all this work and stand before the God of truth. I want the blessing of salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit of God gives to come upon you. Amen! ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Only Those Who Know How to Hear the Word of God Live

< 1 Kings 22:1-41 >

"Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel. Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, 'Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?' So he said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?' Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.' Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.' Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, 'Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?' So they said, 'Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?' So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the king say such things!' Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!' The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on

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their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, 'Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'' And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, 'Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand.' Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, 'Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.' And Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.' Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?' And he answered him, 'Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!' So the king said to him, 'How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'' And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?' Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

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The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.’ Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, ‘Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?’ And Micaiah said, ‘Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!’ So the king of Israel said, ‘Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; and say, ‘Thus says the king: ‘Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.’’’ But Micaiah said, ‘If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.’ And he said, ‘Take heed, all you people!’ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.’ So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, ‘Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.’ So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, ‘Surely it is the king of Israel!’ Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the

driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.' The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot. Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!' So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place. Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel."

The Word we have read today is an event that took place in the nation of Israel. Israel was originally one, but after Solomon it was divided into southern Judah and northern Israel. It is what happened when Jehoshaphat, king of southern Judah, joined hands with King Ahab of northern Israel and tried to recover a land called Ramoth Gilead, which had been taken by the hand of the king of Syria. Israel is by origin a nation that has the servants of God, a nation the LORD God Himself ruled, a nation He governed through the servants He raised up. So even after men became kings, whether in northern Israel or in southern Judah, there were always the servants of God whom God had raised up.

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Two Kings Who Joined Hands over Ramoth

Jehoshaphat, king of southern Judah, went to visit Ahab, king of northern Israel. He went and said this: are we not originally one people? My soldiers are your soldiers, and my horses are as your horses; we are one; let us together recover that land called Ramoth which we lost to the nation of Syria—so he proposed. King Ahab, who was covetous by nature, said, good, then, let us recover it together. So the two nations allied to strike the nation of Syria and recover that territory.

Now the people of Israel, as I said before, were people who had always lived hearing the word of God. So it was basic for them, before going out to war, to ask the servants of God. Jehoshaphat proposed to Ahab: are there prophets in this nation? Let us ask those prophets whether this battle is the will of God, and whether we can go up and win. Ahab agreed, and they called the prophets together—a great number, about four hundred.

The Four Hundred Prophets Who Prophesied Only Favorably

Everyone, the servants of God are not so many as four hundred at a time. True servants of God are not that many. Yet when they gathered some four hundred and asked, the answer was with one voice all favorable and good. Among them a prophet named Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron, came before the king, and prophesied very favorably: just as the LORD makes these horns gore the Syrians until they are destroyed, so, if the king goes up, He will make you win like this. The rest of the prophets all likewise prophesied favorably:

King Ahab, go up; go up, strike the king of Syria, and recover the land of Ramoth.

While the four hundred were all prophesying favorably, Jehoshaphat, who had been listening quietly, asked, is this all the prophets there are in this nation—is there perhaps no other? Ahab answered, there is one, but that man always prophesies to me not what is favorable but only what is bad, so let us not call him. Still Jehoshaphat said, let us hear that man's words too, and had him brought—and that man was the prophet Micaiah.

The Prophet Micaiah, Who Alone Told the Truth

The king's messenger who went to call Micaiah told him that the four hundred had all prophesied favorably, so he should prophesy likewise. But Micaiah said, whatever the LORD says to me, that only will I speak—and he stood before the king. He said: I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd, and the word of the LORD was, *"These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace" (1 Kings 22:17)*—so he prophesied. This word means that the king dies and the people all come back to their own homes. In other words, if they go up to this war, they are defeated.

Then King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, look—did I not tell you that this man always prophesies only what is bad for me? Micaiah went on: therefore hear the word of the LORD—and he delivered what he had seen. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and His left; and when the LORD said, who will persuade Ahab to go up to Ramoth Gilead and fall, various spirits said, one this way and one that way. Then a spirit came forward and

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stood before the LORD and said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets; and the LORD said, you shall persuade him and also prevail—go out and do so. Therefore the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has spoken disaster concerning you—so Micaiah delivered just what he had seen.

Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, who was something like the head of those false prophets, came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, protesting, when did the Spirit of the LORD leave me to go and speak to you? In the end the prophet Micaiah, for having prophesied what was unfavorable, was shut up in prison and suffered the disgrace of eating the bread of affliction and the water of affliction.

King Ahab, together with King Jehoshaphat, took his soldiers and went up at the very front to fight the war. The king of Syria commanded his men that there was no need to kill the other soldiers—find and kill only Ahab, king of Israel. So the Syrian soldiers were looking only for King Ahab. Knowing this, Ahab changed his clothes, disguised himself, and went into the ranks. When the Syrian soldiers, taking Jehoshaphat in his royal robes for Ahab, chased him to kill him, Jehoshaphat cried out in alarm, and seeing that he was not the king of Israel, they withdrew. But a man drew his bow at random, and that arrow lodged in the seam of Ahab's armor, and King Ahab bled in his chariot and died.

Beware of False Prophets

We must know how to discern who is a false prophet. In the Gospel of Matthew there is a word we know well: "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but*

inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:15–20).

These four hundred were false prophets, and Micaiah alone was a true prophet. Micaiah delivered what the LORD had spoken—what he himself had seen. But the four hundred did not deliver what they had seen; they spoke whatever came to their minds. To put it simply, they flattered the king with words pleasant to his ears.

Only Those Who Can Hear Even an Unfavorable Word Live

Through the servants of God we hear favorable words, words of blessing. But at the same time we also hear unfavorable words—words of warning that if you do this, you will meet such things and pass through such suffering. We must not listen only to good words; we must know how to hear words of warning, words of exhortation, words that lead us aright—words that are truly profitable to us.

Jehoshaphat was swept along by the tide and followed, but in God's sight King Ahab served idols exceedingly and was evil. That is why God had determined to kill this King Ahab. Instead of serving God, Ahab built a shrine of Baal and served it, and through his wife Jezebel he served the god Asherah and foreign gods. When God, after bearing and bearing, was about to be angry, Ahab, if he was to live, should have listened to the

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words of the prophet Micaiah. The word that he went up the mountain and saw the sheep scattered without a master means: you, the king, die, and the people all return home. If Ahab had heard that word and turned back, he would have lived. Because he did not turn back, he died.

There are times when God lets us hear words of blessing, but also times when He speaks words of rebuke that lead us into the right way. At such times we must receive that word, knowing it is the word of the LORD God, and believe and obey it—then we receive blessing. This is the faith we need: the faith that can recognize the word of God, the attitude that, if it is the word of the LORD, follows and believes at once.

The Servants of God Know the Future through the Word

A servant of God, even if all the world rushes upon him, delivers what God has said. Whoever may threaten him with a sword and say he will kill him, he first says plainly, God has spoken thus. As a man he may be afraid, but he speaks plainly. How could he not deliver what God has said? If he did not know, that would be one thing; but knowing it, how could he not deliver it?

The servants of God know the future of God's people and of His servants. They know that if one lives by faith, such results come and one is saved; but that if one serves idols and goes out into the world, one surely meets such death. Therefore they exhort in advance. Though the thing has not yet come, they prophesy beforehand that it will be so. The people or the servant who believes that word receives blessing, and the one who does not believe receives calamity exactly according to

that word. God knows the destiny of a man, the state of a nation, and all our life. The LORD leads us into green pastures and beside the still waters.

It is not that the servants of God see visions while praying and so prophesy. Look at the word of God and it is all there. The future of this world, the whole life of a man, the way of his happiness and the way of righteousness—everything is in the Word. That is why they prophesy from this Word. In the world there are many who count themselves prophets. Once, in a bookstore, there was even a book by a so-called prophet, and I opened it to look; that man thought himself a real prophet and had written down his predictions. But he is a false prophet. He himself does not know what he is prophesying, so his prophecy has no fruit and does not come to pass. But a true prophet looks at the word of God and prophesies: a man like Ahab, unless he turns, perishes like this, and if he turns he receives mercy; and the person who follows the righteousness of God by faith and lives the life God delights in receives such blessing. And it comes to pass without fail.

An Ear That Can Hear the Word Is a Blessing

We must be able to hear the Word God reveals through His servants. And we must become hearers and believers. Then we become blessed people. The Scriptures speak in many places through the parable of two women. Among them are Martha and Mary. Martha worked diligently for the Lord and served Him well. That too is precious and by no means wrong. But better still, He said, is Mary, who listened attentively to the words the Lord was speaking. Mary was in the more blessed place. Blessed is the person who has an ear that can hear the

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Word—the ear of the heart that can hear the word of God. Do you have the ear of the heart that can hear the word of God? The person who has such an ear is not only blessed but comes to receive blessing.

It is four hundred to one—whose word will you believe? A wise person believes the word of the one prophet Micaiah. Even if countless people say, go up, go up, it is so. What is truly blessed is not only pleasant words. The word, if you do that you perish, sounds like a curse, but in fact it is a blessing. Because one perishes by doing so, it is prophesied in advance to teach us; so the very ability to understand that word is a blessing.

Jehoshaphat and Ahab, Two Ways That Parted

If we are to live the life of faith before God, we must be able to hear the word of God. We have not yet lived out our whole lives, but if we live like Ahab we become like Ahab, and if we live like Jehoshaphat, God protects us. Jehoshaphat and Ahab went out to the war together; both alike were kings of Israel, and in the flesh both were chosen lives alike. Yet God left Ahab to die, and protected Jehoshaphat even as the enemy came upon him. What does this mean for our lives? Jehoshaphat was lacking and made many mistakes, but he believed the word of God and the words of His servants and, insufficient though he was, followed them. Therefore he was protected even in the midst of danger. But Ahab, though the prophet Micaiah warned him so, heard and believed only the words prophesied favorably to him, and did not listen to the word God counseled him with—and the proud people soon perish according to the Word. (Proverbs 16:18)

Therefore, even though we have not finished our life of faith, we must reckon in advance: am I a Jehoshaphat or an Ahab—one who will receive blessing, or one who will receive a curse? The person who listens attentively to the word of God, believes it, and, insufficient though he is, obeys and follows it, is one who will receive blessing hereafter; and the person who takes lightly and ignores the word given through the servants of God, living like Ahab, must know in advance that he is one who brings a curse on himself, and must turn in advance. That is the life of the wise. We must live a life of faith with the eyes of the spirit opened like this.

We know our own future in advance, and we also know the future of others in advance. People are commonly very curious about how their future will turn out. But what is truly important is whether you are a person who will receive blessing or a person who will receive a curse. This can be said plainly on the ground of the word of God. Only, there is one exception. Even a person now bound for a curse receives blessing if he turns; and even a person now bound for blessing, if he turns again and serves idols like Ahab and leaves God, receives a curse. That is certain. There are people who speak only good words and people who speak only unfavorable words; but if one hears them knowing they are the word of God and turns from his own iniquity and wrong thinking, that person receives blessing before God. We must know how to hear the word of God.

Why the Church Today Fails to Hear the Word

Looking at this passage, I think about how Christianity today has come to be this way. This king is one who holds power. But the servant of God has no worldly power. The

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LORD alone is his strength and his weapon; he has no power visible to the eyes. The king, on the other hand, has much visible power—the soldiers and the people are all his. Inside the church today something similar happens.

Originally, one who teaches well, serves with the Word, and has years of experience is appointed an elder; among the people, one who is longstanding and follows the word of God is appointed an elder. In the Scriptures the servants of God are sometimes called elders as well. But in many churches today, people do not listen well to the words of this servant of God. One like the prophet Micaiah would say boldly to King Ahab: you will die; even if you shut me in prison, you will not return, and I will be released; when the people see my words fulfilled, they will set me free. But today it is not so.

Go around the churches these days and there are cases where the man of much wealth holds the real power. When such people gather, the pastor easily cowers before them. But a true servant of God must boldly deliver the will of God. He must say plainly: serve God; do not set your heart on useless things but serve God. Then God receives glory, and then it is the Church of God. One must not grovel before the man of much wealth. Who is the true holder of power? Not the man with much wealth in the world, but God. Because this has been turned upside down, the church becomes corrupt, and so it fails to hear the word of God.

Even when the right word is delivered, they cannot hear it. Tell them that if they keep on this way they perish, and they do not listen. Countless people say that if you only believe, you go to heaven. Following Calvin's doctrine of predestination, they say that if you just believe unconditionally you are saved; but if you look deep into this passage, you see it is not so simple.

I cannot do that kind of ministry. Before I was born again,

in the days when I served as an evangelist, I once preached at a certain church. As I delivered the Word, there was whispering here and there. I was only there temporarily, preaching for a few days, yet I gathered all the church officers and said this: why do you whisper after the sermon? Did I deliver the Word wrongly? If there is a fault, tell me. Their eyes went round; it seems they thought, the minister before him watched our faces and left, and this young evangelist, newly come, dares to speak like this.

Why did they react so? Because I had not first made them clap and cry, receive the fire! Come, Holy Spirit, hotly!—I did not do that kind of emotional build-up. I did none of that; I simply opened the Word and delivered it steadily, verse by verse, as an exposition. Because I did not whip up the atmosphere but quietly delivered only the Word, some found it dull and whispered. I cannot do that emotional way of doing things.

Let me say it plainly: I am a person who does not use such methods. Having grown up as the son of the director of a prayer house, I saw such scenes all too much, and so I do none of it. Because of that, the people there did not like me either, and in the end I gave up that ministry. If one is going to minister at all, one must deliver the word of God, and the people, if the Word is right, must hear it, say amen, believe, and follow. Then they receive blessing. For someone to try to sway the minister this way and that because he has some wealth or gives some offerings—that is not right.

This Ahab is exactly that figure. To put it simply, a king like Ahab is like the real power-holder of today. In that place, four hundred to one, Zedekiah, the representative of the false prophets, struck Micaiah's cheek and protested: does God speak only through your mouth? Is all we have spoken false?

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Look at this present world and it is exactly the same. Four hundred to one. The prophet Micaiah, because of that, was shut in prison eating the water of affliction and the bread of affliction—but he is a prophet truly worthy of respect. A true servant of God is one who leads the people so that they fare well. The one who at each season rightly delivers the word of God and the word of blessing—the will of God—is the servant of God. We must have the ear of the heart that can hear this word of God. The Apostle Paul said to be circumcised in heart. If it is truly the word of God, we say amen; and the line must be drawn plainly: without this Word I die; this Word is the truth.

True and False Prophets Are Known by Their Fruits

The prophet Micaiah is worthy of respect, and the Scripture records this so that we may beware of false prophets and discern by the fruit whether one is a false prophet or a true prophet. In fact, true prophets and false prophets look alike on the outside. You know it if you have farmed. Beside the true grain there is always a counterfeit. Once at a retreat we were pulling weeds; the pole bean runs up as a vine and hangs full of firm little beans, while the kudzu vine, however lush its leaves and thick its stem and greener still, bears no bean fruit. And someone once cut down the pole beans thinking they were kudzu. That is how similar the outward look is. But how do you know them? By the fruit. When the pole bean flowers, beans hang; the kudzu, however lush, bears no such bean. By the fruit you know the tree.

False prophets and true prophets are known by their fruits.

What the prophet Micaiah said came to pass exactly, and what Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah said did not come to pass. Zedekiah made horns of iron and said the king would win as with those horns, but King Ahab, who believed that word and went out, was defeated in the war and died. True and false prophets are known by the fruit, not by the husk or the process. The false prophets also prophesied—perhaps more forcefully, in more splendid robes, with louder voices. But what was the fruit? The one proved a true prophet was Micaiah, and Zedekiah was exposed as a false prophet.

The Word of God Is Life

Everyone, it must stand plain in your heart: without this Word, without the faith that believes this Word, I die. We often see a double heart: the word of God is good, but is there perhaps some other way? There is no other way. Only the word of God is life and truth and blessing. Nothing besides the word of God becomes life or blessing to us. The conviction must stand plain in the heart: without this, I die. For the saved person, without God he dies; he lives by God. King Ahab too would have lived had he believed the word of the LORD delivered by the prophet Micaiah. He would not have fought the war, and would have enjoyed riches and glory. Because he did not listen to that word, because he did not know that the word of God is life, he suffered and died.

The word of God recorded in the Scriptures is life to you and to me. This Word is not something one may believe or not believe; it is what one must believe to live. Believe it halfway and you die; believe it wholly and you live. If you believe this Word wholly, this Word gives you blessing, keeps and protects

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you, supplies what you need, leads you in the right way, and causes you to dwell under God's protection. Ahab too would have gained life had he believed the word the prophet Micaiah delivered. Because he did not believe, he lost his life.

Because the word of God is life and truth, you must give this Word its full weight and believe it. The person who still has dregs in his heart cannot believe wholly and believes only about eighty percent. But the person who believes wholly believes: this Word is truth and life; if I only do as this Word says, I live; believing this Word I am saved, and doing this Word I receive blessing. Not to believe is death. When we hear the word of God, only if we hear it knowing it is life do we gain life.

We must know how to discern the prophets, and we must believe that this word of God is life. Everyone, do you believe? All the Word in our life, and everything in it, is life itself. I hope you will know this, believe it, follow it, and receive blessing. I have finished the message. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

A Life Lived Spiritually

< 1 Kings 22:39-40 >

"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place."

Today I mean to share the Word through King Ahab. Looking at 1 Kings 22:39–40 that we read today, it says, *"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:39)* The books of 1 and 2 Kings and Chronicles explain these kings in detail, showing well the rest of their acts and what they did—their achievements and the whole account of their lives.

In that light, as we look at the course Ahab lived, I want us to think together about how we ought to live before God.

God First Removed Our Sins

I am truly thankful to God who saved you and me. If God had not saved you and me from all sins and all weaknesses, how could we say we serve God? Believing in God is possible because God first removed all our sins.

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That we believe and trust God—that is, that we believe He has removed our sins—is to trust Him, leaning on the Word He gave us after removing our sins. The Lord, who spoke to us and removed all our sins, sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts, so that by the Word and the Spirit we came to be able to trust God.

By ourselves we cannot believe in God, and even if we believe, it is a vain thing. I believe that God first loved us, cleanly removed our sins, and saved us.

Why David Praised God

Do you know David? Looking at how David lived the life of faith and prayed, he confesses that he praises God because he trusts in God. In David's psalms are contained many confessions that are truly amazing. We can see that David was a man who received favor before God.

David did not believe in God because he was pious of himself; by the grace God first bestowed on David he came to be able to believe, and with that faith he praised God.

You and I live on this earth. And the marvelous thing is this: how can we say we believe in and follow God our whole life long, and how can we hold the assurance of salvation, of going to heaven, our whole life long? It is possible by believing God, by trusting Him. It is possible because God has removed our sins. That we believe in and follow God all our life is because God has removed all our sins.

The Lord Who Bore Even All Our Weaknesses

All people want to live rightly before God, to believe in and

follow God, and to live the life of righteousness. But if God had not removed all the sins of our whole lifetime, how could we stand before God? However much we might want to serve Him, how could we serve Him? That a sinner can serve God is because God has borne all the sins of our whole lifetime, and because, trusting that love, we follow Him.

All our weak parts, all our mistakes and faults—has our Lord borne them all, or has He not? —Yes, He has borne them.— Growing old does not make faults disappear. Rather, even as we age, we make many mistakes and commit many faults before God all our life long.

There is much we do wrong in deed, and much we do in error. Every person living on this earth is such a weak being. In God's sight all are people whose deeds are not perfect and whose faults are many—people who sin out of weakness and who sin out of their own evil.

Yet the Lord loved us who have so many faults, passed all those sins on to the sacrificial Lamb, and made our sins to be no more. So we weak ones obtained the qualification to serve God, became His people and His children, and received blessing.

Where does our faith rest? In the fact that the Lord has borne all our faults and iniquities. *"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)*, He said. I believe that our Lord has made us white as wool. Do you believe that our Lord came to this earth and, to remove the sins of you and me and make us righteous, to make us His people, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River? —Amen—

He did so to save us. I trust that. I believe that the Lord has removed our sins. That is why you and I serve God and have

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become His children, why the qualification to serve God has been given, and why we have become the people of righteousness who can deliver the gospel to others. If the Lord had not removed all our iniquities and faults, how could we have stood before God?

All those countless faults and sins you committed, the Lord has removed and has borne entirely. Confirm that in your hearts. Acknowledge before the Lord what kind of person you are—your evils and your faults—and confirm whether the Lord has taken them all away. All those sins we committed one by one—has He taken them all, or has He not? —Yes, He has taken them.—

We were born evil from our mother's womb, and from the age of one to the age of twenty we sinned. We transgressed and sinned in deed. Have all those sins been passed on to Jesus Christ, or have they not? —Yes, they have been passed on.— From twenty-one to the age we are now, has our Lord taken away all those iniquities, or has He not? —Yes, He has taken them.—

A Life That Boasts of Being Sinless and Praises Him

When we plainly confirm whether the Lord has taken away whatever fault we have, our hearts become hearts in which there is not one sin. Because the heart is clean and without sin, we come to live a life that boasts of being sinless, that praises the God who removed that sin, testifying of Him and giving glory before Him. This is the life of the believer.

What have we to boast of? We boast that the Lord has removed our sins. Is there no sin in your hearts? The person

who has received the remission of sin has no sin. The person who has received the truth of Jesus Christ has no sin. When we received the Word, the Holy Spirit sealed our hearts according to that Word. To boast of having no sin—that is, to boast that the Lord has taken away all our sins and made us sinless people—is precisely to praise the Lord and to preach the gospel.

Is there anything to boast of in our deeds? There is not. However well we have done by our own deeds, one small wrong cancels it out and leaves nothing to put forward. But there is one thing in our hearts worth boasting: that Jesus Christ has removed our sins and we have become sinless. This one thing is worth boasting of.

The person who has received the remission of sin is one who should praise the LORD. He is one who should praise Him with thanksgiving, praise Him with harp and lyre. *"All that is within me, bless His holy name!" (Psalm 103:1)* it says. We praise the fact that the Lord has removed our sins and made us people without sin. The Lord has given His people this blessing.

There Is No Greater Blessing than Being without Sin

The greatest praise and the greatest thanksgiving is to praise and give thanks that the Lord has removed sin, so that I now, because of the Lord, have no sin. There is no blessing more precious and greater than this. To receive and enjoy this great blessing and yet not know how to give thanks that the heart is without sin—to be bound only to one's deeds, darkening and brightening by turns over how well or badly one has done—is not the true life of faith. Believing in the gospel of the water

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and the Spirit is the life of faith.

Today and tomorrow and the day after, forever, our part is to praise and trust the Lord who bore all our iniquities and faults and made us sinless, and to give thanks within that trust. How comfortable and precious is the life that boasts of having no sin! Since nothing of mine can enter into it at all, that life is so very comfortable—and we have received from our God something so precious that money cannot buy it.

The True Happiness Only Its Possessor Enjoys

Everyone living on this earth sins—so how can anyone become a person without sin? Everyone who has received the Lord's favor is without sin. It is a truly precious thing. It is not because we had some special qualification different from the people of the world that we received this grace. It is only because we were so pitiable that He took pity on us, clothed us in grace, and by the grace that is in Christ made us God's people and people without sin. It is a truly thankful thing.

That you and I have become the people of God—we must know how to give thanks for this. Though we are not distinguished or famous people on this earth, not renowned rich men or rare beauties or handsome men, we can be satisfied and thankful with this one thing alone: that our Lord has saved us. What could be more precious than this?

Sometimes when I am out and sitting somewhere, I look through the booklets. In them the faces of famous people appear, and there are many writings. I pick one up now and then and look at the contents. But they have written thickly words without a kernel. While you read, it sounds somewhat plausible, but when you close the book, nothing remains in the

heart. It is because they are wishful thoughts out of man's own mind.

Anyone can speak of a beautiful dream, a beautiful life of heaven. But the person who actually possesses it is the one who is truly happy. The person who possesses the true kingdom of heaven, the person who possesses sinlessness—that person is happy. His story is the real story, and that is life. You and I have no sin. The sinless person lives now on this earth, and lives his whole life with a sinless heart, boasting of it and testifying of it. What a blessed life this is!

Do you want to become such a person? Some have already become so, and some have not yet come into the faith. This does not come by money, nor by effort, nor by the things of the world or anything of one's own. It comes by what is God's. It comes by hearing the Word within the church, by receiving the favor of God. Because it is so precious, it is possible only by the favor of God.

I hope all the people who come into this church will receive this grace. Those who have already received it—even if you have nothing in the world and your work does not prosper, give thanks, boast, and rejoice that you have no sin. The Apostle Paul said, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).*

What we must truly give thanks for and hold precious is that the Lord has removed our sins, that we live as people without sin. When we give thanks for this and trust it—when we believe that He has removed all our sins—true peace of heart and freedom and happiness are there. Such a person possesses a happiness and beauty and truth and eternal life that cannot be compared with anyone in this world. We must know that what we possess is precious. Do not fail to know it, prizing only the things of the world, murmuring and complaining.

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What we must hold most dear is this: to live our whole life as people without sin, to boast of it and deliver it to others, and, gathering together as sinless people, to worship, to lead others also to receive the remission of sin and taste this happiness, guiding them into the favor of God—this life is the most happy and blessed life. Trust God, believe what God has given, and live in Him.

Jesus Christ removed our sins and made us people without sin—we now have no sin—is there anything more precious and more joyful than this in the world? There is not. *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)*, it says. For the rest of what you need, pray before the Lord. God will supply it, so do not worry. Know what is precious as precious.

Ahab, Who Followed Only What Is Seen with the Eyes

Ahab spent his whole life building and doing many works. And it says he built an ivory house. Ivory is the front teeth of the elephant, and with it he built his own house luxuriously. Ahab also built temples where Baal was served and Asherah was served. The man whose lifework was not serving God but picking out and doing only the very evil things—the sin Jeroboam committed—that man is Ahab. And this man was the king of Israel.

His doing evil does not mean he was some special foreigner. He was the king of Israel and an Israelite. This man ruled Israel for twenty-two years, and in all that time he did nothing but sin and stand against God until he died. He did not sin alone; he took the lead in making the people of Israel serve idols. The

Scripture has recorded how evil this man was. On the other hand, in that day there was a servant of God named Elijah.

After this Ahab became king, for three years and six months no rain fell. Why? Because the sin Ahab committed was no ordinary sin. What is the sin of Jeroboam? It is different from the sins we commit out of weakness while believing in God. It is the sin of fundamentally exchanging God for another. He pushed the LORD God aside, carved wood, and made idols to serve. Asherah is an idol in the form of a woman and Baal an idol in the form of a man; he built great temples, made the idols within them, and made the people of Israel bow down and sacrifice there.

So this sin is no ordinary sin. The sins we the saved commit out of weakness are not the sin of exchanging God for another. But Ahab took as his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidon, a servant of the old god Baal. This was not a sin committed out of weakness; it was a sin committed with the heart set on it. His lifework was building his own house—the ivory house—and he lived only for his own pleasure. Ahab served idols all his life and lived only for himself.

The nation of Judah also perishes later, and the northern nation of Israel perishes too. They are all the same Israel, the descendants of Jacob. Then what does God say to us, taking up this King Ahab? After Ahab died, the Scripture records briefly, *"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:39).*

The point is that this man did nothing for the Lord. King though he was. We are spiritually kings and princes of the kingdom of God. The sisters are princesses and the brothers are princes. But what matters is what kind of life one lives as a

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king. Living in the visible world, we ought to serve the invisible God, spread the invisible true truth, and live the spiritual life serving the LORD; but Ahab lived only for what is seen with the eyes. This is the lesson Ahab gives us.

The Spiritual Life and the Fleshly Life, Two Forked Roads

What should we who believe in God live for? Living on this earth, people divide into two kinds: those who live for the truth and those who do not. Even after being born again and becoming God's people, we lean to one side between two lives: going toward the spiritual life, or inclining toward the fleshly life. Even a born-again person of God, if he keeps serving what is seen with the eyes, ends up exchanging God for something else and comes to ruin himself. It is like a nation perishing and every home in it perishing with it.

There are two roads in the believer's life, and though we are somewhat lacking, we must follow the spiritual life. This spiritual life is so noble and so clear a life that one cannot live it out alone. This noble life—serving God, saving souls, serving the gospel, and praising all one's life the God who made us sinless—cannot be lived apart from the church.

But there is also a life that does not go through the church and chases only material things. This life is entirely possible even for a person who believes in God. We can choose one of these two and live it. But what happens if we chase material things? We lose the sinlessness of heart, and we lose the faith that trusts the Lord. Chasing what is seen with the eyes, we lose the invisible God. If we follow the flesh, then though we are God's people we do not serve God; like Ahab we serve

idols and ourselves, and come to live only for ourselves. Then hardship comes upon our life, peace and contentment leave the soul, discernment grows dim, and at last we no longer know what the truth is.

One chases material things, and those very things swallow him up, and by them he comes to ruin. It is exactly this that Satan uses to tempt us. With material things he blocks the way of following the invisible God. Satan the Devil's work is to block the channel so that we fail to receive blessing before God, fail to receive the blessing that comes down from above. Knowing that if God's people live spiritually they become rich in spirit and in flesh and prosper, Satan tries to block that way in advance. So he keeps brightening only the eyes of the flesh—opening only the eyes that see things—stirring up the covetousness of the heart, making a person follow that covetousness and lose what is truly precious.

If one follows Satan's temptation like this when young, then later, grown up, one cannot receive and enjoy the blessing God gives—even if He gives it, one cannot receive it—and one comes to do what stands against God. On the other hand, if one goes forward following the spirit, for a time it is painful. It does not make sense, it seems one loses many things of the flesh, it even feels like being robbed. But though it looks that way, if one praises the God who removed our sin, and, though losing a little, follows and serves the Lord and delivers the gospel to other souls and goes forward united with the church, then what is needed on this earth is also given, faith first arises in the heart, one comes to discern the will of God, and peace settles on the heart. So one lives the precious life of leading others into Christ, receiving God's guidance and blessing and care, enjoying the blessing of rain given in its season—a blessed people of God.

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So these two lives are plainly set before us. And when we are young, Satan the Devil surely drags us to follow the fleshly life. Having lived until now believing and leaning only on the visible world, the spiritual world seems not to add up, the losses seem too many, it feels like losing everything—so it is very painful. But the life that goes forward following the spirit, though it seems to lose the things of the flesh, gains far more in spirit and in heart.

Like the Man Who Found a Pearl of Great Price

When one gains more, that faith settles in the heart, one comes to know what the truth is, and the heart arises that wants to live for the truth. When that heart arises, from then on the Lord supplies also what the flesh needs. Only, until one gains that heart, there is much loss.

A pearl merchant, going about, found one precious pearl. And that pearl was no ordinary pearl but one exceedingly precious. So he sold all his possessions and bought that pearl, the Word says (Matthew 13:45–46).

When that precious and blessed life—walking with God and receiving blessing before the Lord—is discovered in the heart and planted in the heart, one comes to follow that life with one's whole lifetime. And following it, one is supplied by God with everything needed on this earth. The Lord wants His people to live the spiritual life. The books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles tell us how people lived before God, and which life is the right life.

We must not, like Ahab, chase only what is seen with the eyes. We have no sin. We must boast of being sinless. We must spread to all the world that love of God by which the Lord

removed our sin—the grace of Jesus Christ. Do not pursue the visible things too much. Pursuing them does not make them yours. If, in Christ, we first follow His will and unite our hearts with Him and go forward along the life of righteousness, everything needed on this earth is given to you. The life of the wise is the life that follows and carries out the word of God.

All the people of the world chase material things—why then do they not become rich? Living seventy or eighty years, carrying one business through three or four generations—why do they still not become rich, always the same? We must know that material things do not become one's own because a man labors for them. Only when God blesses does that material become one's own, and only when God blesses does that home become a happy home. We must believe that. We must not live only for ourselves.

We must live the spiritual life. How many people on this earth have received the remission of sin? Truly few. I have studied the Scriptures long, lived the life of faith, and met many people, but it is hard to meet a person who says there is no sin in his heart. It is hard to meet a person who can say exactly how his sins disappeared. That means those who have received favor before God are that few. Those who live the spiritual life are truly rare as well.

The Crossroads Where the Heart Must Be Fixed

You have received the remission of sin—do you want to live the spiritual life? Do you want to receive blessing before God? Then first keep what God has given you. Trust God and lean on Him. Believe and rely on the fact that He has removed your sins. Your hearts will become clean as white snow. You

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will live in this world sinless, joyfully spreading your sinlessness. And serve the Lord with it, united within the church. It cannot be done alone. United with the born-again people of God and the servants of God, follow the Lord.

Then God will give you faith to live the spiritual life, give you your companion, lead you in that way, and save your family so that your home becomes a spiritual home. To live the life of the spirit, or the life of the flesh—every saved person stands at this crossroads. One must choose a side and fix the heart. Even after fixing the heart, hard things will come. But if you fix your heart and follow the Lord, God Himself will help you. If you do not fix your heart, it is rather more painful.

What kind of person will you become later? If you do not fix your heart, you can become a person like Ahab. The most worthless man under heaven is Ahab, but if we follow the flesh, we ourselves become Ahab. All one's life crying material things, material things—sin piles up; one makes others sin and keeps them from receiving the remission of sin; then one is crushed by those very things, they become debt instead, and all one's life one serves money as a slave, paying debts, until one dies pressed under money. This is Ahab's life.

The End of Ahab, Who Did Not Listen to the Prophet Micaiah

Beside Ahab's royal palace there was the vineyard of a man named Naboth. Coveting that vineyard so much, Ahab took to his bed to get it into his hands. When his wife Jezebel asked the reason, he said he wanted that field, but though he was king he could not take what belonged to one of his people, and so he had no appetite. Jezebel told him not to worry; she had Naboth

set on high among the people, set up two false witnesses to testify that Naboth had cursed the king and God, and commanded that he be taken at once and stoned to death. She wrote letters and sent them, and the elders of Israel did just so, and Naboth died. Jezebel told Ahab that the field was now his, and Ahab, it is said, made that field a vegetable garden. A king, to whom the whole nation already belonged, thought a thing was his own only when he got it into his hands. For us, the kingdom of God is all ours—it belongs to God's people. If we need it, He gives it all.

Afterward, Ahab king of Israel, going out to war together with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, asked the prophets. Many prophets all said that if he went out he would win, but the one prophet Micaiah said, if you go out, you die. Ahab hated Micaiah, saying he always spoke only what was ominous. When Jehoshaphat asked whether there was no other prophet, he said there was one, but he always spoke only bad things. Still they had him brought and asked him, and Micaiah said, *"I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd" (1 Kings 22:17)*. This was the word that the king would die. Ahab was enraged, shut Micaiah in prison, and ordered that he be given the bread and water of affliction.

Going out to the battlefield, Ahab had Jehoshaphat wear the royal robes, while he himself disguised himself in the clothes of a common man and put on armor. But an arrow some soldier shot without thinking flew in by chance and struck the seam of his armor, and Ahab bled greatly and died. However one disguises oneself, if God says, you go out and you die, one dies. The will of God can never be defied.

When Ahab seized Naboth's vineyard, the servant of God prophesied that the dogs would lick his blood. And indeed, when they washed Ahab's blood at the pool where the harlots

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bathed, the dogs came and licked it. Jezebel also, just as the servant of God prophesied that she would surely perish, was thrown down from the window by the eunuchs at Jehu's command and died, and the dogs tore and ate her corpse. It came to pass exactly according to the word of God.

God's Purpose in Telling Us to Live Spiritually

What does this tell us? That the people of God are to live the spiritual life. God will take responsibility and bless them—so fear God, serve Him, and live: this is what the Lord says. The books of 1 and 2 Kings tell us to live the spiritual life. It is God's promise that if His people serve Him according to His statutes, and, however hard it is, rely on God and serve Him and live, He Himself will block all the enemies around them and bless them.

We must live the spiritual life. We must live for the well-being of our souls rather than of our bodies. We must put God before prospering in the world, and live the life of serving God following His will. We must live preaching the gospel to save the souls of others. We must live testifying of what the Lord did for us—Jesus Christ who came to remove our sins and made us sinless. This is precisely the spiritual life.

Though it seems it will not work and looks hard, unite with the church and serve the Lord through the church, and live such a life. Then the Lord will Himself remove disasters from that nation and home and soul and every livelihood, block the enemy armies, bless you to bear much fruit, and make you blessed. This is God's purpose in telling us to live the spiritual life.

What kind of life must we live? The born-again person

must live the spiritual life. The people of God, the righteous, must live the holy life. Though we are not perfect and the flesh is weak, our hearts and souls must be whole and serve our Lord. Fix your heart, trust God, and live within the faith. Then our life and its outcome will surely be within God's blessing and a glorious life; He Himself will become the surety of our life, receive glory through us, and clothe us with glory. Everyone, do you believe? —Amen—

Even if a saved person has many worldly desires, first unite with the Lord. That is the right way to live one's whole life. Unite with the church. The remission of sin is not something one can receive just anywhere. Only through the Church of God is the remission of sin possible. It is possible through the servants of God and the people of God—through the believers united with the church that lives the spiritual life before God. From now on, live the spiritual life. The truth of the Lord is so exact and bright—unite your heart before the Lord and follow the Lord.

Do not think that you now have no faults. We are still beings weak and full of faults even now. We must praise the Lord who saved such people as us. Weak though we are, if we trust God we can get free of that weakness; if we do not trust, we cannot. If you want your life to become a right life, trust God, believe Him, and lean on Him. Believe what He has done. Then, more and more, you break free and become an instrument of righteousness, a spiritual soldier. We must live the life of faith.

We who have received the remission of sin must live the life of faith that believes the Lord. If we do not live the life of faith, everything not of faith becomes sin, and by deeds no one can be made righteous. However rightly you have lived by deeds, when one or two mistakes are exposed you are bound

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and tormented again. But if with the heart you believe the Lord and trust what He has done, you are not bound. At all times you come to praise God with thanksgiving and give glory before God by faith. And you experience more and more before the Lord, and can return to Him more praise and more glory.

I hope you will live your lifetime as a life of faith, and let us live the spiritual life together. We praise our Lord. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Heretics from Generation to Generation

< 1 Kings 22:51-53 >

"Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done."

Today's passage is the Word that in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria and ruled two years, and that he walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, and provoked the LORD God to anger according to all that his father had done.

When Jehoshaphat, who had gone out to war together with Ahab king of northern Israel, had been king seventeen years, Ahab the king of the northern nation died, and Ahab's son Ahaziah became king. He became king of Israel and ruled two years, then fell from an upper room, grew sick, and died. The question is what he did during those two years. He walked in the way of his father and the way of his mother and the way of

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Jeroboam who had made Israel sin, worshiping the golden calves and provoking the anger of the LORD God of Israel. Among those who became kings in the northern nation of Israel after Jeroboam, there was not one who feared the LORD God and reigned doing what pleases God. They followed, every one of them, the sin Jeroboam had committed.

The Kings of Israel, Truly Hard to Understand

However much I try to understand the kings of Israel, this is what I cannot understand. Ahaziah imitated the faith of his father and mother just as it was and followed the sin Jeroboam had committed. He set up the golden calves that made the people of Israel sin, saying, these are your God the LORD, making them serve idols and offer sacrifices to those golden calves. Ahaziah, like his father Ahab, did not listen to the words of the prophet Micaiah, nor to the words of Elijah; serving the golden calves and standing against God, he fell sick and died. And it was exactly as the servants of God prophesied: *"You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die"* (2 Kings 1:4, 6, 16)—according to that word, he did not come back.

If his father Ahab had served the golden calves, stood against God, and died wretchedly, leaving this world, then the son at least, thinking, so this is how my father died, should have looked back once and thought: when I become king, I must not commit this sin; for my children's sake, for the people's sake, and for the LORD God's sake I must not serve the golden calves. Yet Ahaziah, ruling the nation as king for two years, walked in the way of his mother and the way of Jeroboam and served idols. They picked out and committed

only the sins that would be cursed before God. The kings who inherited the throne in northern Israel followed the sin of Jeroboam almost to a man.

The Wrong Faith Inherited in the Home

The kings of Israel, while receiving fearful rebuke from God as they kept sinning, still practiced the sin Jeroboam had committed. So it seems that education in childhood—especially education in the home—is truly important. What did they see as they grew up? The environment of childhood exerts a great influence. Because they grew up watching the faith of parents who sinned following the sin of Jeroboam, that faith hardened into a faith wrong before God.

The Sin of Exchanging the LORD for a Golden Calf

What God hates most is the sin of serving the golden calves Jeroboam made. What sin did they commit? They made the people of Israel follow the wrong faith of serving a golden calf in place of the LORD God. The kings of Israel also served the idol Baal, praying for good harvests, and led their people to serve that idol too. How many idols did Ahaziah's mother Jezebel serve in her lifetime! What an evil king was Ahaziah's father Ahab, who even killed the servants of God! After Ahab became king, how many disasters there were in the nation of Israel! When disasters were this many, the kings of other nations would say, heaven must be angry because I lack virtue, and would at least offer sacrifice toward heaven; but the kings

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of Israel did not depart from the sin of Jeroboam. Rather they nursed a grudge against God and committed still more the sin God hates most.

While King Ahaziah was ruling the nation those two years, he fell from an upper room and became sick, and he sent messengers, telling them to ask Baal-Zebub the god of Ekron whether he would recover from this sickness. But Elijah said, you shall not come down from that bed; you shall die there—and he really died on that bed.

That is why I say I simply cannot understand the kings and the people of Israel. Not only these kings, Ahab and Ahaziah—those who served the golden calves went on serving the golden calves generation after generation. The nation of Israel, from the time Jeroboam became king after David and Solomon until the day the nation perished, served the golden calves as their god. How the people and the kings of Israel could do so is truly grievous. When a nation does not prosper, they ought to seek the cause; but they did not know it was because of the sin of exchanging the LORD God for a golden calf.

What we must know is this: spiritually, what wrong faith the kings of Israel held before God. To depart from the sin of Jeroboam that the Scriptures speak of was precisely the way to return in faith to the LORD God. What was the faith of the servants of God who appear in the Scriptures? They knew the LORD God as the true God and served Him by faith. It is important for us to know and believe that the LORD God is the true God. It would have been good if the kings of Israel had rightly awakened their people to the fact that the LORD God is the true God and served Him in faith; but they always begged idols—the golden calves and Baal and Asherah—for the blessings of their flesh. They served with all their heart idols that could not even make the flesh prosper.

The LORD God is the God who makes our flesh and our soul prosper and makes all things go well. But the people of Israel served golden calves and idols as God in place of the LORD God. In fact those things are idols made by man. Bowing down to an idol made by man is not only foolish; it is committing great sin against the LORD God.

The northern nation of Israel lost, because of the golden calves, the God who had worked upon their forefathers of faith, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The people of Israel came to be ignorant of the LORD God. They did not know that the God their forefathers had believed, followed, and served is alive even now and lives forever, and wants to be praised through the people of Israel. He is the God who, if only they turned from the sin of serving the golden calves, would embrace them at any time and bless them; but because they betrayed that God, they became those who served the golden calves in vain like that.

The Kings Who Did Not Ask the Servant of God

Until they became so, if they had received the exhortation of the servants of God who were in the nation of Israel, they would have come to know the will of God and met the God who loved them. If they had listened even to the words of Elisha, it would have been enough, but they did not. If they did not know the will of God, they could have asked a servant of God like Elisha. What kind of God is the God their fathers believed and served, what does He hate and what does He delight in, how should I lead the nation—had they asked the servant of God, they could have known it all. Then why did they not ask? They regarded Elisha, rather, as their adversary.

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So they could not know the will and the love of the LORD God. The ones who truly knew the will of the God of their fathers were servants of God like Elisha; but ignoring the words of such servants and refusing to hear the command of God, they had no way to know the will of God. That the people of Israel served so many idols means, conversely, that they wanted to receive that much blessing. Serving the golden calves and Baal and Asherah, they seem to have wanted to receive more blessings through those idols.

Then with what faith could they truly have received the blessing God gives? The nation of Israel came into being because of one man, their forefather Abraham. Abraham crossed the river with his family. So the people of Canaan called them the Hebrews—those who crossed the river. If Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are their forefathers of faith, then by what faith those fathers received blessing is something they could all know. The people of Israel are those who were kept in Egypt through Joseph and entered the land of Canaan under the leading of Moses. Looking at the history of Israel, they could know the LORD God fully; yet, knowing it, they drew still nearer to the golden calves.

In the nation of Israel the records of the successive kings remained. The scribes had recorded the deeds of the kings, so by reading them alone they could know it all. They also had the book of God's Law, the five books of Moses. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—because Moses recorded them, they are called the Pentateuch. This record was the command of God and the history of the nation of Israel. The book of God's Law was in their hands. The people of Israel had the book of the Law written on scrolls, and we now have the Scriptures, the word of God. There was no reason they could not read what was written in their own language. Yet,

reading it, they still replaced the LORD God with a golden calf, served it, and asked for blessing—it makes no sense. They should rather have repented and returned to the LORD God, but they could not cast the golden calves away. Therefore they were cursed by God.

Anyone in this world wants to receive blessing from the LORD God, but since no one knows by himself the way to receive that blessing, they had to ask the prophets of the nation of Israel. The prophets knew the will of God best, so they should have asked them and conducted the politics and the faith of the nation as God delights; but King Ahaziah did not ask the prophets of God, and his father King Ahab also did not listen well to the words of the prophets. The people of Israel were truly arrogant before God, defying the Law and the will of God. The descendants of such evildoers and sinners were also destroyed because of the sin of serving the golden calves and idols. When Jeroboam became king, he should have had the people of Israel serve the LORD God well until he died, and, like southern Judah, set up the sons of Levi as priests and asked the priests about every matter—that would have been good.

Faith Also Needs a True Leader

The nation of Israel is a nation of theocracy. The King of the nation of Israel is the LORD God. God Himself governs the nation of Israel through His servants. So the kings needed only to ask the servants of God for the will of God and so conduct their life of faith and their politics. Without asking neighboring nations anything, they could ask the servants of God about everything. In all the world there was no nation God Himself

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ruled, but the nation of Israel alone was the nation God Himself ruled.

The forefathers of the successive kings of Israel were the fathers of faith who believed in the LORD God, and that God was their own God; yet, despising the blessing of having the servants of God in their nation, they kept God and His servants at a distance and conducted their life of faith as they pleased. And at their own will they exchanged God for a golden calf and followed the sin of Jeroboam. While the kings of Israel came down through several generations, the people also served the golden calf as their god in place of the LORD God. That is, the nation of Israel's faith was corrupted, and they served a golden calf calling it the LORD God.

Even if they knew rightly that the golden calf was an idol, the people of Israel may not have been able to speak properly for fear of the king. If there had been a brave one among the people, he would have said the golden calf is not the LORD God and smashed it. The LORD God is not a creature. He is the holy and almighty God. If they had known such a God, the people could have spoken to the king; whether they failed from fear, or were drawn by their own desires, or feared being merged with the southern nation of Judah—the heart of the people of Israel is past knowing. Still, in all the world, the only place under theocracy was the nation of Israel.

Faith That Chases Only Signs and Wonders

Of course, the Scripture speaks like this: that the Jewish people's stumbling through much idol-serving was so that the gospel would be preached to the Gentiles. Concerning the people of Israel's wrong life of faith, their failure to obey God

and their serving of many idols, the Apostle Paul said that God's leaving them in disobedience was to bestow the mercy of God on all men. If man could do everything well by himself, there would be no need to believe in our Savior Jesus Christ. But because man is lacking and can go wrong, the Savior Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary for all mankind.

Even so, the people of Israel were a people who demanded many signs and wonders. The Scripture says the Jews seek signs and wonders and the Greeks seek wisdom. The faith of the people of our country is similar to this: when they believe in God, they want to see signs and wonders happen and then follow. They lean heavily on their own feelings. The influence a leader has on the people is great. It is so even in soccer. When the coach changed, the results of the matches changed, and we saw the people cheer. As a coach greatly influences the players, so in faith a leader influences the people.

In the nation of Israel there were the servants of God—the prophets. If the kings wanted to govern well and receive blessing from God, they needed only to listen carefully to the words of the servants of God and believe them. Do that and they would succeed—but they did not do it. Among the kings of the nation of Israel, those who were ruined both spiritually and fleshly were, without exception, those who did not consult the servants of God. So in the end they were ruined. King Ahaziah also, two years after becoming king of Israel, fell from the upper room, became sick, and died without coming down from his bed. It was because the nation of Israel forsook God and served idols. In the nation of Israel there were so many gods of every kind that it could be called an exhibition hall of the world's religions—so many were its idols.

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The Christianity of the Whole World Must Now Change

So there is one lesson we must take. Christians of the whole world today are, like Jeroboam, serving a golden calf in place of God. They are following after the kings of Israel who replaced the LORD God with a golden calf and served it. That is why, however much Christianity today tries to live the life of faith better, it has been of no use. However much they strive to fear God, receive blessing, receive salvation, and do better in the life of faith, it does not turn out so. Because the faith of Christianity today, from the age of the Reformation until now, has served a golden calf spiritually following the desires of its own flesh, that faith cannot be changed except by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Many Christians and pastors now say that present-day Christianity must change. But they only say it must change; they do not know what to change and how. It is because they do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So the church members who live their life of faith under pastors who spiritually serve a golden calf, while feeling that this is not it, are still serving the golden calf themselves. Saying they serve Jesus Christ, yet spiritually loving to serve the golden calf, they keep going that way—and so Christianity is perishing spiritually.

Now someone must tell them their wrong, but people have not known the gospel of the water and the Spirit and so could not lead them rightly. They rather thought their own deeds lacking and labored to mend those deeds, but that was not true reform. Now the Christianity of the world must rightly know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and carry out true reform. We must meet, within the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

Jesus Christ whom God sent to wash away the sins of the world from us mankind. We must know that the Lord came to us and gave true salvation, and know the way to receive by faith the blessing of the remission of sin. Not knowing that truth, they come to perish spiritually. This is precisely why, however much the Christianity of the whole world tries to reform its faith, true reform is no longer achieved. Therefore we have published a book dealing with this problem, and people will come to know what the sin of Jeroboam is and why the gospel of the water and the Spirit is necessary.

The Sin of Jeroboam Is the Sin of the Whole People

People think that if a king does wrong before God, that one man alone is punished—but it is not so. Christianity now walks the same road as the sin King Jeroboam committed and is suffering its pain together. What is the greatest sin Christianity today has committed before God? It is following the sin of Jeroboam. The sin of the one man Jeroboam became the sin of the whole people of Israel. It is because the whole people of Israel entered the way of serving the golden calf before God. They exchanged their God for a golden calf. That is, they exchanged the LORD God for the material things and power and riches and glory of the world. They counted the idols of earth greater than the God of heaven.

Therefore it is not that Jeroboam alone sinned; the sin Jeroboam committed made his whole people sin against the LORD God, and because this is a great sin before God, the whole of Israel perished before God. Christianity today must know this fact to be able to return to Jesus Christ who came by

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the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The sin of Jeroboam was not an individual's sin but the sin of a people, and it has now become the sin of Christians. You and I inside Christianity now may have lacks in our deeds and may do wrong; but the problem is not such sins—it is failing to know and receive in the heart Jesus Christ who came to this earth by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Not the Blood of the Cross Only, but the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Yet Christianity today counts only the blood of the Cross important and has no interest in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus spoke of. The faith that says one receives the remission of sin by believing only in the blood of the Cross is a faith anyone can hold easily. But would the truth by which the Lord saved us from the sins of the world be so simple and easy? The gospel of the water and the Spirit Jesus gave us is not a gospel so easily believed. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sins of mankind passed onto His body once for all; carrying those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and paid the wages of sin in full, and rose again on the third day. To know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, one must first know oneself to be a sinner bound for hell, and then believe this gospel in the heart.

I have brought a golden calf here. Christians today make a god for themselves and serve the god they have made. That is precisely the golden calf. The people of Israel believed a golden calf to be God—how could God not be angry?

So the people of Israel were cursed because of the golden calf and suffered in heart and in body. The people of Israel,

believing the golden calf to be their god, fell away from the faith that receives the blessing of God; but those who now believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have known the righteousness of God and have truly become the children of God. Because Jesus Christ came to this earth, we could become God's children by believing that truth in our hearts. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have received the blessing God gives.

Christians of the whole world are now serving a golden calf as their god. It is not one denomination only; many denominations are so. Is not the fact that Christians today chase only material things and health and honor precisely serving the golden calf? Some put forward the word that as your soul prospers you will prosper in all things and be in health, and seek only the blessings of the flesh—such faith is precisely the faith that serves the golden calf. With the mouth they speak of Jesus Christ, but in the end they serve and follow the golden calf more than God.

Return to the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Therefore the Christians of the whole world also must repent before God of the sin of serving the golden calf as their god—the sin of following the sin of Jeroboam. They did not serve the righteousness of the Lord, but served the material things of the world as their god. The church members are so, and the ministers likewise have served only material things in the name of Jesus Christ. So Christianity today, having turned its back on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, has gone greatly wrong before God. Failing to believe in Jesus Christ who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit as their

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Savior, they are under spiritual curse.

Those who have received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have received eternal salvation before God. God is the merciful God. Christians and ministers of the whole world too are cursed for following the sin of Jeroboam, doing a wrong ministry that makes even their church members serve the golden calf. Therefore they too must repent and turn before God. They must return to the living God and believe in their hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit Jesus Christ has given us. By believing this gospel they must receive the remission of all sins, and after receiving the remission of sin they must become those who serve not the golden calf but the righteousness of God. When we think first of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has become the righteousness of God, and follow the kingdom of God and His righteousness by faith, I believe God will make everything of ours go well and be blessed. I hope that those of the world's Christians who have fallen into the wrong way will also believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit before God and return. ✉

◇ Next in the Series: “1 Samuel Volume 1”

Following this book, Volume 1 of the 1 Samuel Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series will soon be published. Covering chapters 1–8, this upcoming volume examines the will of God—who raised up Samuel and led Israel—from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

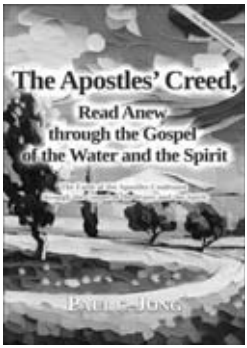
> ***1 Samuel Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)***

We sincerely hope that the books of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will strengthen your faith and become spiritual food for your soul.

All of Pastor Paul C. Jong’s books are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org in eBook (PDF, EPUB) and audiobook (M4A, MP3) formats as soon as each new title is published, and they can also be read directly on the website at any time.

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

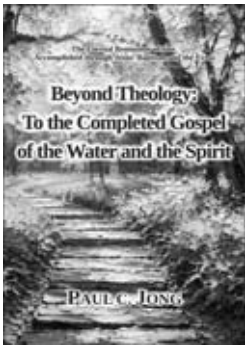


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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 (Coming Soon)



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.

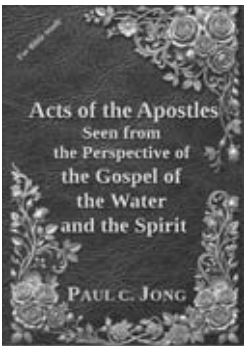
This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Acts of the Apostles Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



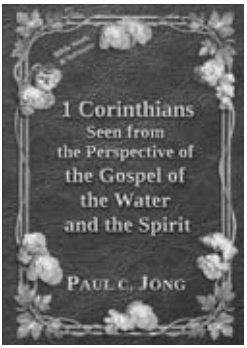
"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Acts of the Apostles is commonly read as a record of the growth and miracles of the early church. However, the core that the Bible intends to say through the Acts of the Apostles does not lie only in testifying to the work of the Holy Spirit. How the already completed gospel of the water and the Spirit was testified to the whole world, that is the central message of the Acts of the Apostles.

This book explains the Acts of the Apostles from Chapter 1 to Chapter 28 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is a record following how the gospel of Jesus Christ—who had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and then resurrected from the dead—was testified.

By reading this book, we come to confirm how the gospel of the water and the Spirit given by the Lord is propagated to the end of the earth. Furthermore, we will clearly receive testimony on how this gospel saves sinners from the sins of the world through the two structures of the baptism and the Cross.

1 Corinthians Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"(1 Corinthians 2:2).

1 Corinthians is commonly read as a practical epistle dealing with church problems. However, the core that the Bible intends to speak through 1 Corinthians does not lie in the order of the church or the arrangement of spiritual gifts. Upon what gospel the church in the midst of division and confusion must stand again, that is the central message of 1 Corinthians.

This book explains 1 Corinthians from chapter 1 to chapter 16 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is a record that follows how Jesus Christ—who had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and then resurrected from death—and that gospel answer all the problems of the church.

By reading this book, we come to confirm the fact that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit makes the church become one and establishes the saints truly holy. Furthermore, how this gospel completely saves sinners from the sins of the world will be clearly testified through the two structures of baptism and the Cross.

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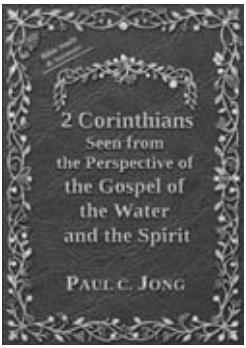
2 Corinthians Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



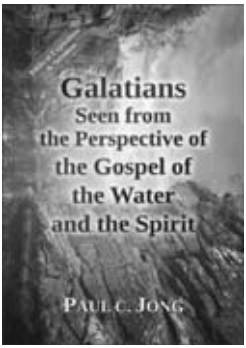
"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

2 Corinthians is commonly read as a personal letter containing the Apostle Paul's hardships and defense. However, the core of what the Bible intends to say through 2 Corinthians does not lie in the apostle's personal explanation or the restoration of his relationship with the church. How God's power is fully revealed in the midst of weakness—that is the central message of 2 Corinthians.

This book explains 2 Corinthians from Chapter 1 to 13 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is a record that traces how Jesus Christ—who had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the punishment for those sins on the cross, and then resurrected from death—and His gospel become true comfort and power in the midst of tribulation and weakness.

By reading this book, we come to confirm the fact that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit sustains the apostle's ministry and establishes believers as new creations. Furthermore, we will clearly receive testimony, through the two structures of baptism and the cross, of how this gospel calls sinners as workers of the new covenant and ministers of reconciliation.

Galatians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1)

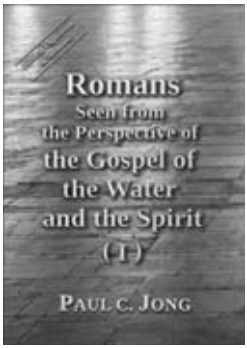
Galatians is often read as a textbook of the Reformation that cried out "faith alone" against legalism. However, the core that the Bible intends to speak through Galatians does not lie in the religious debates or theological slogans of an era. How the righteousness that can never be obtained by human deeds settles upon a soul at once—that is the central message of Galatians.

This book explains Galatians chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is a record that follows how Jesus Christ—who had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the punishment for those sins on the cross, and then resurrected from death—and His gospel become true freedom and eternal righteousness to souls shaking under the yoke of the law.

By reading this book, we come to confirm the fact that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit sustains the ministry of the apostles and establishes the saints as eternal children. Furthermore, through the two structures of baptism and the cross, it will be clearly testified how this gospel moves sinners from being slaves of the law to heirs of the promise, and from the yoke of slavery to free people working through love.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)



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.

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (II)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

Even while saying they have received the eradication of sins, there are many people who still look at their own sins and condemn themselves. However, if you open this text holding onto the gospel that Jesus received the transfer of the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment for those sins on the cross, and then resurrected, you will finally begin to see why the Apostle Paul asserted, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

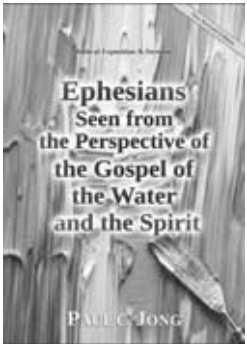
The Apostle Paul reveals that our old man, who was baptized into Christ, died together and was made alive together with Him, and honestly exposes the fact that the law cannot make us holy. Upon that, he proclaims the confirmed salvation of the one whose condemnation has disappeared, and through his sorrow toward Israel, he testifies that salvation comes not by human zeal but only by God's mercy.

A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit knows that they themselves are already dead to sin and alive to God. Even if the flesh is still weak, that weakness cannot turn them back into a slave of sin again. The person who lays down the zeal to establish their own righteousness and accepts with their heart the righteousness that God has already accomplished will not be put to shame and will enjoy the richness of the Lord's grace.

Salvation has already been completed once and for all. What remains now is to accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, and to live preaching that gospel in newness of life.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Ephesians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]



Ephesians is a letter that sings of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" which God has bestowed upon us in Christ. Into this single letter the Apostle Paul poured the highest and deepest truths of the gospel—from the love of God, who chose us before the foundation of the world, to His raising us by grace when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and finally to His eternal plan of uniting all things into one in Christ. This book expounds that Epistle to the Ephesians from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—the gospel through which Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world by being baptized by John, paid the full penalty for those sins on the Cross, and, by rising again, gave us eternal life.

Above all, Ephesians is "the letter of the Church." God has built His Church upon the faith of those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Church of God is none other than the gathering of those who have been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, if faith in this gospel dwells in your heart, you can live a life of true faith. And such a life of faith is possible only within the Church of God. It is my earnest hope that, through this book, all of you will hold fast to the gospel of the water and the Spirit in your hearts and live a life of true faith worthy of that grace within the Church of God. All thanks be to God.

Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)



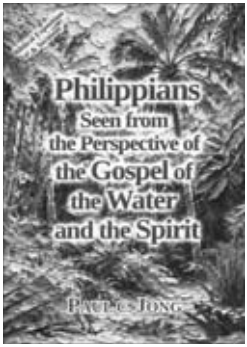
For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a Bible study 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Philippians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

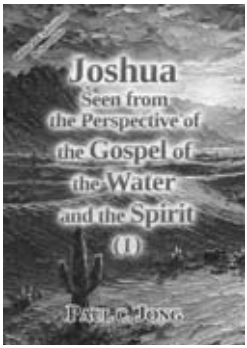


This book offers a fresh understanding of the Epistle to the Philippians from the perspective of the 'gospel of the water and the Spirit.' When we hold fast to the truth that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John, suffered judgment on the Cross, and was resurrected, the true source of Paul's joy becomes absolutely clear.

Paul discarded everything he once boasted of as rubbish, proclaiming instead the righteousness received from God through faith alone. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have already been delivered from sin and granted citizenship in heaven. Even though our flesh is weak, we are never again placed under condemnation; this is the root of true joy that remains unshaken in any circumstance.

Salvation has been accomplished completely, once and for all. Now, we must believe in this gospel with all our hearts and live boldly, sharing it in our new life. This book serves as a clear guide along that path.

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)



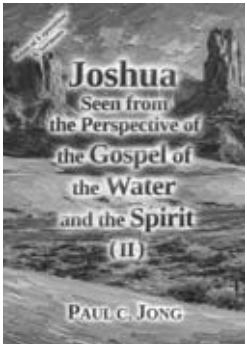
The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (II)

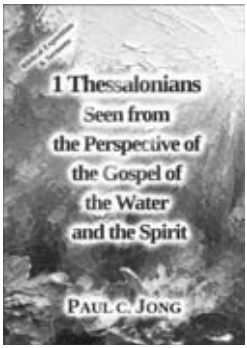


The latter half of the Book of Joshua records the borders of the land and the distribution of the inheritance more than the wars of conquest. But Joshua chapters 13 through 24 are not a mere record of land distribution. They are the Word in which God fulfills His promise, gives each tribe its inheritance, and calls them to serve God only within it.

This book explains Joshua chapters 13 through 24 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Caleb's request for Hebron as his inheritance, the tabernacle of meeting at Shiloh, the cities of refuge, the altar of witness by the Jordan, and Joshua's last exhortation and the covenant at Shechem show the salvation and the spiritual inheritance given in Jesus Christ. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Enjoy by faith the remission of sins, the true rest, and the spiritual inheritance God has given. Cast away your own righteousness and your idols, be united with the Church of God, and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Believe that all of God's promises are surely fulfilled, and pass the gospel of the water and the Spirit on to the next generation.

1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



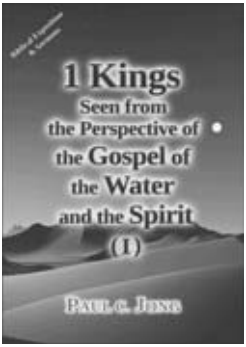
The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

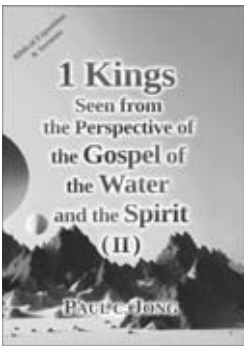


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures 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.

1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (II)



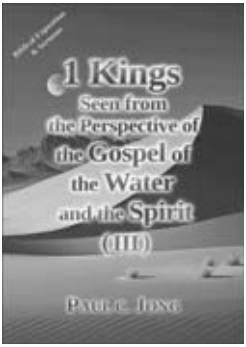
Why was the heart of Solomon, who built the Temple and received great wisdom from God, carried away by idols? 1 Kings chapters 8–12 show us everything from the event in which the glory of God filled the Temple to Solomon's fall and the division of the kingdom, and to Jeroboam's worship of the golden calves. Even our past achievements of faith cannot guard our hearts for us today.

This book clearly proclaims the law of God's salvation for the remission of sin, a law that no one can change. By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world; on the Cross He received the judgment of that sin and died; and by rising again He completed salvation. This is the unchanging gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Do not let your heart be carried away by idols. Stand firm in the righteousness of God, be united with the church, and use everything you have received for preaching the gospel and for the salvation of souls, and so preach this gospel of life to the next generation and to the whole world.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (III)

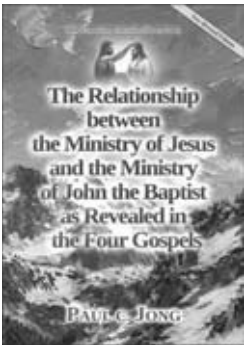


Among the teachings of countless religions, how can we discern the true gospel of life? 1 Kings chapters 13–17 show, through the false altar and the death of the man of God, through Ahab's worship of Baal and the famine of Elijah's day, that the standard of discernment is not a person's position or years of experience but the word of God that He has already given clearly.

This book makes clear why leaving out the baptism of Jesus and preaching only the Cross is to change God's law of salvation. By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself; on the Cross He received the judgment of sin and died; and He rose again.

Hold fast to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, unmixed with false teaching. Believe in God, who fed Elijah and the household of the widow of Zarephath even in a severe famine, and in the spiritual famine of today as well, preach this gospel to the whole world with greater faith.

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.

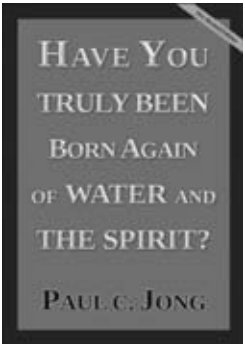
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

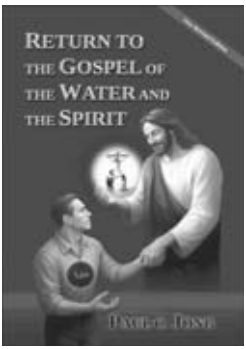
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

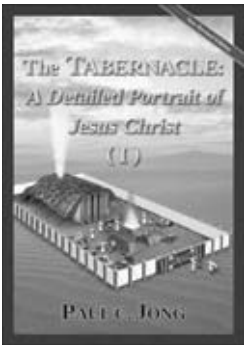
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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]



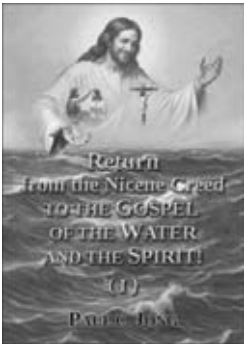
How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

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.

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THE NEW LIFE MISSION
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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 86-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.

1 Kings, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—

How can we believe in the true God and keep the entrusted gospel to the very end?

When Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, God answered by fire and turned the people back to the true God. This ministry of Elijah in the Old Testament was completed, when the New Testament came, in the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment on the Cross, died, and rose again from death.

God raised up the weary Elijah again with bread and water and a still small voice, and caused a few young men to defeat the great army of Syria. The work of the gospel is accomplished not by numbers, but when we take by faith what God has given us.

Ahab used the victory God had given him according to his own will and tried to make Naboth's vineyard into a vegetable garden. If we make the church of God and the gospel a field for our own private benefit, it becomes the evil of tearing down the vineyard. Even while about four hundred prophets prophesied victory with one voice, Micaiah preached only the word he had received from God.

Do not falter between two opinions. Hear the word of the water and the Spirit, which gives life, and carry out the work of the gospel by faith; and faithfully keep the vineyard of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the next generation.

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