
Biblical Exposition & Sermons
Matthew
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(V)
Paul C. Jong



“How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37)

Why did Jesus rebuke the hypocritical religious leaders and yet lament over Jerusalem?

Just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings to protect them, the Lord desires to embrace sinners and save them. God declared the judgment that would come upon those who reject the righteousness of God, but He did not desire sinners to perish; He desired them to believe in the truth of the water and the Spirit and be saved.

To save all mankind, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the cross, and then rose from the dead, thereby removing all the sins of the world. Do not reject the salvation from sin that Jesus has already accomplished. Believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and come into the Lord's embrace of salvation.

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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Matthew
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(V)

PAUL C. JONG



Hephzibah Publishing House
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SEOUL, KOREA

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

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

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

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

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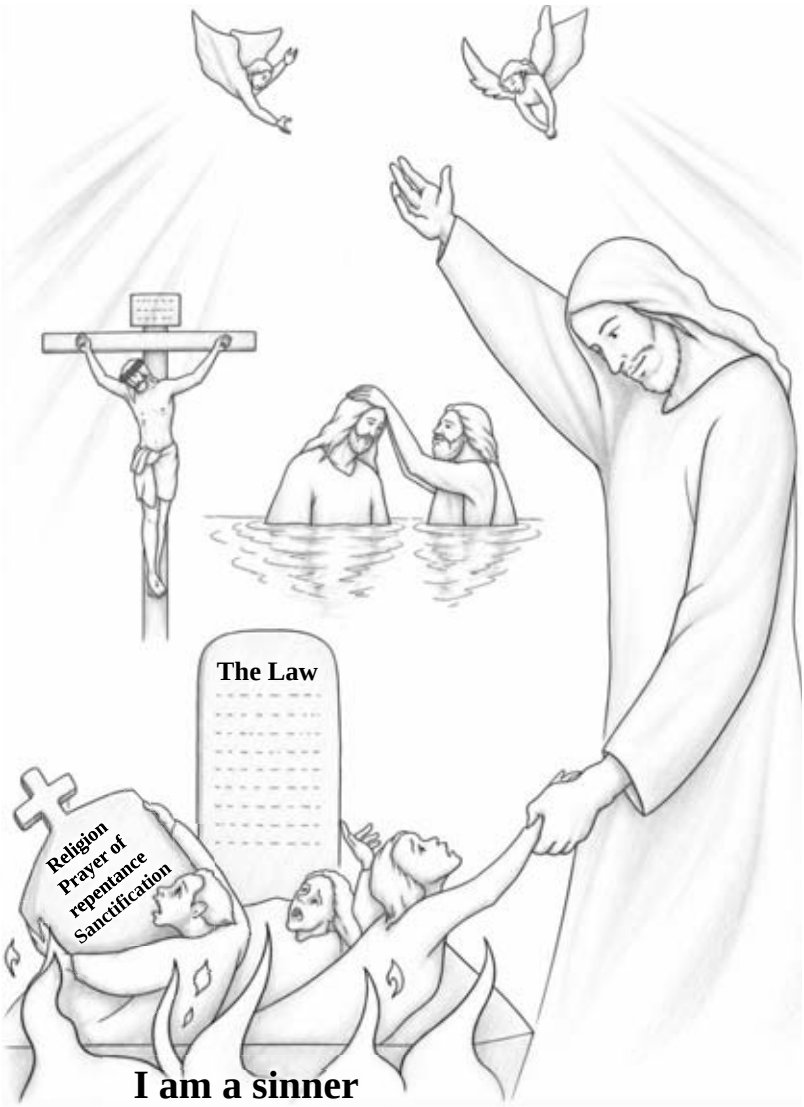

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Preface

Matthew chapters 19 through 23 contain Jesus Christ's clear teaching, given as He went on toward Jerusalem, on the way of salvation and the life of a disciple, the grace of the kingdom of God and the fruit of faith, and the difference between true faith and false religion. Jesus corrected the wrong thoughts and the wrong faith of men, and He Himself walked the way of the true Savior, who gives His own life for many. He also entered Jerusalem as King, exposed the unbelief of the hypocritical religious leaders, and declared the judgment that would come upon those who refuse the righteousness of God.

This book is the fifth book of Biblical Exposition, in which the word of Matthew chapters 19 through 23 is unfolded from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This word makes plain that a man can never enter the kingdom of God by the works of the law and his own righteousness, or by wealth and religious position. Only when we believe with our hearts the righteousness that God has accomplished through Jesus Christ do we receive the remission of all our sin and enter the kingdom of God. This is the way of salvation that God has given us.

By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body. And bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received all the judgment of sin, and He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. The man who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives complete remission of all his sin and is no longer a sinner but a righteous man, and he receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a

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child of God. He also lays down his own merit and his own righteousness and relies on the grace of the Lord alone, and he lives serving the church and souls and preaching the gospel of life to all the world.

The word of grace and service and judgment that Matthew chapters 19–23 convey

Matthew chapter 19 begins with the word concerning marriage and divorce. Jesus said not to take marriage lightly according to the hardness of man's heart, but by faith to honor the will of creation by which God has joined them together. Blessing the little children, He taught that the kingdom of God must be received with a heart like that of a little child; and in the rich young man He exposed the self-confidence that he had kept the law and the heart that was held fast by wealth.

The rich young man asked what he had to do in order to obtain eternal life, but he believed that he could be made righteous by keeping the law with his own strength. Jesus, however, said that with man it is impossible to accomplish salvation, but that God is able to accomplish it. Salvation is not a reward obtained by the good works or the efforts of man, but a gift of grace that God gives freely. We acknowledge that we have no righteousness at all with which to accomplish salvation, and we are saved by believing with our hearts the righteousness that God has completed.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew chapter 20 shows how both those who came first and those who came later received one denarius by the grace of the owner. Salvation is not a wage for the merit or the labor of man, but the grace of God, who calls sinners and gives them eternal life.

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Therefore we must not boast of our own labor on the ground that we were called first, nor envy the grace of God shown to those who came later. Everyone who has been saved must believe and boast, not of his own merit, but only of the grace that the Lord has shown.

After He had already borne all the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John, Jesus foretold for the third time the suffering He would undergo in Jerusalem and His death on the cross and His resurrection. But the disciples still sought the high places. The Lord taught that whoever would become great must become one who serves, and that whoever would be first must become the slave of all. That Jesus gave His own life as a ransom for many is the most perfect example of true love and service. We also, who have received the remission of sin, must share with other souls the life we have freely received from the Lord, and must live for the gospel.

Matthew chapter 21 records the event in which Jesus entered Jerusalem as the lowly King. Jesus drove out those who had made the temple a house of merchandise, and He cursed the fig tree that had no fruit. This shows that a religious life that is outwardly full of leaves cannot please God, and that we must bear the fruit of the true faith that believes the righteousness of God with the heart and serves the gospel.

The chief priests and the elders questioned the authority of Jesus, and yet they did not believe the fact that the baptism of John the Baptist came from heaven. The parable of the two sons teaches that it is more important to believe and follow the Word of God with the heart than to say with the lips only that one obeys. The parable of the wicked vinedressers exposes the sin of the religious leaders, who persecuted the servants of God and at last sought to kill even the Son of God. The kingdom of God is given not to those who establish their own righteousness, but to those

who believe the righteousness of God and bear the fruit of the gospel.

The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew chapter 22 shows the invitation to salvation that God has prepared for His Son. Those who were invited first refused the feast with the excuse of the affairs of the world, and they persecuted the servants who had come to invite them. Afterward both the bad and the good were invited to the feast; but in order to take part in the feast one had to put on the wedding garment that the king had prepared. This garment is not a righteousness that a man has prepared by his own works, but the remission of sin and the righteousness of God, with which God freely clothes the man who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus answered wisely the questions concerning taxes and the resurrection, and He made plain that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. The great and first commandment is to love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind, and the second is to love our neighbor as our own body. Moreover, Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David, but He is the Creator God, whom David confessed as Lord. We do not stop at knowing Jesus merely as a great teacher or a prophet; we believe in Him as God, who came to save us from all sin, and as our eternal Savior.

Matthew chapter 23 solemnly rebukes the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees. Sitting in Moses' seat, they laid heavy burdens on other people while they themselves did not do them, and they loved the best places and high titles and the recognition of men. But our true leader is Christ alone. The one who has gone ahead in faith is not a person who lords it over his brothers and sisters, but a person who humbles himself and helps them, so that they may live by a right faith and serve the gospel. The one who is truly great before God is the person who believes the

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love of the Lord and humbles himself and serves the church and souls.

The scribes and the Pharisees were thorough about the tithe of small garden herbs, but they cast away justice and mercy and faith; and while they adorned the outside to look clean, they harbored greed and lawlessness in their hearts. They themselves did not enter heaven, and they blocked even those who were trying to enter; and while they said that they honored the prophets, they in fact rejected the Christ to whom the prophets had borne witness. Jesus declared the judgment that would come upon them, but at the same time He showed the mercy and the sorrow with which He desired to embrace Jerusalem, as a hen desires to embrace her young. The heart of the Lord is not a heart that delights in the destruction of sinners, but a heart of love that desires all men to believe the truth and be saved.

The robe of righteousness that is put on through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapters 19 through 23 clearly distinguish between the works of man and the righteousness of God. Neither the good deeds of the rich young man, nor the labor of the laborers who came first, nor the detailed ordinances of the religious leaders can wash away the sin of man. The salvation that man cannot accomplish by his own strength, God Himself has accomplished perfectly. Jesus, who has no sin, received all the sin of mankind transferred onto His own body once for all by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing that sin He was hanged on the cross and was judged, and He rose again from death.

The cross is not the place where the sin of mankind first

passed over to Jesus; it is the place where Jesus received the punishment for the sin of the world that He had borne at the Jordan River. The baptism He received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection are one complete work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another. The man who believes this gospel with his heart believes that all his sin was transferred onto Jesus and that even its judgment has completely ended. Therefore he is no longer a sinner but a righteous man who has received the remission of all his sin, and he is a child of God who has put on the robe of righteousness and received the Holy Spirit.

We who have received the remission of sin do not serve our own righteousness and our wealth as our master, but believe and follow the word of the Lord. We do not boast that we were called first, and we do not seek to be served from a high place, but we humble ourselves for the sake of souls. We are also united with the church of God and bear the fruit of the gospel; we esteem the righteousness and the mercy and the faith of God above outward religious forms; and we boldly preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives the remission of sin and eternal life, to those who are bound by false teaching.

The structure of this book and how to read it

This book first examines the whole flow of each chapter from Matthew chapter 19 through chapter 23, and then explains, from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the meaning contained in the events and the parables and the expressions. It then contains questions and answers through which the word that has been learned may be confirmed and engraved on the heart, along with sermons that help the reader

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apply that word to his actual faith and life.

Dear readers, first read slowly the biblical text of the chapter concerned. Next, through the exposition of the text, examine the flow of the word and the saving will of God that is revealed in it. Then, through the questions and answers, confirm whether you have rightly understood the word; and as you read the sermons, I ask that you believe with your heart the salvation God has accomplished and follow that word in your life.

I sincerely hope that everyone who reads this book will lay down his own works and his own righteousness completely, and by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart will receive the remission of all his sin. I hope that you will put on by faith the robe of righteousness that God has clothed you with, that you will esteem the Lord and the gospel above the wealth and the position of the world, and that you will live as workers of faith who serve the church and souls. I also pray earnestly that you will discern hypocrisy and false teaching by the Word, hold fast the righteousness and the mercy and the faith of God, and bear abundant fruit of the gospel throughout all the world until the day you meet the Lord.

I give all glory to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has perfectly saved us from all sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has called us to the wedding feast of the kingdom of God. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 19

< Matthew 19:1-30 >

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’ They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’ His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.’ But He said to them, ‘All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.’ Then little

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children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there. Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the

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twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 19 is the word that Jesus gave in the course of leaving Galilee and going toward Jerusalem. This chapter deals with marriage and divorce, the calling of the single life, little children, the rich young man, wealth and salvation, and the reward of discipleship.

These contents look different from one another, but they are joined together by one common question: whether a person can enter the kingdom of God while holding on to his own desire, his own merit, and his own possessions. Jesus reveals the hardness of heart and the self-righteousness of man, and proclaims that salvation is not a work that man accomplishes but a work that God has completed in Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus went to the region of Judea and healed the sick (verses 1–2)

Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. This shows that the ministry of Jesus was advancing toward Jerusalem, where He would bear the cross. When great multitudes followed Jesus, the Lord healed their diseases.

The multitudes needed the mercy and the healing of the Lord. However, the Pharisees who appear immediately afterward did not come out to Jesus in order to receive help; they came out to test Jesus over the matter of divorce. Jesus, who heals life, and

the Pharisees, who try to trap Jesus with an argument over the Law, stand in contrast.

2. The original intent of the marriage that God established (verses 3–6)

The Pharisees asked, *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"* At that time there was an argument over the interpretation of the Law as to for what reason a husband could put away his wife. However, their purpose did not lie in learning the will of God but in testing Jesus.

Jesus did not first speak of the conditions under which one may divorce, but went back to the beginning of creation. He said that God created man male and female, and that He made a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife so that the two would become one flesh.

The word *"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate"* is the central teaching of Jesus concerning marriage. Marriage is not a mere feeling or a private contract, but a covenantal relationship in which two people become one flesh before God.

Therefore marriage is not a relationship that can be easily ended on the ground that one's own desire is not satisfied. The husband and the wife must not regard each other as a possession, but must respect and faithfully love the other as a person whom God has entrusted to them.

3. The certificate of divorce was not a command but something permitted because of hardness of heart (verses 7–9)

The Pharisees asked again why, then, Moses commanded to give a certificate of divorce and to send the wife away. However, Jesus corrected them, saying that Moses did not command divorce as the ideal will of God.

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The word *"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so"* is the heart of the matter. The certificate of divorce was a permission given in a situation already broken by the sin and the hardness of man, in order to protect the weak and to restrain disorder. It was not the form of marriage that God desired from the beginning.

Jesus said that to divorce one's wife for a reason other than sexual immorality and to marry another person is adultery. This was a solemn rebuke of the act of casting away one's spouse according to one's own desire and forming a new relationship. It also carries the meaning of protecting women, who at that time could be cast away relatively easily.

However, this word must not be used as a tool to condemn one-sidedly those who have already been divorced or those who are abused in the home. This passage is not a word that deals in detail with every legal and pastoral situation of our day. Neither must a person who is in danger of violence and abuse be forced unconditionally to keep that place. When it is necessary, safe separation and protection must come first.

The purpose of Jesus does not lie in driving a wounded person into a corner, but in revealing the hard heart that casts away a spouse carelessly because of one's own greed, and in making the person return to the original will of God.

4. Marriage and the single life are each a gift and a calling that one has received (verses 10–12)

The disciples who heard the word of Jesus said that if the responsibility of marriage was so heavy, it would be better not to marry. Jesus said that not every person is able to live unmarried, and that *"only those to whom it has been given"* can accept this saying.

The word *"eunuchs"* that appears in the text is an expression of that time explaining the various cases of those who cannot marry or do not marry. He said that there are those who are so from birth, that there are those who have been made so by other people, and that there are also those who live without marrying for the sake of the kingdom of God.

The word *"eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"* does not mean to mutilate the body. It refers to the calling of the single life, in which a person voluntarily does not marry for the work of the kingdom of God. Jesus neither made marriage a duty for every person, nor made the single life a higher faith that everyone must follow.

The one who is married must faithfully bear the responsibility of marriage, and the one who has received the calling of the single life can use his life for the kingdom of God. Whichever it is, what is important is to live according to the calling received from God and not according to one's own desire.

5. We must not hinder the little children (verses 13–15)

People brought little children, desiring that Jesus would lay His hands on them and pray. But the disciples rebuked them. The disciples regarded the little children as hindering the important ministry of Jesus.

However, Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* The Lord did not regard the little children as insignificant beings, and He laid His hands on them Himself.

The word that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the little children does not mean that a little child has no sin or fault at all. It means that the one who, like a little child, does not exalt himself, relies on help, and receives grace is fit for the kingdom of God.

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Earlier the Pharisees tested Jesus with their knowledge of the Law, but the little children came to Jesus without any position or merit. The kingdom of God is given not to the one who asserts his own qualification, but to the one who comes to the Lord as a person who needs grace.

6. The rich young man tried to obtain eternal life by good deeds (verses 16–20)

A young man came to Jesus and asked, *"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"* In his question was the thought that if he added some good deed of his own, he could obtain eternal life.

Jesus said that there is only One who is good, and told him to keep the commandments if he wanted to enter into life. He then spoke of the commandments that forbid murder, adultery, theft, and false witness, and of honoring one's parents and loving one's neighbor.

The young man answered that he had kept all these things, and yet he asked, *"What do I still lack?"* He thought that he had kept the Law well, but in his heart he was still feeling that something was lacking.

Jesus did not simply add one more commandment to him. He revealed the fact that the young man was not actually keeping the commandments completely, and revealed what it was that ruled his heart.

7. The young man who could not choose Jesus above his wealth (verses 21–22)

Jesus said to the young man, *"Sell what you have and give to the poor,"* and He said, *"Come, follow Me."* The word of Jesus does not simply mean that a person is automatically saved when he becomes poor. Neither is it a universal rule that every

person must sell all his property in order to be saved.

Jesus exactly revealed the idol hidden in the heart of this young man. Outwardly he said that he had kept the commandment to love his neighbor, but in reality he could not give up his possessions for the poor. He said that he wanted eternal life, but he loved his wealth more than Jesus, who gives eternal life.

The young man neither argued that Jesus was false nor became angry. He heard the word and went away sorrowful. He saw his own lack, but he could not choose the road of laying down his wealth and following Jesus.

This event asks what it is that a person relies on and loves most. The fact of having much wealth is not in itself a sin, but when wealth becomes the master of the heart in the place of God, it keeps a person from receiving the word of salvation.

8. The reason it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (verses 23–26)

Jesus said that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, and said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. By his own strength and ability a person can never obtain salvation.

Here the rich man does not mean only a person who has much property. It refers to the person who is rich in heart, who thinks that he can live well even without God and that he can solve every problem by his own strength, wealth, and ability. Such a person thinks that he does not need the help of God and that he does not need to believe in Jesus in order to receive the remission of his sin. Being satisfied with the wealth and the pleasures of the world, he takes no interest in his own sin and in the salvation of his soul.

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When the heart of a person is rich like this, he does not receive even the work of salvation that Jesus came into this world and accomplished. Because he relies on his own strength and his own possessions, he does not admit the fact that he is a sinner who can do nothing before God, nor does he seek the mercy and the salvation of God. With such a heart a person cannot enter the kingdom of God.

When the disciples heard the word of Jesus, they were greatly astonished and asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus answered, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* This word is the heart of Matthew 19:23–26.

Whether a person is rich or poor, he cannot enter the kingdom of God while he holds his sin. No one is saved for the reason that he is poor, nor is anyone kept from salvation merely for the reason that he has much wealth. No one can remove the sin of his heart by his own strength and good deeds; everyone must receive by faith the salvation that God has accomplished.

Therefore the rich man who finds it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven is not the person who has much wealth in itself, but the person who is rich in heart, who considers that he does not need the help of God and who relies on his own strength and possessions. Even a person who has much wealth is saved if he admits his sin and his inability and receives the salvation that God has granted. On the other hand, even a poor person cannot be saved if he relies on his own thoughts and his own righteousness and refuses the grace of God. The problem does not lie in the amount of wealth that one possesses, but in the heart that admits its own inability before God and receives His salvation by faith.

9. The reward of the disciples who left everything and followed the Lord (verses 27–29)

Peter asked, *"We have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"* Unlike the rich young man, who could not leave his wealth and went away, the disciples left their livelihood and their families behind and followed Jesus.

Jesus promised that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, the disciples also will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. He also said that everyone who has left houses or family or lands for the sake of the name of Jesus will receive many times as much and will inherit eternal life.

This word is not a formula that one gains more wealth in the world by disregarding the responsibility of the family or by giving up property. It is a promise that even if a person suffers the opposition of his family or economic loss while following the gospel, God does not forget that sacrifice. The one who believes receives a new family of faith and the inheritance of the kingdom of God, and will enjoy the completion of eternal life in the time to come.

However, discipleship is not a matter of calculating a reward and making a bargain with God. That is why Jesus adds an important warning at the end.

10. The one who is first can become last (verse 30)

The word *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first"* shows that the position and the evaluation of man can be overturned in the kingdom of God.

The fact that one followed Jesus first, the fact that one left more things, and the fact that one served longer do not automatically make a person greater. If a person takes these things as his own merit and tries to be exalted above others, the

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one who is first can rather become last.

On the other hand, even a person who was called late or who looks insignificant in the eyes of the world can become first if he believes the grace of God and humbly follows the Lord. This word is connected to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard that follows in Matthew chapter 20.

The core of the whole

In Matthew Chapter 19 the hardness, the self-righteousness, and the greed for possessions of man appear again and again. The Pharisees tried to justify their own desire by looking for the permitted range of divorce, the rich young man thought that he could obtain eternal life by good conduct, and the disciples calculated the reward for what they had left.

Jesus returned marriage to the will of God in creation rather than to the convenience of man. He received the one who, like a little child, does not put forward his own qualification, and He revealed the love of wealth and the self-righteousness of the rich young man. And He declared that although no one can be saved by the strength of man, God accomplishes salvation.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 19 is the word that no one can obtain eternal life by the hardness of man, by his own righteousness, or by his wealth, and that the one who believes like a little child in the salvation that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection, and who regards the Lord as more precious than anything and follows Him, inherits the kingdom of God and eternal life.

2) Matthew Chapter 19 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 19 deals with marriage and divorce, the single life, little children, the rich young man, wealth and eternal life, and the reward of discipleship. These words look like different subjects, but beneath them one problem is flowing. It is the hardness of man, his own righteousness, and his attachment to his own possessions.

The text does not directly mention the baptism of Jesus. However, seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, man cannot cure the hardness of his heart or obtain eternal life by his own conduct and ability; he obtains eternal life only when he believes in the salvation that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection.

1. Jesus, who heals the sick, is the Savior who makes the sinner whole (verses 1–2)

Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judea, and when great multitudes followed Him, He healed their diseases. This scene shows the mercy of Jesus. The multitudes came to the Lord with their diseases, but the Pharisees who appear next came out with a matter of dispute by which to test Jesus.

Seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, every person is a being sick with sin. Even though a person looks healthy and righteous on the outside, in his heart there are evil thoughts, desires, and hardness. This disease is not healed because a person has much religious knowledge, nor is the sin of the heart removed because a person has done many good deeds.

That is why the Son of God put on the body of a man and

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came to this earth. Jesus is not one who came merely to teach mankind a way to live a good life. By receiving the baptism from John in the Jordan River, He took upon His own body all the sins of mankind, and bearing those sins He was judged on the cross, and He rose again from the dead and completely saved the sinner.

Just as Jesus had compassion on the sick, God had compassion on us who were under sin and judgment. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a teaching by which a sinner cures himself; it is the news of the salvation in which the Lord came to the sinner and healed him completely.

2. The original intent of marriage and the hardness of man (verses 3–9)

The Pharisees asked whether it is lawful for a man to put away his wife for any reason at all. They were not trying to learn the will of God; they were trying to widen the range within which one could divorce, and to test Jesus.

Jesus did not first discuss the conditions of divorce, but went back to the beginning of creation. He said that God created man male and female and made the two be joined together and become one flesh. Therefore He said, *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."*

Then the Pharisees asked why Moses had given a certificate of divorce and let a man send his wife away. Jesus said that this was not the original will of God but that it was permitted because of *"the hardness of your hearts."*

The center of the problem is the heart of man, which comes before any system. In order to accomplish his own desire a person casts away his spouse and yet tries to justify it by the Law. He sees only the fault of the other as great rather than his own fault, and he treats according to his own advantage the very person whom he ought to love and be responsible for. Such

hardness is not fundamentally removed by the resolve of man alone.

The sins that Jesus took upon Himself through the baptism He received from John include not only adultery and sexual immorality but also hatred, selfishness, hardness, and every sin by which a person has hurt his spouse. The Lord bore all those sins and was judged on the cross. Therefore even the person who has failed in marriage or has committed sin must not remain in condemning himself, but must first believe in the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished.

The gospel does not make a person regard divorce lightly. Rather, as one who has received the remission of a great sin, it makes him have mercy on his spouse, admit his own fault, forgive, and serve. The person who is full of his own righteousness always tries to correct the other person, but the person who knows the grace of the remission of sin first looks back on his own hardness.

At the same time, this word must not be used as a tool to force a person who suffers violence and abuse to endure unconditionally. Separation and protection for the sake of safety may be necessary. The gospel is not a word that shuts a victim up in danger; it is the power of God that reveals sin and saves the wounded.

3. Marriage and the single life are not conditions of salvation but a calling received (verses 10–12)

The disciples said that if the responsibility of marriage was so heavy, it would be better not to marry. Jesus said that not every person is able to live unmarried, and told those who are able to accept this saying to accept it.

He said that there are also those who live unmarried of their own will for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, but the single

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life in itself does not make a person more holy, nor does it give salvation. A person is not more fleshly because he is married, nor is a person more spiritual because he is unmarried.

The remission of sin is not obtained by whether one is married or by an ascetic life. The one who is married and the one who lives unmarried must both believe the fact that Jesus took their sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the cross.

If the one who believes the gospel is married, he must know his home as the place the Lord has entrusted to him and serve faithfully. If he has received the calling of the single life, he can use that life for the kingdom of God and for the work of the gospel. What is important is not to boast of one's own condition, but to believe the righteousness the Lord accomplished and to follow His will in whatever condition one is in.

4. The one who receives the gospel like a little child obtains the kingdom of heaven (verses 13–15)

People brought little children, desiring the laying on of hands and the prayer of Jesus, but the disciples rebuked them. However, Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

The little children had no merit or position to offer to Jesus. They did not claim that they had kept the Law well, nor did they boast of wealth and ability. They came to Jesus as beings who needed protection and grace.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also must be received with such a heart. When a person puts forward his own knowledge and his own religious merit, it is hard for him to receive the salvation of the Lord. This is because the facts that "I have lived a good life," that "I have prayed much," and that "I have attended church for a long time" do not wash away sin.

Faith like that of a little child is not believing anything at all without discernment. It is laying down one's own thoughts before the truth of salvation that God has spoken. It is believing the word just as it is: that when Jesus received the baptism from John He took upon Himself all the sins of the world, that He paid the wages of those sins on the cross, and that He rose again and completed salvation.

"If the Lord received all my sins passed on to Him, then my sins have already been passed on to Jesus. If the Lord received the judgment of my sins on the cross, then before God the punishment of my sins has ended." The one who answers the word of God with amen in this way is the one who receives grace like a little child.

5. In the question of the rich young man there was his own righteousness (verses 16–20)

The rich young man asked Jesus, *"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"* In this question was the thought that there was something he himself could do in order to obtain eternal life.

Jesus told him to keep the commandments. Then the young man answered that he had kept all the commandments, and yet he asked what he still lacked. He thought of himself as a righteous person who had kept the commandments well.

However, the role of the Law does not lie in letting a person establish his own righteousness. The Law makes man realize that he is a sinner before God. Even though he thinks that he has not murdered, he has hated another person in his heart; even though he thinks that he has not committed adultery, he has held lust in his heart; and even though he thinks that he has not stolen, he has held greed. No one can perfectly keep the commandments of God in heart and in conduct.

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This young man looked only at the outward form of the Law and thought that he had kept it. He did not know his own inner heart and his own desire. He was a person full of his own righteousness. Rather than admitting his inability before God, he thought of himself as quite a good person.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit tears down such self-righteousness. However good a life a person may live, he cannot wash away his own sin. Salvation is not a work that I complete by adding my good deeds; we are saved by believing the righteousness that Jesus has already completed.

6. The word to sell his possessions revealed the master in the young man's heart (verses 21–22)

Jesus told the young man to sell his possessions, to give to the poor, and to follow Him. This is not a universal formula of salvation that every person must sell all his property in order to be saved.

Jesus revealed what it was that the young man relied on most. The young man claimed that he had loved his neighbor, but he could not give up his wealth for the poor. He wanted eternal life, but he loved his wealth more than Jesus, who gives eternal life.

His body was standing before Jesus, but his heart was holding on to his wealth. He wanted to follow the Lord, but he could not give up his own possessions and his own desire. In the end he went away from Jesus sorrowful.

Here wealth is not limited to money alone. A person can rely on his own knowledge and career, his religious zeal and his reputation as though they were wealth. If a person thinks, on the ground of what he possesses, "I am all right even without God," he is a person who is rich in heart.

However, the person who is poor in heart before God admits that he has no ability to accomplish salvation. He confesses, "I

am not good. I cannot wash away my sin. Without the grace of the Lord I can only perish," and he comes to the Lord.

7. The camel and the eye of a needle show that the salvation of man is impossible (verses 23–25)

Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. This word does not mean that a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven, though with difficulty, if he tries a little harder. It is a strong expression that it is impossible by the ability of man.

In the text the rich man refers first of all to the young man who actually had much wealth. However, this word is directed not only to the person who relies on wealth, but to every person who relies on his own ability and his own righteousness and thinks himself rich before God.

It is not only the person who has much wealth who finds it hard to be saved. Even a poor person cannot believe the gospel if he holds on to his own righteousness and his own stubbornness. The heart of the matter lies not in what a person has, but in what he relies on.

The disciples asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* This very question is important. If even a person who lives ethically and also possesses wealth, like the rich young man, cannot enter, then who can be saved? The answer is that no one can be saved by his own strength.

However, Jesus said, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* This word does not stop at the simple meaning that God is almighty and therefore can do anything. God Himself solved the problem of sin that man could not solve, and He made the sinner a righteous person without sin so that he might enter the kingdom of God.

In order to save sinners God sent His only begotten Son Jesus

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Christ into this world. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred onto His own body once and for all. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place all the curse and the punishment of sin, and by rising again from death He completely overcame the power of sin and death. In this way the incarnation of Jesus, the baptism He received from John, His death on the cross, and His resurrection are one complete work of salvation that God accomplished in order to save the sinner.

The person who is rich in heart thinks that he does not need such salvation, and so he does not receive the gospel. But the person who has realized his own sin and inability and has become poor in heart before God receives with thanksgiving the salvation that God has accomplished.

8. With men it is impossible, but God has accomplished it all (verse 26)

Jesus said, "*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*" This word is not merely an encouragement to keep a positive mind when a difficult matter arises. In the context it is the word that man cannot save himself and that God Himself has completed that salvation.

A person cannot remove his own sin. Good deeds cannot wash away sin, and prayer and fasting cannot receive the punishment of sin in his place. Even the effort to keep the Law cannot undo the sin already committed. But God Himself accomplished the salvation that man could not accomplish.

The Son of God put on the flesh of a man and came to this earth. In the Jordan River the Lord took upon Himself all the sins of mankind once and for all through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins He was hung on

the cross and received the judgment of sin in our place. The Lord said, *"It is finished!"* and died, and after three days He rose again and gave eternal life to those who believe.

The baptism that Jesus received from John is not merely a ceremony by which He showed an example of humility. It is the work of salvation in which the Lord took upon Himself the sin of the world, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* The blood of the cross is the evidence that Jesus bore those sins and was judged. The resurrection proclaims that this salvation was completely accomplished.

Man cannot produce salvation, but God accomplished salvation by the water and the Spirit. We must not claim that there is a possibility of salvation in ourselves, but must believe in our hearts the salvation that God has accomplished.

9. To follow the Lord is not the price of salvation but the fruit of the faith of one who has been saved (verses 27–29)

Peter asked what they would receive, since they had left everything and followed Jesus. Jesus said that everyone who has left houses or family or lands for the sake of the name of the Lord will receive many times as much and will inherit eternal life.

However, this does not mean that a person can buy eternal life by giving something up. The price of eternal life is not paid by our sacrifice. Jesus has already paid the whole price by His baptism and the cross.

The one who has received the remission of sin does not give up the things of the world in order to pay the price of salvation; he follows the Lord because the Lord is more precious. In order to keep and to preach the gospel he may suffer loss in property, in relationships, and in honor. There are also times when he must lay down his own stubbornness, his own pride, and his own

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rightness.

What must be given up in order to follow the Lord is not only visible property. To lay down one's own rightness, the desires of the flesh, and one's own thoughts and stubbornness is also to give up. This does not mean, however, that one should disregard the responsibility of the family or dispose of property carelessly. It is the word to lay down what one has relied on and loved more than the Lord, and to put the will of the gospel before one's own will.

And the promise that one *"shall receive a hundredfold"* must not be turned into a formula of material prosperity. It does not mean that if a person makes an offering or gives up property for the gospel, he will receive back several times as much money in this present life. In the gospel the Lord gives new brothers and sisters, cares for what is needed, and makes us inherit the eternal kingdom of God in the time to come.

10. Even the one who is first can become last if he boasts of his own merit (verse 30)

Jesus said, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."* This word is the warning given after Peter calculated what they had left and asked about a reward.

A person does not become first because he has lived a life of faith for a long time. He cannot claim his own merit before God because he has done many works, because he has offered many things, or because he came to know the gospel before others.

Even the person who believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit first can become last if he forgets grace and exalts himself. On the other hand, even the person who heard the gospel late can become first if, like a little child, he lays down his own righteousness and believes the righteousness of Jesus.

The order of the kingdom of God is different from the rank

of the world. Rather than the career, the property, and the outward sacrifice of a person, the Lord looks at the heart that believes the righteousness God has accomplished and humbly follows. This word continues into the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in the next chapter, and salvation and reward are grounded not in the calculation of man but in the grace of God.

The core of the whole

When Matthew Chapter 19 is seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in the breaking of marriage there is the hardness of man, in the failure of the rich young man there is his own righteousness and his reliance on wealth, and in the question of Peter there is the heart that tries to calculate his own sacrifice.

However, the little children had nothing to put forward. The little children came to Jesus as beings who needed grace. The one who enters the kingdom of God is not the one who puts forward his own conduct, asking, “What must I do?” like the rich young man, but the one who asks, “What has the Lord accomplished for me?” and believes that grace.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all our sins, including our hardness, our greed, and our own righteousness. The Lord bore those sins and was judged on the cross, and He rose again and completed the salvation that man could not accomplish. The one who believes this salvation like a little child obtains eternal life, and the one who has received the remission of sin regards Jesus as more precious than wealth and than his own righteousness and lives according to the will of the Lord.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 19 is the word that no one can obtain eternal life by the hardness of man, by his own righteousness, or by his wealth, but that, because Jesus

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completed through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection the salvation that man could not accomplish, the one who believes that grace like a little child and has laid down his own righteousness inherits the kingdom of God and eternal life. ✉

Matthew Chapter 19

Eternal life is not obtained by the righteousness and the wealth of man, but is the grace of God received by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 19 begins with Jesus leaving Galilee and going to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. When great multitudes followed Him, Jesus had mercy on them and healed their diseases. Even on the road going up to Jerusalem toward the cross, the Lord did not turn away from those who were suffering.

The Pharisees tested Jesus, asking whether a man may put away his wife for any reason at all. Jesus went back to the beginning of creation and said that what God has joined together man must not separate. Marriage is not a contract for the convenience of man but a covenant in which two become one flesh before God, and the life lived unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is also a precious gift that God has given.

When people brought little children in order to receive the laying on of hands and prayer, the disciples rebuked them, but

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Jesus received the little children and said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. The kingdom of heaven is given not to the person who puts forward his own merit, but to the person who, like a little child, receives the grace of God just as it is.

A rich young man asked what good thing he must do in order to obtain eternal life. When Jesus spoke of the commandments, he said that he had kept them all, and when the Lord told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor and follow Him, he went away sorrowful, for he had much wealth. He wanted eternal life, but because he could not lay down his own righteousness and his wealth, he lost the Lord of life.

Jesus said that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that with men it is impossible but with God all things are possible. This salvation is not something that man accomplishes by his own strength; it is the grace of God received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. To the disciples who left everything for the Lord, a reward in the eternal kingdom was also promised.

Matthew Chapter 19 proclaims that man can never reach eternal life by his own righteousness, his wealth, and his merit, and that he is saved only by the grace of God. Now, as we look at the words of the text in order, we will learn about the grace of salvation that is revealed through the accounts of marriage, of the little children, and of the rich young man, and about the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the ground of that grace.

Eternal life is not obtained by the righteousness and the wealth of man,
but is the grace of God received by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Jesus, who went to Judea toward the cross, had mercy on the multitudes who followed Him and healed their diseases

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there" (Matthew 19:1–2).

Jesus had taught His disciples who is the great one in the kingdom of heaven, how they must treat one lost soul, and how they must forgive a brother. And *"when Jesus had finished these sayings"* He left Galilee and went to the region of Judea. The teaching of Jesus did not end with words alone. The Lord Himself went to the sinner, cared for those who were suffering, and practiced the love and the mercy of which He had spoken.

That Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judea was not a simple movement from one place to another. Jesus had taken upon Himself all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He knew that He would suffer in Jerusalem, be hung on the cross and die, and rise again, and so complete the salvation of mankind. Therefore His going toward Judea was a step of obedience taken in order to accomplish the mission of salvation that God the Father had entrusted to Him.

Although Jesus knew that suffering and death were waiting for Him, He did not avoid that road. In order to save us from sin and judgment, He went forward to the end according to the will of God. The salvation of the Lord is not an event that happened unexpectedly; it is a righteous work accomplished according to the plan that God had established.

The most important thing that Jesus accomplished first in order to save mankind from sin was the baptism He received

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from John the Baptist. Although Jesus had no sin, by receiving the baptism in the Jordan River He took upon His own body all the sins of the world. And bearing those sins He went to the cross, shed His blood, and died, and after three days He rose again and overcame the power of sin and death. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the way of righteousness by which God saved the sinner.

When Jesus went to the region of Judea, great multitudes followed the Lord. Among them there were those who followed in order to hear the Word, and there were also those who followed in order to be healed of their diseases. However, to follow Jesus along with many people and to believe in the salvation of Jesus in one's heart are two different things. A person may follow the Lord for a while because of the needs of the flesh, but true faith is to know and believe who Jesus is and how He removed our sin.

Jesus did not turn away from the multitudes who followed Him. The word *"He healed them there" (Matthew 19:2)* shows the fact that the Lord had deep compassion on the suffering of the people. Even in the midst of the momentous journey toward the cross, Jesus did not pass by those who were suffering before His eyes.

That the Lord healed the sick was a sign showing that He is the Messiah who came from God and the Master of life. Jesus not only makes the diseased body whole; He also has the authority to make alive the soul that is dead in sin. His healing of the diseases of the flesh shows beforehand that the Lord will completely destroy sin and death and give the life of resurrection to those who believe.

However, we must not conclude that every disease is due to the individual sin or the lack of faith of that person. Disease and death are sufferings that entered a world fallen because of sin,

but the fact that a certain person has fallen ill does not mean that he has committed more sins than others. What a sick person needs is not condemnation but prayer and care, and it is also important to help him receive the treatment he needs.

Neither must the healing of Jesus be understood as a word that guarantees only the health of the flesh and worldly success. Even the person who has been healed of his disease finally meets the death of the flesh. Therefore the most fundamental healing that a person must receive is that all the sin of his heart is removed by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that he is reconciled with God. If a person does not receive the remission of sin, he cannot escape the judgment of God even though his body is healthy.

The fundamental disease of our soul is sin. A person tries to live a good life by himself, but he cannot completely remove the evil thoughts and the sin that rise up in his heart. The power to wash away sin does not lie in the resolve of a person or in religious conduct, but in the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all our sins, and on the cross He received the punishment of those sins in our place. And He rose again from death and gave eternal life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this word of salvation is the truth of God, and He dwells in the heart of the one who believes it. Therefore the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not rely on his own conduct but relies on the righteousness that Jesus completed, and so receives the remission of sin.

The text records that *"there"* Jesus healed their diseases. Jesus did not work only when those who were suffering came to a special place; He showed mercy to the people He met on the road He was walking. The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit must look after suffering souls and preach

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the gospel in the very place where he is.

We must not follow Jesus merely as one who solves the problems of the world. A faith that acts as though it believes when difficulties are solved but leaves the Lord when what one wants is not accomplished is not true faith. We must believe that Jesus is the Savior who took our sins upon Himself and received the judgment in our place, and we must follow His word whether our circumstances are good or difficult.

Moreover, the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not pass by the pain of another person with indifference. Just as Jesus healed the sick multitudes even on the road toward the cross, the church that believes the gospel must preach the word of salvation to souls suffering under sin and must also care with love for those who are in difficulty in the flesh. The preaching of the gospel and mercy toward one's neighbor cannot be separated from each other.

Matthew 19:1–2 is the word that Jesus, even while going forward to Judea in order to accomplish the mission of salvation, healed with love the multitudes who followed Him. We must not seek only visible miracles and the benefit of the flesh, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by taking our sins upon Himself through His baptism and by the cross and the resurrection. The one who has received the remission of sin and eternal life through this faith must live a life that follows in the footsteps of the Lord, embracing suffering souls and preaching the gospel of life.

The marriage that God has joined together is not a contract for the convenience of man but a covenant in which two become one flesh in love and responsibility

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.' His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it" (Matthew 19:3–12).

The Pharisees did not question Jesus in order to learn the will of God rightly. The Bible records that they were *"testing Him"* when they asked. Rather than asking how marriage was to be kept according to the will of God, they asked on what ground a

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man could put away his wife. They were not looking in the Word of God for a way to obey, but were trying to find a ground on which to justify their own conduct.

When a person wants to accomplish his own desire, he tries to use the Word of God. Rather than believing the Word just as it is, he holds on only to the verses that are to his advantage, and he pushes away the words that are uncomfortable, giving as his reason the situation of that time or personal circumstances. However, faith is not a matter of fitting the Word of God to one's own thinking. To lay down one's own thoughts and desires before the Word of God is faith.

Jesus did not remain in the argument about divorce in which the Pharisees were engaged, but went back to the beginning of creation. He quoted the word that God made man male and female, and that a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife so that the two become one flesh. The meaning of marriage must be found not in the custom of an age or in the convenience of man, but in the will of God who made man.

The word *"the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5)* does not mean only a physical union. It means that the husband and the wife have become one body that shares life and responsibility together. It is a relationship in which they share each other's joy and pain, care for the weakness of the other as the weakness of their own body, and live together before God.

Therefore a spouse is not a possession to be used for one's own happiness and cast away when he or she is not pleasing. The husband has not received the right to rule over his wife, and neither must the wife regard her husband as a person she can move according to her own will. The purpose for which God made the two become one flesh lies in their loving and serving each other and growing together in faith.

Jesus said, *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not*

man separate" (Matthew 19:6). This does not mean that man in fact has no ability to break the relationship; it is a command that man must not carelessly break the relationship God has established according to his own greed and feelings. This is because marriage is not merely a private promise between two people but a responsible covenant made before God.

The Pharisees asked again whether Moses had not commanded to give a certificate of divorce and to send the wife away. However, Jesus made it clear that Moses did not command divorce as the will of God but permitted it because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. What had been laid down in order to prevent greater confusion and harm in a reality where the relationship had already collapsed because of sin, the Pharisees were using as though it were a right that justified divorce.

The root of the problem of which Jesus spoke was *"the hardness of your hearts."* The deepest cause that breaks the relationship of husband and wife does not lie only in a difference of character or in economic circumstances. The heart that does not admit its own fault but sees only the fault of the other as great, the heart that wants to be forgiven but is unwilling to forgive, and the sin of trying to use the other person for one's own desire break the relationship.

A person may look as though he has kept the law and yet hold adultery and greed in his heart. The fact that a person has cast away his spouse and then, having gone through a formal procedure, married another person does not make his desire righteous before God. By saying that to put away one's wife for a reason other than sexual immorality and to marry another is adultery, Jesus revealed the sin of the heart that gave rise to that conduct rather than the legal form.

This does not mean, however, that this word may be used as

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a tool to force a person who suffers violence or abuse to endure and to live together unconditionally. In a situation where life and safety are threatened, the victim must first be protected safely and helped to receive the necessary assistance. To forgive does not mean to hide violence or to permit sin that is repeated. To reveal sin clearly and to call for responsibility, and to desire that the soul may truly turn, must be accomplished together.

Neither does this word mean that all who have experienced divorce are to be condemned alike. The circumstances and the responsibility of each person are different, and God knows even the hidden situation. Rather than judging carelessly a person who has been wounded by divorce, we must comfort him with the gospel, and if there is sin of his own, we must help him to admit it before God and turn from it. In Christ the way of restoration is open even to the one who has been wounded and has failed.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the hard heart that appears in the text is the reason that every person must receive a fundamental salvation. Even though a person knows the will of God concerning marriage, he cannot completely put away his self-centered heart. Even though he has not committed adultery outwardly, lust rises in his heart, and even though he has not cast away his spouse in conduct, he may hate and push the other away in his heart. When a person stands before the Word of God, there is no one who can become righteous by his own strength.

In order to save such sinners, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Not only our adultery, our lust, and our hatred, but also our pride, our selfishness, and our hardness were passed on to Him. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood, receiving the judgment of

sin in our place, and after three days He rose again and accomplished a complete salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus is not merely a ceremony by which He showed humility. Because He took upon Himself the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, He was judged for the wages of those sins on the cross. The Holy Spirit bears witness that the baptism of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection are the work of salvation that accomplished the righteousness of God. The one who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of sin by believing the righteousness that Jesus accomplished and not by his own conduct.

Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean that a difference of character between husband and wife or every problem of the home immediately disappears. However, the one who has received the remission of sin has a new standard by which to deal with conflict. He must put away the thought of the flesh that finds relief only in defeating the other, and must follow the Word of God; when he has done wrong he must apologize without making excuses, and remembering the remission of sin he has received from the Lord, he must forgive the other.

The gospel is not a weapon by which husband and wife condemn each other. Before attacking the other with the words "You have broken the Word," a person must remember how great a mercy he himself, a sinner, received before the Lord. The one who has received the remission of sin does not cover the sin of the other as though it were not sin, but neither does he try to cast the other away at once. While speaking the truth, he comes to endure long and to pray, desiring restoration.

The disciples said that if the responsibility of marriage was so heavy, it would be better not to marry. They thought in an

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extreme way that if they could not end a marriage according to their own convenience, it would be better not to marry. However, Jesus did not say that avoiding marriage is the road given to every person. Marriage and the single life are both a place of life given to each person before God.

The *"eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"* of whom Jesus spoke does not mean literally to injure one's own body. It refers to the person who has willingly chosen a single life for the work of the kingdom of God. Since this is a life borne by a person who has received a special grace and measure, it cannot be forced upon everyone. The single life is neither a condition for obtaining salvation nor evidence that one is more holy than a person who is married.

The one who is married must love and care for his spouse and his children within the home and must serve the gospel. The one who lives unmarried can use his time and his strength for the kingdom of God and for souls. What is important is not whether one is married or unmarried, but whether one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and follows the will of God in the place entrusted to him.

The fact that a person has kept his married life well does not become a merit for the remission of sin, and the fact that a person has failed in his married life does not make the salvation that Jesus accomplished incomplete. Salvation is received only by believing in the baptism of Jesus Christ, the cross, and the resurrection. However, the one who has been saved must, in thanksgiving for that grace, regard as precious the relationship that God has established, and must live thinking first of the soul of the other person and of the benefit of the gospel rather than of his own desire.

Matthew 19:3–12 is not a word that teaches only rules concerning marriage and divorce. It is the word that reveals the

hard heart of man, which tries to change the will of God to fit his own desire, and that teaches us to return to the order of creation that God established. Since we cannot cure our hard hearts by our own righteousness, we must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sin. And relying on that grace, whether we are married or live unmarried, we must love the person entrusted to us, serve responsibly, and live for the kingdom of God.

Jesus grants the kingdom of heaven to the one who, like a little child, does not put forward his own merit but receives the grace of God

"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there" (Matthew 19:13–15).

People brought little children, desiring that Jesus would lay His hands on them and pray for them. They believed the fact that the most precious blessing their children needed comes from Jesus. The knowledge and the wealth of the world are also necessary, but above all they desired that the young souls would grow within the grace and the Word of the Lord.

However, the disciples rebuked the people who had brought the little children. The disciples considered that since the little children could not sufficiently understand the word of Jesus and were not beings of great influence in the society of that time, they were not an important object worthy of coming near to the Lord. Judging that there was a more important and greater work for Jesus to do, they hindered the little children from coming.

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However, Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them."* The Lord receives as precious even the soul that has no power in the world and is not regarded as important by people. No one must be pushed out of the road that leads to Jesus because his knowledge is lacking, because he is young in age, or because his life is weak.

The disciples thought that they were protecting Jesus, but in reality they were blocking the road by which people came to the Lord. Even today the church and the workers of the gospel can commit the same fault. If we disregard a person who wants to know the gospel because he asks a question wrongly or is slow to understand, and if we treat carelessly a person who has no worldly position or wealth, we commit the same fault as the disciples.

Jesus said, *"For of such is the kingdom of heaven."* This word does not mean that a little child enters the kingdom of heaven because he is by nature without sin. Every person is born a descendant of Adam, and in his heart there is an inclination to sin. A little child also needs the grace of God that saves. What the Lord emphasized here is the attitude of faith that, like a little child, humbles itself and relies on another.

A little child does not boast of his own ability and merit before his parents. Neither does he claim that he can provide his own food and keep his own life. He relies on his parents for what he needs and receives what his parents give. The faith that obtains the kingdom of heaven is like this. It is that a person does not put forward his own good deeds and religious conduct, but receives the salvation that God has accomplished for him just as it is.

Therefore faith like that of a little child does not say, "I have attended church for a long time, and so I am qualified to be saved," or, "I have lived better than other people, and so I can be

acknowledged by God." Rather, it admits that one is a being who cannot wash away his own sin, and it relies on the salvation that God completed in Jesus Christ. To lay down one's own righteousness and to receive the righteousness of God is faith like that of a little child.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we are beings who can add nothing to the work of washing away sin. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of all mankind, including little children. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood, receiving the judgment of all sin, and after three days He rose again and became our eternal Savior.

The baptism of water that Jesus received, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection are not events separated from one another. Because He received our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He paid the wages of those sins in our place on the cross. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this work of salvation is the truth that completely accomplished the will and the righteousness of God. The one who believes this fact in his heart receives the remission of sin by the righteousness that Jesus accomplished and not by his own conduct.

Faith like that of a little child receives simply and truly this salvation that God has accomplished. Such faith believes the Word of God more than one's own feelings. Even when a believer feels guilt in his heart, he does not bring back to himself the sin that Jesus took upon Himself. It acknowledges the word just as it is: that Jesus took all sin upon Himself and even bore the judgment for it.

A person may think that faith is deep only when salvation is made complicated. He considers that sin is washed away only if

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he practices asceticism for a long time, sheds many tears, and repeats a prayer of repentance every day. However, no religious effort that a person performs can add any effect of the remission of sin to the salvation that Jesus completed. Faith is not an act of adding something to the salvation of God, but of receiving with thanksgiving the work that the Lord has finished.

This does not mean, however, that faith like that of a little child is a blind attitude of following the words of everyone without any thought. The words and the traditions of men must be discerned by the Word of the Bible. Only, before the salvation of God to which the Bible clearly bears witness, a person must lay down his own stubbornness and his religious prejudice. Faith like that of a little child is not a naivety that is deceived by men, but a humility that trusts the Word of God.

That Jesus laid His hands on the little children means that He regarded them as precious and blessed them. The Lord did not regard the little children as a troublesome burden, and He showed love and concern to them as well. However, the act of laying on hands does not in itself automatically give the remission of sin. The remission of sin is received when one believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

The fact that the parents brought their children to Jesus is also important. Parents must not think that they have fulfilled their responsibility merely by providing their children with a good education and a stable life. They must teach the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that their children may know and believe who Jesus is and how He removed all sin. To lead the soul of a child to the Lord is the most precious love that parents can give.

However, the faith of the parents is not automatically passed on to the children. The fact that the parents believed the gospel

does not mean that the children are born again of themselves. As the children grow, they too must hear the Word of God, realize that they are sinners, and believe in their hearts the salvation that Jesus accomplished by His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. Rather than demanding faith by force, parents must teach the Word, show the gospel by their lives, and help their children with prayer.

Neither must parents demand of their children only worldly success. To know God and to receive the remission of sin is far more important than to obtain a good school and a good occupation. If the parents regard material things and honor as most precious while telling their children to love God, that teaching loses its power. They must apologize even to their children when they have done wrong, rely on the Word and on prayer when things are difficult, and show a life that serves other souls.

The church also must not hinder little children from coming to Jesus. It must not treat the questions of children as troublesome or regard them as beings who disturb the worship service. It must explain the gospel step by step in words that young souls can understand, and help them to believe the baptism of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection. Not only to little children but also to those who hear the gospel for the first time and to those who are weak in faith, it must endure long and teach the Word.

Even a person who has already believed the gospel can lose the heart of a little child as time passes. When biblical knowledge and a career of faith are accumulated, he may think that he already knows everything and may regard the admonition of the Word lightly. However, in the kingdom of God a person is not exalted because he knows much; the greater the grace he has received, the lower he must become. The one who has been

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saved does not boast of his own knowledge but confesses that all salvation is the grace of the Lord.

Matthew 19:13–15 shows the love of Jesus, who receives the weak, and the attitude of faith that receives the kingdom of heaven. We must not put forward our own merit and religious zeal, but must receive like little children the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given. Moreover, we must not block the road by which another person comes to the Lord, but must preach with love and patience to little children and to weak souls the gospel of the remission of sin that Jesus completed.

The rich young man wanted eternal life, but because he could not lay down his own righteousness and his wealth, he left the Lord of life

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:16–22).

Eternal life is not obtained by the righteousness and the wealth of man,
but is the grace of God received by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

A young man came to Jesus and asked concerning eternal life. In that he sought eternal life and asked Jesus, he looks like an earnest person. However, in his question there was a fundamental error. He asked, *"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*. He did not think of eternal life as a gift that God gives by grace, but thought that he could obtain it as the reward for a good work that he himself had done.

This young man wanted eternal life, but he did not stand in the place of a sinner who must be saved. He thought that he already had considerable goodness in himself, and that if he added one more good work to it, he could complete eternal life. His interest lay in what he himself could do rather than in what God had accomplished.

Jesus said, *"No one is good but One, that is, God."* This does not mean that Jesus Himself is not good or is not God. Rather, He made clear the fact that the absolute standard of goodness lies in God alone. A person may consider himself good when he compares himself with other people, but before the holy God he cannot boast of his own goodness.

Jesus told the young man to keep the commandments if he wanted to enter into life. This was not to present a method of salvation by which a person can obtain eternal life by keeping the Law. Because the young man was relying on his own conduct, the Lord had him reflect on himself before the Law. The Law is not a ladder that makes a sinner righteous but a mirror that reveals the sin and the inability of man.

When the young man asked which commandments, Jesus spoke of the commandments not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, to honor one's parents, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. These are chiefly commandments concerning how a person must treat other

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people. If he had truly kept these commandments, he should have thought of the life and the need of his neighbor before his own benefit.

However, the young man answered confidently, *"All these things I have kept from my youth."* Outwardly he had not killed anyone, had not stolen, and had not committed open adultery. But the Law of God examines not only the conduct that appears outwardly but also the thoughts and the motives of the heart.

Even though a person has not murdered in conduct, he can hate another person; and even though he has not actually committed adultery, he can hold lust in his heart. Even though he has not stolen an object, he can covet the possessions of another; and even though he has not told an outright lie, he can hide the truth for his own benefit. Before the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, no one can say, "I have kept it completely."

That the young man, while saying that he had kept all the commandments, still asked, *"What do I still lack?"* shows the fact that there was no true assurance and peace in his heart. While claiming that his own conduct was sufficient, he had no assurance that he had obtained eternal life. A faith of the Law always leaves in a person the fear that something is still lacking. This is because the conduct of man cannot reach the perfect righteousness of God.

Jesus revealed the idol hidden deep in the heart of that young man. That He said, *"Sell what you have and give to the poor,"* was not a word establishing a new law that every person must sell all his property in order to be saved. Because to that young man wealth was more precious than God, and because wealth was ruling his heart, the Lord revealed it exactly.

The young man claimed that he had kept all the commandments, saying that he had loved his neighbor as

himself. However, before the word to share his possessions with the poor he could not obey. His words and his heart were different from each other. With his mouth he said that he had loved his neighbor, but in reality he loved his own property more than his neighbor.

The word of Jesus was a demand to lay down not only the property of the young man but also his own righteousness. It meant, "You are not a righteous man who has kept the commandments perfectly, but a sinner who loves wealth more than God. Therefore cast away your own righteousness and follow Me." However, the young man did not admit that he was a sinner and did not seek the grace of the Lord.

Wealth in itself is not evil. God entrusts material things to man, and a person of faith can use them to care for his family, to help his neighbor in need, and to serve the gospel. The problem is not that a person possesses wealth but that wealth possesses the heart of a person. If money becomes a more secure support than God and keeps a person from obeying the Word, that wealth becomes an idol.

Neither does a poor person automatically enter the kingdom of heaven. Even though his property is small, his heart may be full of greed and of his own righteousness. The problem of riches spoken of in this text is not only the amount of property, but the heart that thinks it can live even without God and the heart that relies on its own conduct and ability.

Jesus said, "*Come, follow Me.*" What was most important for the young man was not the act of disposing of his property in itself, but believing in Jesus as the Master of life and salvation and following Him. However, although he wanted to obtain eternal life, he loved his own property more than Jesus, the Master of eternal life.

The young man heard the word and went away sorrowful. He

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was sorrowful because it was a pity to give up his wealth, and because it seemed that he would lose eternal life if he refused the word of Jesus. In the end, however, he chose the road of holding on to his wealth and leaving Jesus. This is the greatest tragedy of the text. He had much wealth, but he lost the Lord who gives the remission of sin and eternal life.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a person cannot obtain eternal life by his own good deeds, as this young man could not. Because in the heart of man there are greed, pride, and his own righteousness, he cannot perfectly keep the commandments of God. What a person needs is not to pile up more of the good deeds he lacks, but to admit his own sin and to believe the salvation that God has accomplished.

In order to take upon Himself even our sins of greed, of our own righteousness, and of idolatry, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood, receiving all the judgment of sin. After three days He rose again from death and became the Savior who gives the remission of sin and eternal life to those who believe.

In the salvation of Jesus, the baptism and the cross are not separated. Because He took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, He received the punishment of those sins on the cross. The Holy Spirit bears witness that the baptism of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection completely accomplished the righteousness of God. The one who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin by the righteousness that Jesus accomplished and not by his own good deeds.

The rich young man asked, “What must I do?” but the gospel first makes us hear, “What has Jesus done for me?” Salvation is

not something we buy by giving up wealth or by performing many good deeds. It is the gift of God received by believing in the heart the fact that Jesus took all sin upon Himself and was judged.

This does not mean, however, that the one who believes the gospel may live without responsibility concerning wealth. Good deeds are not the price of salvation, but they are the fruit of thanksgiving that the one who has been saved must bear. The one who has received the remission of sin does not store up wealth for himself alone, but acknowledges it as what God has entrusted to him and uses it for his family, his neighbor, and the gospel.

Moreover, to follow Jesus does not mean that every believer must give up his occupation and his property. Each one must work in the place entrusted to him and use what he needs, but he must not let wealth or position come before the Word of the Lord. What is needed is a heart that can gladly give when the Lord tells him to use it for the gospel and for souls.

As we look at the rich young man, we must not judge only other people. We must examine whether in our own hearts also there is something that we rely on and love more than the Lord. Not only wealth but also family, honor, knowledge, a religious career, and our own plans and stubbornness can become idols of the heart. If because of these things we cannot receive the Word of God, we too, like the young man, can become sorrowful and go far from the Lord.

Matthew 19:16–22 is not a word that the effort to live a good life is unnecessary, but a word that eternal life cannot be obtained by good deeds. The Law reveals our sin and our inability, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit tells the fact that Jesus removed all those sins. We must lay down our own righteousness and the supports of the world and believe the

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salvation that Jesus completed. And after we have received the remission of sin, we must not serve wealth as our master, but must live a life that follows Jesus, the Master of life, and serves our neighbor and the gospel.

God has completed the salvation that was impossible for man, and He also repays in the eternal kingdom every labor spent in following the Lord

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:23–30).

After seeing the young man who could not give up his great wealth and went away, Jesus said to His disciples that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. That young man wanted eternal life, but he tried to obtain salvation by his own

conduct, and he relied on wealth more than on God. Through the matter of that one person, Jesus revealed the problem of self-righteousness and greed that is in the heart of every person.

The word *"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"* does not mean that a person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven merely for the reason that he has property. In the Bible there are also people of faith to whom God entrusted material things. Neither does a person automatically enter the kingdom of heaven for the reason that he is poor. Even though a person has no property, his heart may be full of greed for money, of his own righteousness, and of attachment to the world.

What must be examined more deeply here is the person who is rich in heart. The person who is rich in heart thinks that he can live by his own ability, wealth, and knowledge even without God. He relies on his own good deeds and his religious career, and he does not urgently need the salvation that God grants. Even when he hears the gospel, he receives only the part that agrees with his own thinking, and before the word that requires him to lay down his own support he draws back.

Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. It is impossible for a camel actually to pass through the eye of a needle. Therefore the heart of this comparison does not mean that a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven if he tries a little harder, but that it is entirely impossible for the person who relies on his own righteousness and his own possessions to be saved by his own strength.

When the disciples heard this word, they were greatly astonished and asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* The disciples too held just as it was the thinking of that time, which regarded wealth and social success as the blessing of God. Therefore they asked who in the world could be saved if even a rich man, who

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appeared to have received many blessings, found it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus looked at His disciples and said, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* This is the center of the text. Salvation is not a work by which a person climbs up by his own effort, but a work that God Himself accomplishes for the sinner. A person cannot remove his own sin by himself, and neither can he receive the judgment of sin in the place of others and live again.

In order to accomplish the salvation that was impossible by the strength of man, Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this earth. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of all mankind. He received passed on to Him not only the greed, the self-righteousness, and the idolatry of men, but all the sins of the past, the present, and the future.

Bearing those sins, Jesus was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received all the punishment of sin. And after three days He rose again from death, overcame sin and death, and became our eternal Savior. God Himself accomplished the work of the passing on of sin, of judgment, and of new life, which man could not do.

The salvation of Jesus is a work in which the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection are joined into one. Through the baptism He received from John He took our sins upon Himself, on the cross He paid the wages of those sins, and by the resurrection He guaranteed eternal life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit bears witness that all this is the true salvation that completed the righteousness of God. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore the remission of sin is not received as the reward for giving up much property or for piling up good deeds. It is

received when one believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. Even a person who has much wealth receives the remission of sin and obtains salvation if he lays down his own righteousness and his reliance on his possessions and believes the gospel, and even a poor person cannot be saved if he relies on his own thoughts and conduct.

Peter, who heard the word of Jesus, asked, *"See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"* Peter and the other disciples left their boats, their nets, and their occupations behind and followed Jesus. Unlike the rich young man, who left Jesus because of his wealth, the disciples laid down what they had and followed the Lord.

However, within the question of Peter there was also a heart that calculated the reward for what he had left. It is the thought, "That young man could not give up, but we have given up; what then shall we receive?" To remember what one has sacrificed for the Lord is not in itself wrong, but one must be on guard against taking it as his own righteousness and merit and exalting himself above others.

Jesus did not disregard the sacrifice of the disciples. He promised that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, the disciples also will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the word that when Jesus comes again and makes all things new, He will give special authority and a mission to the apostles who followed the Lord.

The word *"in the regeneration"* shows that the present world is not eternal. Now it may appear that the unrighteous person prospers and that the person who lives by faith suffers loss. However, when Jesus comes again in glory, all things will be rightly established according to the righteousness of God. At that time it will be clearly revealed that the labor of faith performed

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for the Lord was not in vain.

Jesus said that everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of His name will receive many times as much and will inherit eternal life. This word is not a command to abandon responsibility toward one's family or to leave one's parents or children carelessly. The Bible clearly teaches us to honor our parents and to care for our family.

The meaning of this word is that when one must choose between one's family or wealth and the Word of the Lord, he must choose the Lord first. It means not to cast away the gospel of the water and the Spirit even when the family keeps one from believing the gospel, when one is threatened with the loss of property, and when the relationships of the world demand that one deny the Lord. It is not a cold command to love one's family less than the Lord, but the word to exalt above all the Lord, who is the source of all love.

Moreover, what must be given up in order to follow the Lord is not only visible wealth and relationships. One's own stubbornness and pride, one's own rightness and worldly desire must also be laid down. However right one's own thought may appear, if it differs from the Word of God it must certainly be laid down before the Word. While holding on to one's own righteousness, one cannot follow the Lord completely.

That Jesus said one *"shall receive a hundredfold"* must not be understood as a material formula that one will certainly obtain greater property in the world. To the one who has lost for the sake of the Lord, God gives a family of faith and the love of the church, the care that is needed, and spiritual joy. He also gives an eternal reward that does not decay in the kingdom of God in the time to come. This is not a promise of prosperity that one obtains more money by offering money.

Eternal life is not obtained by the righteousness and the wealth of man,
but is the grace of God received by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Neither does the word that one will *"inherit eternal life"* mean that one purchases eternal life by an act of sacrifice. Eternal life is received only by believing the salvation that Jesus completed. Only, the person who has truly believed the gospel regards the Lord as more precious than everything in the world, and when it is necessary he bears the fruit of faith by laying down what is his own and following the Lord.

Salvation and reward must be distinguished. The remission of sin and eternal life are the gift of grace received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, without any merit of man. However, concerning how a person has lived for the Lord and for the gospel after being saved, God remembers and repays the faithfulness and the labor of each person. It is not that one piles up his own righteousness in order to receive a reward, but that he serves the Lord in thanksgiving for the salvation he has already received.

Finally Jesus said, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."* This is a warning not to boast of the fact that one has believed for a long time or of the fact that one has made a great sacrifice. Even though a person came to know the gospel first, he can fall behind if he falls into his own righteousness and pride and does not obey the Word; and even though a person believed the gospel later, he can become one who has gone ahead if he humbly lives according to the Word.

The order of the kingdom of God is not decided by worldly position or by a career of faith. Rather than who has attended church longer and who has held more offices, what is important is who has believed the grace of God and obeyed the will of the Lord. The one who is first must not lower others but must serve all the more humbly.

Matthew 19:23–30 is the word that no one can accomplish salvation by the strength of man, but that God has accomplished

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a complete salvation by the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. We must not rely on wealth and on our own righteousness, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin and eternal life. And after we have been saved, we must regard the Lord as more precious than anything in the world, lay down our own stubbornness and desire, and follow the gospel. The Lord does not forget that faith and that labor, and He repays it with the best in the eternal kingdom that will be made new. ✉

Eternal life is not obtained by the righteousness and the wealth of man,
but is the grace of God received by faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 19

[Question] 1. What is the principle of the life of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven that appears in Matthew Chapter 19?

The principle of the life of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven that appears in Matthew Chapter 19 can be summed up as follows.

First, we must regard marriage as the holy covenant that God has established and faithfully keep the union of husband and wife.

"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).

Second, we must come to Jesus with a humble and dependent heart like that of a little child, and must receive as precious those who are small and weak.

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

Third, we must put away murder, adultery, theft, and falsehood, must honor our parents, and must love our neighbor as ourselves. This means a life that goes beyond the mere outward keeping of the commandments and loves God and one's neighbor from the heart.

Fourth, we must not serve wealth as our master, but must share with the poor and follow Jesus. The rich young man could not give up his great wealth and left Jesus. A citizen of the

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kingdom of heaven must regard Jesus as more precious than the possessions of the world.

Fifth, we must not rely on our own good conduct and ability, but must rely on the grace of God.

"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Lastly, we must sacrifice for the sake of the name of Jesus, and yet must not boast of the reward but must be humble. Because the order of the kingdom of heaven is different from the rank of the world, the one who is first can become last and the one who is last can become first.

Therefore the citizen of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew Chapter 19 is the person who keeps the covenant of the home, is humble like a little child, loves his neighbor, regards Jesus as more precious than wealth, and follows the Lord relying on the grace of God and not on his own conduct.

[Question] 2. Explain the context before and after Matthew Chapter 19 and its role in the content.

Matthew Chapter 19 stands at the turning point where the Galilean ministry of Jesus ends and the journey toward Jerusalem, where He would suffer on the cross, begins.

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 19:1).

In chapter 18 before it, He taught concerning humility and forgiveness within the community of the church. In chapter 19 that follows, while moving to the region of Judea, He spoke concerning marriage and divorce, little children, eternal life, wealth, and discipleship. This shows the attitude that a citizen of

the kingdom of heaven must have in actual life.

Chapters 19 and 20 are the part in which Jesus teaches His disciples in the course of going up to Jerusalem, and from chapter 21 the entry into Jerusalem and the last ministry begin. Therefore chapter 19 is the passage leading from the Galilean ministry to the ministry of the cross in Jerusalem, and it is the part that teaches the disciples the life of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 19:1, about where is *"the region of Judea beyond the Jordan"*, to which He came after leaving Galilee?

"The region of Judea beyond the Jordan" generally refers to the region of Perea, which lay to the east of the Jordan River. This was the region extending from the south of Galilee to the east of the Dead Sea, and at that time it was ruled by Herod Antipas.

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 19:1).

Therefore this word means that Jesus left Galilee, passed through the region of Perea east of the Jordan, and moved south toward Jerusalem. Here *"the region of Judea"* can be understood as an expression referring not only to Judea proper but to the wide region in which the Jews lived.

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[Question] 4. In Matthew 19:3–12, what are the three reasons that the word concerning marriage and divorce must be examined as important?

The reasons that the word of Matthew 19:3–12 must be examined as important are the following three.

First, it is because the question of the Pharisees was a test intended to put Jesus into political and religious difficulty. In the Jewish society of that time, differing views stood opposed to each other over the permitted range of divorce. Moreover, John the Baptist, who had rebuked the wrongful marriage of Herod Antipas, the ruler of this region, had been put to death. Using such a sensitive matter, the Pharisees tried to bring Jesus into dispute and danger. However, Jesus did not choose one of the claims of that time, but answered on the standard of the order of creation that God established.

Second, it is because it makes clear that marriage is not a system that man can make or dissolve according to his convenience, but a holy union that God has established. From the beginning God created man male and female and made the two become one flesh.

"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).

Therefore marriage is not a temporary contract between two people but a union of the whole person made before God. That Moses permitted a certificate of divorce was not to encourage divorce or to acknowledge it as the will of God, but was a measure to restrain the harm arising from the hardness of the people.

"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8).

Third, it is because this word presents the clear standard of God not only concerning marriage and divorce but also concerning the single life. To choose the single life for the reason that the responsibility of marriage is heavy, or to avoid marriage for one's own convenience, is not a right attitude. Marriage must be borne faithfully within the order that God has established, and the single life is a life that a person who has received a special gift and mission from God for the work of the kingdom of heaven bears of his own will. Neither marriage nor the single life is the holier or the superior; each person lives according to the will and the responsibility he has received from God.

Therefore this word is important in that it shows the wisdom of Jesus, who overcame the evil test of the Pharisees, makes clear the creation principle and the permanence of marriage, and presents the right standard of faith concerning divorce and the single life.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 19:3, how did the Jewish society of that time regard the matter of putting away one's wife?

The Jews of that time thought, on the ground of Deuteronomy 24:1, that a husband could divorce his wife if he wrote her a certificate of divorce.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house" (Deuteronomy 24:1).

However, there were two representative views concerning

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the range of *"some uncleanness."*

The school of Shammai held that one could divorce only when there was a grave sexual offense such as sexual immorality.

The school of Hillel interpreted it broadly, holding that even a trivial dissatisfaction, such as preparing food badly, could be a ground for divorce.

Therefore many Jews thought of divorce as a matter of a legal right given to the husband rather than as a matter of the will of God in creation. The Pharisees also placed their interest in the question of for what reason one could divorce, but Jesus corrected their thinking by the original principle of marriage, that what God has joined together man must not separate.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 19:3, what does the word *"testing Him"* tell us about the character of their question?

That the Pharisees were testing Jesus means that they did not ask sincerely in order to learn the will of God, but tried to find a fault in the answer of Jesus, to bring Him into dispute, and to obtain a ground on which to accuse Him.

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" (Matthew 19:3).

In the Jewish society of that time, differing views stood opposed to each other over the grounds on which divorce was possible. If Jesus supported one side, He could be attacked by the other side, and if He appeared to go against the Law of Moses, He could be accused. Moreover, Herod Antipas, the ruler of that region, had put John the Baptist to death over the matter of his wrongful marriage.

Therefore the question of the Pharisees was not a simple question about the Bible but a trap intended to bring Jesus into religious and political difficulty.

[Question] 7. In Matthew 19:3, what disadvantageous result were the Pharisees trying to bring upon Jesus by their question concerning divorce?

The Pharisees were not trying to learn right teaching from Jesus; they were trying to obtain a ground on which to attack and accuse Him, whatever answer He might give.

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" (Matthew 19:3).

If Jesus permitted divorce broadly, they could accuse Him of damaging the holiness of marriage, and if He strictly forbade divorce, they could attack Him for going against the Law of Moses. Moreover, if He gave an answer that took issue with the wrongful marriage of Herod Antipas, who ruled this region, they could put Him in political danger like John the Baptist.

Therefore the result they intended was to bring Jesus into religious dispute and political danger, to lower His authority, and to obtain a pretext for removing Him.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 19:4–6, how did Jesus answer the question of the Pharisees concerning divorce?

Jesus did not first discuss whether divorce is permitted, but

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spoke of the creation principle of marriage that God established. He said that God created man male and female, and that a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife so that the two become one flesh. Therefore He answered that man must not separate the husband and wife whom God has joined together.

"And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate'" (Matthew 19:4–6).

The answer of Jesus means that since marriage is not a mere human contract but a holy union that God has accomplished, the husband and the wife must faithfully keep that relationship.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 19:7, what is the second question of the Pharisees?

When the Pharisees heard the word of Jesus that man must not separate what God has joined together, they asked again why, then, Moses commanded to give a certificate of divorce and to send the wife away.

"They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?'" (Matthew 19:7).

On the ground of the Law of Moses they tried to make the word of Jesus and the regulation of Moses appear to contradict each other.

[Question] 10. In Matthew 19:8, how does the word that because of the hardness of heart Moses permitted the putting away of a wife, but that from the beginning it was not so, define the regulation of Moses?

Jesus made clear that Moses did not command divorce, but permitted divorce in a limited way because of the hard hearts of the people of Israel. He also said that divorce is not the original will of God.

"He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so'" (Matthew 19:8).

Therefore the regulation of Moses was not for the purpose of encouraging divorce, but was a measure to restrain the harm of the divorce that was already occurring and to protect the weak. The original will of God concerning marriage is that the husband and the wife become one flesh and keep that covenant.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 19:7 and 8, what sort of matters were the "*some uncleanness*" that became a pretext for sending away a wife in the time of Moses?

The expression mentioned in the Law of Moses is not simply "shame" but "*some uncleanness.*" This refers to a shameful and improper act revealed within the marriage relationship.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house" (Deuteronomy 24:1).

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Deuteronomy does not present a concrete list of the acts that fall under *"some uncleanness."* Because the range of this expression was not concretely defined, differing interpretations arose among the Jews of later times. Those who held a strict view limited it to grave sexual immorality, but those who wanted to permit divorce easily extended it even to trivial matters in which a husband felt dissatisfaction with his wife.

However, what Moses laid down concerning the certificate of divorce was not for the purpose of encouraging or commanding divorce. It was a permission intended to restrain the divorce that was already occurring because of the hardness of the people, and to let the woman who was sent away be protected legally.

"He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so'" (Matthew 19:8).

Therefore one must not take even a trivial dissatisfaction as a ground for divorce under the pretext of *"some uncleanness."* Jesus placed the principle of marriage that God established at the beginning before the permissive regulation of Moses, and He taught that man must not separate according to his own convenience the relationship of the husband and wife whom God has joined together.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 19:9, what is mentioned as the only ground on which divorce is permitted?

The only ground for divorce of which Jesus spoke is sexual immorality. Jesus said that the person who divorces his wife for a reason other than sexual immorality and marries another woman commits adultery.

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

This means that since marriage is a relationship of one flesh that God has joined together, it must not be broken by a change of heart or by a trivial reason. *"except for sexual immorality"* refers to the case in which a spouse has broken the sexual faithfulness of the marriage. However, even in such a case it is not a command that one must divorce; it is the word of an exception in which divorce may be permitted. If it is possible, the restoration of the relationship through repentance and forgiveness must come first.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 19:10, what does the response of the disciples who heard the word concerning marriage and divorce make us realize?

When the disciples heard the strict word of Jesus concerning divorce, they responded that if the responsibility of marriage was so great, it would be better not to marry.

"His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry'" (Matthew 19:10).

This response shows that the disciples too were under the influence of the relatively free custom of divorce of that time, and that they did not sufficiently understand marriage as a covenant to be kept for life. The lesson gained here is that we must not try to avoid marriage because its responsibility is heavy, but must receive it as the holy covenant that God has established and keep it with love and faithfulness. Moreover, marriage and the single life are both not a matter to be decided according to

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one's own convenience, but must be chosen responsibly according to the gift and the will received from God.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 19:11 and 12, explain the word concerning the single life.

The single life of which Jesus spoke is not a duty required of every person; it means living without marrying for the work of the kingdom of heaven, according to the special gift and mission received from God.

"But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it '" (Matthew 19:11–12).

Jesus spoke of three cases of not marrying: the person who from birth finds it difficult to marry, the person who has been made so by other people, and the person who lives unmarried of his own will in order to devote himself to the mission for the kingdom of heaven.

"*eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"* does not mean to mutilate the body; it means voluntarily laying down the right to marry for the work of the kingdom of heaven. The single life is not a station superior to marriage; it is a life that a person who has received the gift to bear it chooses of his own will.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 19:11 and 12, how does He describe the person who can bear the single life?

According to the word of Jesus, the person who can live unmarried is the person who has received the gift to accept and to bear that life.

"But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given'" (Matthew 19:11).

The single life includes the case of one who from birth finds it difficult to marry, the case of one who has been made so by other people, and the case of one who of his own will does not marry for the work of the kingdom of heaven.

"There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it" (Matthew 19:12).

Therefore it is not that every person must live the single life by compulsion. The person who has received that gift and mission from God can choose it of his own will for the work of the kingdom of heaven and can bear it.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 19:13, who were those who were rebuked by the disciples?

The disciples rebuked the people who had brought little children, desiring that Jesus would lay His hands on them and pray.

"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them" (Matthew 19:13).

That is to say, the disciples rebuked the parents or the

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guardians who had brought the little children. They regarded the coming of the little children to Jesus as unimportant, but Jesus rather said to permit the children and not to forbid them.

[Question] 17. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus said to permit the little children to come to Him and not to forbid them, and said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to whom?

Jesus said to allow the little children to come to Him and not to hinder them. And He said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such people as these.

"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:14).

This means that the person who, like a little child, humbly and purely relies on the Lord belongs to the kingdom of heaven. It is also the lesson that no one must hinder little children and weak people from coming to Jesus.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 19:15, what does it mean that Jesus laid His hands on the little children?

That Jesus laid His hands on the little children means that He received them with love and bestowed the grace and the blessing of God upon them.

"And He laid His hands on them and departed from there" (Matthew 19:15).

At that time the laying on of hands was an act of blessing and

prayer, of seeking the protection and the grace of God. Jesus did not regard the little children as troublesome or insignificant beings, but acknowledged them as precious beings belonging to the kingdom of heaven and blessed them. This gives the lesson that the church and those who believe must also receive little children with love and care for them in faith.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 19:16–22, compare the account of the rich young man with the records of the other Gospels and put them together.

The account of the rich young man is recorded not only in Matthew 19:16–22 but also in Mark 10:17–22 and Luke 18:18–23. When the records of the three Gospels are put together, the person who came to Jesus was a young man of much wealth and also a ruler.

Matthew records him as *"young man"* and Luke makes clear that he was *"a certain ruler"* and was *"very rich."* Mark records that he ran to Jesus and knelt before Him. Therefore he was a person who had obtained wealth and social position at a young age and who had also lived religiously, keeping the commandments, but who had not obtained assurance concerning eternal life.

He asked Jesus, *"Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"* In Mark and in Luke he calls Jesus *"Good Teacher"* and asks what he must do in order to obtain eternal life. He did not know eternal life as a gift that God gives by grace, but tried to obtain it as the reward for some good work that he could perform.

Jesus said that only God alone is good, and said that if he was to enter into life he must keep the commandments. This is not a

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word acknowledging that eternal life can be obtained by the works of the Law. It is a word that made him realize the fact that the standard of goodness that God requires does not lie in the relative good conduct of man but in the perfection of God.

Jesus presented the commandments not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, to honor one's parents, and the word to love one's neighbor as oneself. In Mark the word *"Do not defraud"* is also recorded. The young man answered that he had kept all these commandments from his youth, and yet asked what he still lacked. This question of his reveals that although he thought he had kept the commandments outwardly, in his heart there was no assurance of eternal life and no true peace.

Mark records that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Jesus was not trying to condemn him and drive him out; He was trying to reveal the wealth and the self-righteousness that had captured his heart and to lead him to true faith.

"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:21–22).

That Jesus told him to sell all his property, to give to the poor, and to follow Him does not mean that one obtains eternal life as the reward for giving up property. This word revealed the self-contradiction of the young man, who relied on and loved wealth more than God and yet thought that he had kept all the commandments. He had not loved his neighbor as himself, and he was regarding wealth as more precious than God. Therefore he was not a person who had kept the Law completely.

The most important command in the word of Jesus is the word *"Come, follow Me."* What the young man needed was not

to add one more good deed, but to put away the heart that relied on his own righteousness and his wealth, and to believe in Jesus as his Savior and follow Him. However, because he had much wealth, when he heard that word he took on a sorrowful look and went back grieving.

The records of the three Gospels show the fact that although this young man earnestly sought eternal life, he could not lay down his own righteousness and his wealth and so did not follow Jesus. A person cannot obtain eternal life by keeping the Law perfectly or by piling up good conduct. He must first admit that he is a sinner who cannot completely keep the Law of God, and must receive by grace the salvation that God has accomplished.

In order to save sinners, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and was judged on the cross, and He rose again from death. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart obtains the remission of sin and eternal life by the salvation that Jesus Christ completed, and not by relying on his own good conduct or his wealth.

Therefore the account of the rich young man is not a word that condemns the having of much wealth in itself. It is a warning that with a heart that relies on wealth and on one's own righteousness more than on God, one cannot completely follow Jesus. Eternal life is not the reward for the good work that a person has done; it is the grace of God given to the person who admits his own lack and believes the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished.

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[Question] 20. In Matthew 19:16, what did the rich young man ask Jesus concerning the obtaining of eternal life?

The rich young man asked Jesus what good thing he had to do in order to obtain eternal life.

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?'" (Matthew 19:16).

In this question there appears the thought of the young man, who tried to obtain eternal life by his own good conduct rather than to receive it by the grace of God.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 19:17, what does the first answer of Jesus to the rich young man mean?

The first answer of Jesus means that the absolute standard and the source of goodness is not man but God alone.

"So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Matthew 19:17).

The rich young man thought that if he added some good conduct he could obtain eternal life. However, Jesus first made him realize that God alone is essentially good and that man cannot reach perfect goodness by his own conduct.

Moreover, the word *"keep the commandments"* does not mean that one can obtain salvation by a few good deeds. It is a word that led him to discover his own lack and his sin before the commandments of God and to cast away his own righteousness. In the end, eternal life is not obtained by one's own good conduct but is received by believing the salvation that Jesus completed.

[Question] 22. In Matthew 19:18 and 19, which commandments did Jesus tell the rich young man to keep?

The commandments that Jesus spoke of to the rich young man are as follows.

- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

"Jesus said, '"You shall not murder,'" "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:18–19).

Jesus spoke chiefly of the commandments concerning the relationship with other people. Through this He made the young man look back not on whether he had kept the commandments only outwardly, but on whether he had lived truly loving his neighbor.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 19:20, what does the answer *"All these things I have kept from my youth"* and the question *"What do I still lack?"* each show?

In the answer of the young man there appear the confidence and the self-righteousness of one who has kept all the commandments. At the same time, from his asking *"What do I still lack?"* there are also revealed the anxiety and the spiritual thirst of one who feels that something is lacking in his life and

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who has no assurance concerning eternal life.

"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?'" (Matthew 19:20).

The young man thought that he had kept the commandments in outward conduct, but in the depth of his heart he was not loving God and his neighbor completely. His attachment to his wealth was about to reveal that very lack.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 19:21, what were the things that Jesus required of the young man?

Jesus told the young man that if he wanted to be perfect he should sell his possessions, share them with the poor, and follow Jesus.

"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Matthew 19:21).

Jesus pointed out that the greatest problem of the young man was his attachment to wealth. He thought that he had kept all the commandments, but in reality he was loving wealth more than God and his neighbor. Therefore the heart of this word is not the act of giving up wealth in itself, but the command to put away the heart that had served wealth as its master and to regard Jesus as most precious and follow Him.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 19:21, what does the word "*Come, follow Me*" that Jesus spoke to the young man ultimately mean?

The central meaning of the word "*Come, follow Me*" is to

put away one's own righteousness and one's dependence on wealth, to believe in Jesus as the Master and the Savior of one's life, and to obey His word.

"Go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21).

Jesus did not require merely the good deed of sharing out one's property. He required the young man to lay down the wealth that he had relied on and loved most, and to regard Jesus as most precious and follow Him.

Therefore eternal life is not obtained by the good conduct that a person has done or by the outward keeping of the commandments, but is received by believing the salvation that Jesus completed through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection. The word *"Come, follow Me"* shows what true discipleship is, namely to deny oneself and to receive Jesus as the Master of one's life.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 19:22, how did the rich young man respond when he heard the requirement of Jesus?

When the young man heard the word to sell his property, to share it with the poor, and to follow Jesus, he went away sorrowful. This was because he had much wealth.

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22).

He wanted eternal life, but he did not love the Lord enough to give up his wealth and follow Jesus. His response shows that when wealth rules the heart, it can become a great obstacle to following Jesus.

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[Question] 27. In Matthew 19:23, what does the word *"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"* mean?

The *"a rich man"* spoken of here does not mean only a person who has much property. The central meaning is the one who is rich in heart, who relies on his own righteousness and on the things of the world.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:23).

The one who is rich in heart is the person who thinks that he has piled up much of his own good conduct and righteousness, or who relies on money, on ability, and on his worldly circumstances and considers, "I can do without the help of God." Because such a person does not admit the fact that he is a sinner and a being who absolutely needs the salvation of God, he cannot receive the salvation that Jesus completed.

Therefore it is not that a person is unconditionally kept from entering the kingdom of heaven because he has much material wealth, nor is it that a person enters the kingdom of heaven of himself because he is poor. The problem is the heart. A person must admit that by his own strength he can neither remove his sin nor enter the kingdom of heaven, and must believe the salvation of God that Jesus completed.

"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and then rose again and completed salvation. The person who is poor in heart receives this gospel of the water and the Spirit as his own salvation,

receives the remission of sin, and enters the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore the word that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven does not speak of the greatness or the smallness of one's property, but means that a person must put away the heart that relies on his own righteousness and on the things of the world and must admit that he is one who absolutely needs the salvation of God.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 19:24, explain the meaning of the word in which He made a comparison using the camel and the eye of a needle.

"A camel" refers to the camel, and *"the eye of a needle"* refers to the small hole of a needle through which thread is passed when sewing. It is impossible for a large camel to go through a small needle's eye.

"And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).

Through this impossible picture Jesus emphasized the fact that it is even more impossible for the person who is rich in heart to enter the kingdom of heaven by his own strength. Here the rich man is not simply a person who has much property, but a person who believes in his own good conduct and righteousness, or who relies on money and ability and thinks that he does not need the help of God.

Because such a person does not admit his own lack and his sin, he cannot receive the salvation that Jesus accomplished by His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. On the other hand, the person who admits that he is a sinner who absolutely needs

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the help of God and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin and enters the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore this word means that it is impossible for a person to be saved by his own righteousness and ability, and that one enters the kingdom of heaven only by believing the salvation that God has accomplished.

[Question] 29. In Matthew 19:25 and 26, how are the ability of man and the ability of God contrasted in relation to salvation?

The principle of salvation of which Jesus spoke is that a person cannot be saved by his own ability or by his good conduct, but that God saves the sinner.

"When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:25–26).

A person cannot remove his own sin or enter the kingdom of heaven by wealth, by the act of keeping the commandments, or by his own righteousness. Therefore God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this earth. By receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received the judgment of sin, and by rising again from death He completed salvation.

Therefore the word *"with God all things are possible"* means that God has completely solved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit the problem of sin and judgment that man could

not solve. Salvation is not a result that man brings about by doing a good work; it is the grace received by believing the righteousness of Jesus that God has completed. Therefore the sinner must not rely on himself, but must believe the baptism that Jesus received from John, His death on the cross, and His resurrection, and so receive the remission of sin and eternal life.

[Question] 30. In Matthew 19:27–29, what reward is promised to those who left everything and followed the Lord?

Peter asked what he and the other disciples would obtain, since they had left everything and followed Jesus. Jesus promised three rewards to those who had left what was their own in order to follow the Lord.

First, to the twelve disciples was promised the authority to sit on twelve thrones and to judge the twelve tribes of Israel when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.

"In the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

In this world the disciples laid down their livelihood, their possessions, and their worldly position in order to follow Jesus, but in the time to come they receive the authority to share in the glory of Jesus Christ and to reign with Him.

Second, to the person who has left houses or family or lands for the sake of the name of Jesus was promised a reward of many times as much.

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's

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sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).

This word does not mean to disregard the responsibility toward one's family or to give up one's property unconditionally. It means that when family, wealth, or worldly relationships block the work of believing and following Jesus, one must regard the Lord and the gospel as more precious than these. To the person who has borne loss and persecution for the sake of the name of the Lord, God gives brothers and sisters within the church and an environment in which to serve the gospel, and He repays him with abundant blessing in this world and in the time to come.

Third, the blessing of inheriting eternal life was promised. Eternal life is not a salvation obtained as the reward for the act of giving up property and family. Eternal life is the inheritance that God gives by grace to the person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished. Only, God does not forget all the labor that the one who has been saved has spent for the Lord and for the gospel, and He repays it with a reward.

What must be given up here is not only visible possessions. One must also give up the stubbornness, the pride, the self-righteousness, and the desires of the flesh that block the work of following the Lord. To leave everything and follow the Lord is not to abandon one's life irresponsibly, but to put the Word of God and the gospel before one's own thoughts and benefit.

Therefore to the person who has left everything and followed the Lord there are promised the authority to share in the glory and the reign of the Lord in the time to come, the blessing of many times as much received in this world and in the time to come, and the blessing of inheriting eternal life. God does not forget any sacrifice made for the sake of the name of the Lord

and for the gospel, and He certainly repays it.

[Question] 31. In Matthew 19:30, what does the word of Jesus, "*But many who are first will be last, and the last first*" teach?

This word means that the standard by which a person is evaluated in the kingdom of heaven is different from the standard of the world. The person who is first and appears exalted in the world does not necessarily receive a great reward in the kingdom of heaven either, and the person who is last and appears lowly in the world can be first before God.

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30).

If a person boasts of his own merit for the reason that he has lived a life of faith for a long time or that he has sacrificed many things, he can become last. On the other hand, even the person who believed in the Lord late can become first if he receives the grace of God with thanksgiving and is faithful in humility and faith.

This word is the warning given after the words of Peter that they had left everything and followed the Lord. Since a reward is given not according to the career or the merit of a person but according to the grace and the sovereignty of God, it means that one must not compare himself with other people or boast of his own sacrifice. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Stand as a little child before the will that God has established

< Matthew 19:1-15 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.' His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom

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it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.' Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there."

In the first part of Matthew Chapter 19 three scenes that look different from one another follow in order. First the Pharisees test Jesus over the matter of divorce. Next comes the word concerning living without marrying, and then people bring little children to Jesus. However, these scenes are directed toward one center. It is that a person must not try to change the will of God to fit his own circumstances and greed, and that he must lay down his own judgment like a little child and receive the word of the Lord.

The question of the Pharisees was not a question asked in order to learn the truth. They tested Jesus and tried to find a weak point in His word. They did not ask what the original will of God was, but asked within what range a man could put away his wife. Even while dealing with the Word of God, they looked first for a way out rather than for a way to obey. However, Jesus did not enter into their argument but went back to the beginning of creation. He made clear the original will, that God made man male and female and joined the two together so that they might become one flesh.

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The will of God comes before the convenience of man

A person often decides right and wrong on the standard of his present feelings and circumstances. Even while saying that a relationship is the grace of God when it is comfortable, when conflict arises he looks for a reason that suits his own heart and tries to break off the relationship. However, the Lord did not speak of marriage as a mere contract or as a union of convenience. He said that the two whom God has joined together have become one flesh. Therefore a husband and a wife cannot treat each other as a means for their own happiness. A spouse is not a person who exists in order to satisfy my desire, but a person whom God has entrusted to me so that we may live together and serve each other.

This word is not a word that forces one of the two to endure all suffering unconditionally. Violence, abuse, and threats to life must not be hidden, and the responsibility must not be turned on the victim. Sin must be clearly revealed, and the person who is in danger must be protected. The church also must not merely tell people to keep up appearances, but must help responsibly for the sake of truth, safety, and restoration. Nevertheless, what we must not miss is the fact that the hardness of man must not be justified. The heart that does not see its own fault but sees only the fault of the other as great, and that tries to keep its own pride rather than the Word, breaks the relationship down.

Jesus made clear that the reason Moses permitted a certificate of divorce was that the hearts of the people were hard. This does not mean that divorce was the original will in which God delights. It was a permission given in order to prevent greater evil and confusion in a reality that had already collapsed because of sin. The Pharisees held on to the permitted regulation

and tried to make their own conduct right, but Jesus saw the hard heart that lay behind that regulation. Even though a person can defend himself with the letter of the law, before God even the motive of his heart is revealed.

The same thing happens in our life of faith. Even after hearing the Word, a person first calculates how far he may go. Rather than putting away his own greed, he tries to reduce the Word to fit his own situation. However, faith is not a matter of fitting the Word of God to my thinking, but of laying down my thinking before the Word of God. If God says it is right, it is right, and if God says it is wrong, it is wrong. When this clear standard is established in the heart, we come out of our self-justification.

The conflicts of a home usually do not begin suddenly at one moment. When a person holds a small hurt for a long time, interprets the words of the other in his own way, and remembers only his own labor, the distance of the heart grows greater and greater. A problem that looked trivial at first becomes, when it is joined to pride, a fight that ends only when the other is defeated. What is needed at this time is not a stronger word by which to subdue the other, but the work of reflecting on one's own heart before God. We must examine whether hatred is mixed into the claim that I am right, and whether I am avoiding my own responsibility on the pretext of the fault of the other.

The word that God made the two become one flesh does not mean that they are to remove their differences. A husband and a wife may differ in character, in thinking, and in the environment in which they were raised. A home of faith is not a place where those differences are erased by force, but a place where they share and bear each other's burdens within the Word. They must not insist only on their own way, but must listen to the words of the other, must apologize first when they have done wrong, and

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must pray and consult together concerning important matters. The word one flesh gives not a right to possess the other but a responsibility to care for the other as for one's own body.

The church must also be wise when it deals with the problems of a home. It must not cover wounds with superficial advice, but must honestly listen to the words of both sides and confirm the facts. It must urge the one who has done wrong to turn, and must give to the one who has been wounded time for restoration and safe help. Above all, it must lead both of them with the gospel so that they may think first of the benefit of the soul rather than of their own face. The restoration of a relationship is not making the problem as though it had never happened, but admitting the truth and beginning a new step within the grace of the Lord.

The salvation that cures the hard heart

The deepest problem of a person is not his environment but the sin of his heart. Even though there are good systems and rules, if the heart is hard a person uses them for his own desire. Even though he knows the word to love, he hates; even though he knows the word to forgive, he holds a grudge; and even though he knows the word to be truthful, he lies for his own benefit. Therefore what a person needs is not the degree of correcting a few actions, but to be saved from the heart that has been hardened by sin.

God did not leave this salvation to the resolve or the self-discipline of man. Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this earth and, by receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, took upon Himself the sins of all the people of the world. And He paid the wages of those sins by shedding His blood and dying on the

cross, and He rose again from among the dead. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The water refers to the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood shows that He received on the cross the judgment of those sins. The Holy Spirit bears witness that all this salvation is the true salvation completed by the will and the righteousness of God.

When we believe this gospel, we come to put away the thought that I come to God because I have done well. Seeing the hatred, the lust, the pride, and the greed in my heart, I come to admit that I am a sinner who cannot make himself clean. At the same time I receive the word that Jesus received all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that He paid all the wages of those sins by the blood of the cross. The person who has received the remission of sin by this faith does not establish his own righteousness but exalts the righteousness of God.

Just because a person has believed the gospel does not mean that the disposition of his flesh becomes perfect overnight. Stubbornness still rises up, feelings are still hurt, and there are still times when he thinks first of his own benefit. However, the one who has been born again has a clear standard to return to. He returns not to his own feelings but to the Word, and he relies not on his own righteousness but on the righteousness that the Lord accomplished. When he has done wrong he admits it without attaching an excuse, and rather than trying to defeat the other he lowers his heart for the sake of the gospel. This is the road of living by faith and not simply following the hard heart.

Between husband and wife also, what is most needed is not the work of proving to the end which of them is more right. Both of them must stand before the Lord and examine their own hearts. Each must look back and ask whether he tried to listen to the words of the other, whether he put forward his own stubbornness

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as though it were the will of God, and whether he used the Word in order to condemn the weakness of the other. The one who has received the remission of sin grants forgiveness, and the one who has received mercy from the Lord embraces the weakness of the other. The gospel is not a weapon that rules a relationship but the word of life that makes both live.

If we believe the salvation of the Lord, our standard in dealing with the other person must also become different. The Lord did not save us because we were worthy of love; He showed mercy while we were in sin and weakness. If that is so, we too cannot say that we will love only after the other has become perfect. This does not mean that we are to cover sin as though it were not sin, but we must be on guard against the heart that, on seeing the weakness of a person, immediately tries to cast him away. Remembering the long-suffering we have received from the Lord, we must speak the truth and yet speak it in love, and must not let go of the possibility of restoration.

Moreover, we must not confuse forgiveness with the restoration of trust. Forgiveness, which lays down resentment in the heart, is an attitude that the one who believes the gospel must hold, but broken trust must be built up again through a true turning and responsible conduct. To remain defenseless before repeated falsehood and violence is not faith. A heart that deals clearly with sin and yet desires that one soul may turn and live within the gospel—this is the evangelical attitude that avoids both condemnation and neglect.

The place of life entrusted to each person

When the disciples heard the word concerning marriage, they said that it would be better not to marry. They felt that the

responsibility of marriage was heavy. Jesus said that not every person is able to accept that saying. Some people marry and establish a home, and some people live unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. What is important is not which condition is the holier, but whether one lives by faith in the place that God has entrusted to each person.

Marriage is not a condition of salvation, and neither is the single life a means of obtaining a higher righteousness. The one who is married must love and care for his spouse and his children and must serve the gospel in his home. The one who lives unmarried must not use that condition as a freedom for himself alone, but must use it preciously for the kingdom of the Lord. No one must boast of the form of his own life. What is important is to know the grace and the measure that God has given and to live in thanksgiving.

A person easily judges the condition of another. The one who is married sometimes regards the unmarried person as lacking, and the unmarried person sometimes makes light of the labor of the one who is married. However, the Lord knows the heart and the condition of each person. What we must do is not to measure the life of another person, but to seek the will of the Lord in the place now entrusted to me. If I have a home, I must build up that home within the gospel; and if my condition is to live alone, I must use that time and strength for the kingdom of God. If it is a life that lets the life and the grace received from the Lord flow out to another soul, then that place is precious.

Marriage and the home in particular are not a private area unrelated to the gospel. The person of faith must not set up his own desire as master even in his home. When both the husband and the wife believe the righteousness of the Lord and are led by the Word, they come to help each other instead of using each other's weakness. They also teach their children the gospel of

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the remission of sin rather than demanding of them only worldly success. It is not because a home is perfect that it is used by God; it is the home that seeks the grace of the Lord and returns to the Word whenever it falls short that serves the gospel.

Parents cannot teach faith to their children by words alone. It is also necessary to have them attend worship and to let them know biblical knowledge, but the parents must show the appearance of actually humbling themselves before the Word. They must apologize even to their children when they have done wrong, must choose prayer rather than complaint when difficulty arises, and must show a life that regards the soul as more precious than material things. Children look not at the perfection of their parents but at whom their parents rely on as they live. When the gospel is conveyed in the home both by word and by life, the young soul comes to know God not as one who is far away but as the One who saves and leads his own life.

The faith that receives like a little child

When people brought little children to Jesus, the disciples rebuked them. The disciples must have thought that there was a more important and urgent work for the ministry of Jesus. The little children could not deeply understand the Word, and they must have looked like beings without influence in society as well. However, Jesus said to permit the little children and not to forbid them from coming to Him. And He said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

A little child does not come to his parents putting forward the knowledge or the merit that he has. Neither does he claim that he has the ability to provide his own food and clothing. He only relies on his parents and receives what his parents give. The

faith that obtains the kingdom of heaven is like this. It is not putting forward one's own good deeds and religious career, but receiving with thanksgiving the salvation that God has given. To acknowledge the work that the Lord has accomplished as it is and to rely on it is faith.

Faith like that of a little child is not a blind attitude of following the words of men without any thought. It is the attitude of laying down one's own pride before the Word of God. When the Bible bears witness that Jesus removed our sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the blood of the cross, it is not placing one's own experience and feelings above that Word. It is receiving as more true than the feeling "I still feel like a sinner" the word that the Lord took my sin upon Himself and received the judgment.

A person thinks that the gospel is a deeper truth only when it is made difficult. He sometimes considers that he can receive the remission of sin only by long asceticism and by shedding many tears. If he believes that the sins of the day are washed away only when he offers many prayers of repentance every day, his heart always remains under sin. However, since Jesus took all sin upon Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid all the wages of those sins on the cross, what we must do is to believe that completed salvation. Faith is not an act of adding to the work of God but of receiving the work that God has finished.

Jesus laid His hands on the little children and blessed them. The Lord does not push away the person who is weak and has nothing to rely on. Rather, He receives the person who humbles himself and comes to the Lord. Therefore we must not block another soul from coming to the Lord. Neither must we despise a person because his knowledge is lacking or his life is weak. To the person who wants to hear the gospel of the water and the

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Spirit we must calmly preach the Word, and we must help him to believe the righteousness of God.

We must remember this word also when we deal with the little children in the church and with those who are hearing the gospel for the first time. If we urge a person because he is slow to understand, or disregard him because his question is simple, we become like the disciples, who blocked the road that led to the Lord. The gospel is not a word only for those who have much knowledge. Whoever admits his own sin and believes the salvation that Jesus accomplished becomes a child of God. Therefore the one who believed first must, rather than putting forward his authority, endure long and explain, and must help at the side of the weak person until he stands upon the Word.

We ourselves also easily lose the heart of a little child as time passes. When a career of faith is accumulated, we may think that we already know the Word, and we may close our hearts as soon as we hear a familiar expression. However, the grace of God must be received newly every day. The truth of the remission of sin does not change, but our heart in dealing with that grace can become proud. We must give thanks for the work the Lord has done, as when we first heard the gospel, and must give ear even to a small admonition of the Word. The more we know, the lower we must become, and the more we have received, the more we must serve.

The first part of Matthew Chapter 19 urges us to return to the original will of God. In our relationships we must think of the will of God before our own convenience; in the place of our life we must not compare ourselves with others but must bear the mission entrusted to us; and before salvation we must rely on the Lord like little children. The beginning of all this lies not in defending a hardened heart but in becoming low before the Word of God.

By our own strength alone we cannot overcome the hardness of our heart. However, if we believe the salvation that Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, by the blood of the cross, and by the resurrection, we receive the remission of sin and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit makes us believe the Word of God in our hearts, and helps us to put away our own stubbornness and to follow the will of the Lord. We must remember this grace every day. We must become people of faith who regard as precious what God has established, who receive the Word like little children, and who open the road so that others also may come to the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Do not join hands with the harlot, but become one who joins hands with God alone

< Matthew 19:16-26 >

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and

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said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Today's word is a word that I often preached in the past. I have preached many sermons on this theme, *"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16).* A certain young man came to Jesus and asked in this way. Then *"So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Matthew 19:17).*

When he asked again which commandments, Jesus said, *"Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:18–19).* Here Jesus did not speak of the first through the fourth commandments, which concern God, but spoke only of the commandments concerning people.

Then *"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?'" (Matthew 19:20).* That young man was full of his own righteousness. Next it is written, *"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:21–22).*

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The one who has sin cannot enter the kingdom of heaven

It is written, *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:23)*. Does this mean, then, that none of the rich people of this world can enter the kingdom of heaven? It is said that in our country as well, a certain founder who had raised up a great enterprise, lying on his sickbed and near to death, asked a clergyman who had come to visit him what this word means, since the Bible says that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. That person did not know, and it is said that he answered that he would study and come back to answer later, and then spoke of something quite beside the point.

Jesus said, *"And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24)*. It is difficult for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, but even that is easier than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is the word that it is impossible for man.

What did He speak of? It is that a person was born with sin from his mother's womb, and that unless he casts away what he possesses he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. What, then, is it that you and I must cast away?

If we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we go to the kingdom of heaven. That is the right answer. But is it accomplished by that alone? People may think that they go to the kingdom of heaven if only they believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is a right saying and yet it is not. It is that even though a person believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is something he must cast away.

Cast away the teaching of the harlot

What, then, must we cast away? Let us look at Revelation 17:1. *"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters'" (Revelation 17:1).* It speaks concerning a harlot. We commonly call a woman who has committed adultery a harlot. What, then, is the harlot of which Revelation chapters 17 and 18 speak?

It is written, *"with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2),* and *"The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Revelation 17:4–5).*

It says that the harlot sat on many waters. This speaks of religion. Purple clothing is the clothing of a king. Those who are in high positions chiefly wear purple clothing. The harlot spoken of here refers to the greatest religion, the most universal religion.

What is it to be most universal? It is to say that there is salvation in the religion you believe and there is salvation in the religion I believe, and so let us all unite. That is the most universal religion. Therefore when we watch a broadcast, pastors and priests and monks and the leaders of various religions all gather together. They acknowledge one another. They say that there is salvation in your religion and there is salvation in my religion, and so all our religions are one. That is what is called the harlot.

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Just as a married woman who lives together with another woman's husband is called a harlot, so to receive all the religions of others is spiritually called a harlot. From of old such a company has played the king, and it is so even now. In the Middle Ages, where was it that killed the most people and abused the most people? And yet now it plays the king among all the religions of the whole world. The leaders of many countries, even while not believing that religion, must show courtesy before it. This is because otherwise there is no political advantage.

This is what you and I must cast away. It is the acknowledging of the religions of the world, and the holding just as they are of the doctrines that men have produced in their councils. The person who receives and believes such doctrines is a descendant of the harlot.

Beware of the faith of the harlot, which straddles both sides

This is what I meant when I said that a person obtains salvation if he believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and yet said that it is not so. He has believed what he learned in a religion of the world and the doctrine he heard in the past; he has not believed the Word of God. The person who has learned a doctrine and holds it just as it is within himself, and lays the gospel of the water and the Spirit on top of it, and says that he has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is not saved. It is that he has much that he possesses. That is to say, he is a rich man.

A person who has much asks what he must do in order to obtain eternal life. When he is told to keep the commandments

concerning people, he says that he has already kept them all. Then, when he is told to sell his property and share it with the poor, he says that this is difficult. It is that he merely wants to believe a religion, and that he cannot believe to the point of giving up what is his own.

Jesus was trying to give salvation to that young man. Jesus Christ alone is our Savior. He is our true Savior, who received the baptism from John and so received our sins passed on to Him and took them upon Himself, and bearing those sins shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose again from death and delivered us from judgment.

However, the harlot, who says that this religion is right and that religion is right and that all are right, is one who opposes Jesus Christ. God said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. He said not to have other gods but to serve God alone; so if a person acknowledges other religions and receives all the doctrines of other religions into his heart and says that they are right, what is that but being rich spiritually?

If, even while believing in Jesus, we hold just as they are the things that were pleasant when we believed another religion in the past, and hold all the morality and ethics made by the thinking of men, and hold all the doctrine that one receives the remission of sin by offering prayers of repentance, and hold the faith that there is probably salvation in this religion and in that religion, then even though we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, it is in vain. It is impossible.

This is what the Lord spoke of. It is not merely a word to the degree that one cannot keep the Law. If we truly believe God, we must acknowledge only God and His Word and must say that all the rest is not so. If a person, while believing his own religion, says that our religion is right and your religion is also right, that what Jesus did is right and what our founder says is also right,

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then in the sight of God that is a harlot. To straddle here and there and to live connecting oneself to anything at all is what is called a harlot.

After the last tribulation God comes again to this earth in order to judge Satan the devil and the harlot. He comes in order to judge those who do not receive that Jesus alone is the Savior and who say that this religion is right and that religion is right. We must know that fact.

People say that what is good is good, that your religion is right and my religion is right, and ask why we argue so sharply. We can treat our neighbors generously, have compassion on them, acknowledge them as human beings, and look after them. However, if we acknowledge the religion that they believe, you and I become a harlot before God. If that happens, we cannot receive love from God and cannot receive salvation.

There is nothing other than the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The Christianity of the whole world says that it believes in Jesus and is devoted. When we look at their faith, the thought may arise that they lack only one point and that the rest is similar, and that it would be enough to acknowledge just this much. However, may we acknowledge them? Can a person who had such faith and came into the church be said to be saved if he only acknowledges the gospel of the water and the Spirit?

If that happens, the Holy Spirit does not work. Within the heart of such a person the thoughts of the flesh still boil up, and the desires of the world and every filthy thing remain just as they were. Will the Lord be pleased? Will such a person live the life of a servant as the Lord is pleased? Will he do whatever work he

does as though serving the Lord? He merely does it as it comes. The Lord is not pleased.

That is why those people do not receive salvation. When we preach the gospel to them and give them books, they say that this is right, and yet they cannot cast away what is their own. Because they do not cast it away, they do not receive the remission of sin.

Our Lord says that He has removed sin, but they think that even though they believe in Jesus, sin still remains and that only the sins committed from time to time are remitted. To believe that sin remains and that only the sins committed from time to time are remitted, and to be told that all sin has been remitted once and for all so that you have no sin, are completely different. That I have removed your sin and therefore you have no sin, and that sin still remains and therefore it must be remitted again each time it is committed, are different words. The latter claim means that one must be remitted again each time he commits sin in the future, which means that there is not a single day on which he is without sin.

Therefore the religions of this world, even while saying that they believe in Jesus, do not obtain salvation. It is because they do not cast away what they possess. It is so also concerning Mary. Mary is a person exactly like us. Just as we inherited sin through our parents, Mary also was born with sin in the same way, and God only used her body. She gave birth to Jesus and afterward gave birth to other children as well. How, then, can she become the queen of heaven? Because they are not born again, they piece it together with the thoughts of the flesh.

Unless they cast away the doctrinal faith that they believe, then even though they believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they believe the two together, and so they become a harlot. Such a person can never obtain salvation. If within our own

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church also there is a person who, while knowing what was wrong in what he learned in the past, holds it just as it is and believes by laying the gospel of the water and the Spirit on top of it, that is not salvation. The Holy Spirit cannot work in that heart. Such a person, even when a difficult matter comes upon him, cannot solve that problem by faith. This is because God is not his own God.

If a person is bound to the harlot, he must come out from there. He must cast it away. Our God is the Triune God, and He alone is God. Mary is not God, and even if a person believes a theory of repentance, a theory of sanctification, or a theory of justification made by men, that does not become salvation. The salvation in which Jesus, who became our Savior, came to this earth and received the baptism from John the Baptist and so received our sins passed on to Him, and was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death and saved us—that is the true salvation. There is nothing other than that.

The Lord comes to us only when we have completely cast it away

Therefore Peter spoke in this way. *"Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life'"*

(Matthew 19:27–29).

The person who has lost nothing has nothing to gain before the Lord. The person who has lost nothing of his own has nothing to gain. We must know that. Do you say that a certain person, even though he is not born again, is truly excellent and treats you well? Do you say that a certain person believes our gospel too, and seems to be a decent person, and seems to have much love? Jesus is not pleased with regarding things in such a vague way.

If we are to believe in Jesus, we must believe very clearly, just as it is in the Word. Only then is there something we lose before Jesus and something we receive. If we believe in a muddled way, we live a religious life and then go to hell. We become a harlot, and after serving the harlot as a slave we go to hell. Who is it that enjoys all the riches and the glory of the world? The way they live is luxurious.

Jesus said, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).* It is only the outer shell that looks splendid and holy. I am not trying to slander the religion of others. I am speaking of it because the harlot is recorded in the Bible.

Among those who believe other religions also, how many are there who live more uprightly than we do? How many are there who are respected by people? Do you think that the people of the world will live worse than those who have been born again of water and the Spirit? There are many who live more holily and who love their neighbors more. However, what sort of god is the god that they believe? It is a god that opposes God.

A certain religion tells a person to become a god himself. So they discipline themselves in the way. They also claim

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transmigration, saying that if a person is born once and lives wickedly he is born as an animal after he dies, and that if he lives well in that lifetime he is born again as a human being in the next lifetime. That is how a caste system arose in a certain country. It is that if one lives well in this life, he is born in a higher station in the next life. In the end it is a striving to become a god oneself, and so it is not believing in God.

Here, when the rich young man asked what good thing he must do, Jesus said that there is only One who is good. It is the word: Who is good besides God? Why do you call Me good? Are you not looking at Me as a man? God alone is the One who is good. God does not acknowledge anything else besides Himself. Unless a person casts away the religion that those gods have joined together to make, and what he learned in that religion, he does not receive salvation.

Did you think that the prayer of repentance and the theory of justification that you learned in the past are somewhat lacking? They are not merely lacking; they are a faith that has conspired with the harlot. They must be completely cast away. They must be swept out cleanly, as when one cleans a house. Even the feelings that were pleasant within it must all be swept out. When that is done, your heart becomes clean, and you believe the Lord, who came to us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive salvation, and keep that Word in your heart and come to live the life of preaching the gospel that the Lord desires.

Come to your senses, keep watch, and be prepared

I do not know how it is that you and I have met the Lord in this way. The world is going to ruin. Then do you ask why we build houses and prepare? Until the Antichrist appears, people

must still live longer. Even if we live only one month more, we must have all that is needed. Even in order to sleep we must have a pillow, and a mattress, and something to cover ourselves with. Even though the Lord is coming quickly, what must be prepared must be prepared.

At the least, we must not become people who go to borrow from others because we have nothing to eat. We should rather lend than borrow. Even though we hand out booklets to those who are not born again and spend material things on them, we must not try to get something to eat from them.

Have you experienced hunger? When I was young I experienced hunger again and again. It was not long after the war had passed, and so some houses ate and some houses could not eat. Smoke rose from the chimney of one house, and from another house no smoke rose even when mealtime came. My parents always taught us at the table. They told us not to show that we had nothing, not to go to another person's house at mealtime, and not even to say that we had nothing.

I think it was when I was about five or six years old, and the memory of that time is vivid. I had eaten a little breakfast, and at noon there was nothing to eat, and when evening came, smoke rose from the chimneys of the whole neighborhood and the smell of food came, but in our house there was nothing. My mother did not come, and I went this far down the alley of the neighborhood and came back that far. And then, in the rubbish bin of a certain house, a few strands of noodles were hanging.

When I saw them I do not know how much I wanted to eat them. I passed by with my eyes closed, and looked again as I came, and looked again as I passed by, about fifteen times. Enduring and enduring, saying, Shall I eat them or not, I must not eat them, they are dirty, it is shameful, and looking to see whether anyone was watching or not, without knowing it I

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turned my face away, stretched out my hand, took a strand of noodles, put it in my mouth, and passed on. It went down without even time to chew it.

From then on I could not bear the shame that came over me. So, while waiting for my mother, I simply went into the house. I was so ashamed. Do you know how great a suffering the suffering of not being able to eat is? When the end of the world draws near, such things will become more numerous. Even now there are people who take their own lives out of shame.

Therefore we must not steal and must not rob, but must faithfully pay our taxes and work, so that we too may eat what we are to eat and may serve God, and we must preach this gospel, that our Lord, who came with the water and the Spirit, alone is the true Savior and the true God. We must live such a life and so finish it.

With whom does the Antichrist conspire? He conspires with the harlot. It is written, *"who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4)*. The powerful of the world, the Antichrist, and religion unite and kill all who do not listen to their word. That is the massacre and the martyrdom that occur at the time of the last great tribulation. Even if we die at that time, if we die honorably for the glory of God, there is not the least lack. God raises us up again and repays us, and takes us to the eternal kingdom of heaven and makes us live forever.

Now the ice of the South Pole is melting. It is said that when the ice melts and becomes water, the volcanoes under the sea erupt. Many people think that volcanoes erupt only on land, but when they erupt under the sea, hot lava rises up and heats the seawater and kills all the living things of the sea. Then, it is said, the seawater turns red. The disaster of the waters becoming red

that appears in Revelation is that very disaster. Such a thing will come before long.

And yet people do not even blink. They say that if it comes, it comes, and that it is enough if only they themselves live well now. Will it really be so? Even if the seawater rots and overflows, will we be able to eat well and live well? Even if the Antichrist kills us and the harlot kills us, will they survive? It is said that they also die. Just as He said, *"All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll" (Isaiah 34:4)*. God says that He will destroy this earth and roll it up as one rolls up a scroll, and will make a new heaven and a new earth, and will make us live there.

Now is not the time to live a life of faith knowing things only roughly. Even though we know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must know it properly and be awake. We must come to our senses. If a person has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet holds the heart and the faith that the religions of the world are also all right in their own way, he is cast away on the last day. Who would receive one who takes the hand of the harlot and shares love with the harlot? God loves, blesses, protects, and leads the person who can say that what is not so is not so, and makes him live a new life.

We must not join hands with them. While we live on this earth we must love our neighbors and must not do evil to them but do good, and if there is something to help them with we must help, and we must become people who convey this gospel to those who have not been saved, by writing, by audio, and by electronic books. We must become those who share out rather than those who receive. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

God, who accomplished the salvation that was impossible for man

< Matthew 19:16-30 >

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

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Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

A young man came to Jesus and asked what good thing he must do in order to obtain eternal life. He wanted eternal life and had an interest in the commandments as well. Outwardly he looks like an earnest and excellent seeker. However, in his question there was an important error. He did not think of eternal life as the grace that God gives, but thought that he could obtain it as the reward for the good work that he had done. He believed that if he made an effort he could reach the life of God.

Jesus did not immediately praise his zeal. Saying that there is only One who is good, He first made clear that the standard of goodness lies not in man but in God. A person compares himself with others and considers himself fairly good. He prides himself that he has not committed a great crime, that he has honored his parents, and that he has faithfully lived a religious life as well. However, when he stands before the perfect goodness of God, there is no one who can boast of his own conduct.

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The young man who did not know his own true self

When Jesus told him to keep the commandments, the young man asked which commandments. When the Lord spoke of the commandments concerning people, he answered that he had kept all these things. He went further and asked what he still lacked. This answer shows that he did not know his own heart. That a person has not murdered in his conduct does not mean that there is no hatred in his heart, and that he has not committed open adultery does not mean that there is no lust in his heart. Even though he has not stolen the goods of another, there is greed in his heart; and even though he has not told a great lie with his mouth, he hides the truth for his own benefit.

The Law was not given in order to let a person have the assurance that he is righteous of himself. Rather, it makes him realize his own sin before the Word of God. The person who truly knows the commandments cannot say, “I have kept them all.” Seeing the evil thoughts and the greed that rise up ceaselessly in his heart, he comes to seek the mercy of God. However, this young man made the Law a tool for establishing his own righteousness. This was because he did not look at his inside with the mirror of the Word but looked only at the life that appeared outwardly.

Even today many people ask the same question. They ask what more they must do in order to be saved, and how much they must pray and serve in order to be acknowledged by God. They think that they can obtain eternal life if they attend church for a long time, make offerings, and live morally. However, good conduct is the fruit that the one who has been saved bears in thanksgiving; it is not the price that buys the remission of sin. A sinner cannot remove the judgment of God by his own conduct. He can neither remove the sin he has already committed nor

prevent the sin he will commit.

The Lord revealed what the hidden master of the young man was. When He told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor and to follow Him, the young man went away sorrowful. With his mouth he had said that he had kept all the commandments, but in reality he loved wealth more than God. This is not the word that the fact of having much wealth is in itself a sin. The problem lay in the fact that that wealth had become the master of his heart and had come before the word of the Lord. When the road of following the Lord and the road of keeping his own possessions parted, he chose his own possessions.

Lay down the richness of the heart

The word of Jesus that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven does not refer merely to the amount of one's property. Not only the person who has much wealth but also the person who relies on his own righteousness, ability, and judgment is a person who is rich in heart. The heart that thinks, "I believe better than other people. I have kept the commandments well. I can take responsibility for my own life even without the help of God," is a rich heart. Even when such a person hears the gospel, he does not receive it as the salvation that he urgently needs.

The person who is poor in heart admits that he can do nothing before God. He knows that he cannot wash away his sin by himself, that he cannot deliver himself from death and judgment, and that he cannot produce the qualification to enter the kingdom of God. Therefore he seeks the help of God. He admits the fact that without the salvation the Lord accomplished he can only

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perish, and he receives with thanksgiving the word of life that God has given.

We need the help of God in every moment of our living as well. We cannot keep our health, our work, our home, and the ministry of the church by our ability alone. But above all we need the help of God for the remission of sin and for eternal life. Even though a person has many things of the world, if there is sin in his heart he cannot escape the judgment after death. On the other hand, even though he has little in the world, if he has obtained the remission of sin and eternal life that the Lord has given, he is the person who has received the greatest blessing. Therefore the person of faith does not boast of his possessions but acknowledges that every good thing has come from God.

That the Lord told the young man to give up his possessions was not the establishing of a new law that everyone must literally dispose of all his property in order to be saved. The Lord revealed the idol that was holding the heart of that person. Each person may have something that he relies on more than the Lord. It may be wealth, or it may be honor, family, knowledge, or his own plans. If a person tries to follow the Lord as well while holding on to that, he comes to serve two masters. Faith is not placing the Lord as one among many choices, but acknowledging the Lord as the only Master of life and salvation.

The richness of the heart is not well revealed before a person meets difficulty. When matters go as one wishes, when one is healthy and has material ease, anyone can say that he gives thanks to God. However, when plans are blocked and a matter arises that one cannot solve by his own strength, what he has been relying on appears. The person who is rich in heart complains rather than asking God, and holds on to his own calculation rather than to the Word. The person who is poor in heart is not ashamed of his lack but seeks help from God, and

waits for the road that the Lord opens.

To seek the help of God is not an attitude of avoiding responsibility. The person of faith faithfully does what he must do, and yet acknowledges that the sovereignty over the result belongs to God. He does not make his own wisdom absolute but listens to the admonition of the church, and after praying he takes one step by faith. Even when a matter has gone well, he does not boast of his own ability but confesses that God helped. When there is such a heart, even though a person possesses material things he does not become a slave of material things, and even in a lacking condition he does not lose heart.

This principle is the same in the life that follows the remission of sin. A person cannot hold the desires of the flesh as the goal of his life and at the same time completely follow the will of the Lord. If he rejoices only when his own plan is accomplished and complains against the Lord when it goes awry, then he himself is still standing at the center. The one who has been born again must practice laying down his own desire before the will of the Lord. He must make the preaching of the gospel, in which the Lord delights, the precious purpose of his own life, and must use his time, his material things, and his talents for that work.

The complete salvation that God accomplished

When the disciples heard the word that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, they were greatly astonished. And they asked who then could be saved. Jesus answered that with men it is impossible but with God all things are possible. This word is the center of the text. Salvation is not a work that man accomplishes

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by his own good conduct and resolve, but a work that God Himself accomplishes for him.

The reason it is impossible for man is that a sinner cannot move his own sin to another place, and neither can he pay the whole wages of that sin and live. However, God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. By receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of mankind. And bearing the sin of the world He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received all the judgment of sin. After three days He rose again and showed that He is the Son of God and our complete Savior.

The baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist is not merely a ceremony to show an example of humility. It is the work of salvation in which He took upon Himself the sins of sinners by the method that God had appointed. The blood of the cross is not blood shed without having taken sin upon Himself; it is the judgment in which He paid the wages of the sin of the world that He had received passed on to Him by that baptism. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this work of the water and the blood is the true salvation that accomplished the righteousness of God. Therefore the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes to believe that his sin has been passed on to the Lord and that the wages of that sin have been completely paid.

Before this gospel there is nothing for us to add. The prayer of repentance that we offer every day does not complete the salvation of Jesus. When we realize a sin we must admit the fault and turn from it, but sin is not washed away by the merit of that prayer. Jesus took sin upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and it has already been removed by His being judged on the cross. We receive the remission of sin by believing this fact. Faith is not a work of producing a

special feeling in the heart, but of acknowledging as right and relying on the word that God has spoken.

The conscience of a person is sometimes made comfortable for a while by doing many good deeds and offering many prayers of repentance. However, by that alone one cannot answer how his sin has actually been dealt with before God. That the feeling has subsided does not mean that sin has been removed, and that one has shed many tears does not mean that judgment has ended. True peace does not come from the assurance that my devotion is sufficient, but from the word that Jesus took all sin upon Himself and received all the judgment. Therefore the person who believes the gospel relies on the unchanging salvation of God rather than on the change of his own heart.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make us dissolute. It is not a gospel that teaches that since all sin has been removed one may live as he pleases. Rather, because it makes us know what price the Lord paid in order to remove our sin, it makes us hate sin and serve righteousness. We do not do good in order to be saved; we do good because we are thankful for the grace by which we have already been saved. Even when we fail we do not despair as though we had become sinners again, but receive the rebuke of the Word, turn from the fault, and follow the will of the Lord.

The young man asked what he himself must do, but the gospel tells us what God has done for us. The young man put forward his own goodness, but the gospel bears witness that God alone is good and that this good God has saved the sinner. The young man could not let go of his own possessions and went away sorrowful, but the person who is poor in heart casts away his own righteousness and receives the righteousness that the Lord gives. It is precisely here that the religion of works and the faith of the gospel part from each other.

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The road of leaving everything and following the Lord

Peter said that the disciples had left everything and followed the Lord, and asked what they would obtain. In fact the disciples left their boats, their nets, and their familiar life behind and followed Jesus. The Lord did not regard their labor lightly. He spoke of the glory they would receive when the world is made new, and promised that everyone who has left houses or family or lands for the sake of the name of the Lord would receive many times as much and would inherit eternal life.

To leave here does not mean to hate one's family or to throw away one's responsibility carelessly. There may be things that one inevitably loses because of pressure that opposes the gospel, and there are also times when one must yield his own benefit for the work of the Lord. However, what must be cast away first of all is one's own stubbornness, pride, and wrong thinking, rather than visible property. Holding on to these, a person cannot follow the word of the Lord. The person who insists that his own thinking is always right cannot receive the guidance of the church, and in the end he goes his own way.

To deny oneself does not mean to remove one's personality and judgment either. It means not making one's own thinking, which collides with the Word of God, the final standard. We must think, consult, and choose responsibly, but when a fault is revealed through the Word we must be able to change direction. Even though the admonition of the church is not to our own liking, we must examine whether it is for the benefit of the gospel and of souls, and must receive it. The person who denies himself is not a person without strength, but a person who knows how to govern his own stubbornness for the sake of the will of God.

To follow the Lord does not mean that our flesh disappears or that individual responsibility is disregarded. It is to make the will in which the Lord delights the priority of our life. Even while holding an occupation and caring for a home, we do not do all these things for our own desire alone, but receive them as a life for serving the gospel. When material things come, rather than storing them up for our own boasting, we use them for the preaching of the gospel and for helping our neighbors. When we have talents, rather than seeking to be acknowledged by people, we offer them to the work of making souls live. To live according to this new purpose that the Lord has given is the life of faith.

That we lay down something for the Lord is not our own righteousness either. It is possible because the Lord first gave up everything for us. Jesus gave up the glory of heaven and came to this earth, received the baptism from John the Baptist, and gave up even His life on the cross. Because we are people who have received the remission of sin and eternal life by that love, we too obtain the strength to bear loss for the will of the Lord. If we forget the grace we have received, even a small sacrifice looks great; but if we remember the salvation we have received, serving the Lord becomes thanksgiving.

The Lord said that the one who is first can become last and the one who is last can become first. The fact that one received the remission of sin early, or the career of having worked long in the church, cannot take the place of the present state of one's faith. If a person who at first followed the Lord with thanksgiving puts forward his own merit as the years pass, he can become one who is last. On the other hand, even a person who believed the gospel late can become one who is first if he knows the grace of God deeply and serves the Lord with all his heart. God looks not at the outward order of men but at whom

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that heart now loves and follows.

If the one who is first is not to become last, he must continue to remember the grace he has received. He must not forget the fact that it was not I who found the gospel but God who let me hear the Word, and that it was not I who took hold of the Lord but the Lord who first sought me and saved me. The greater the work entrusted to him in the church becomes, the more humbly he must be united with his brothers and sisters, and the more he must regard even a small work as precious. On the other hand, the one who came late must not be impatient to be acknowledged by people, but need only be faithful in the place the Lord has entrusted to him. The order of the kingdom of God is not decided by worldly career and honor.

Therefore we must not rely on the labor of the past but must make our hearts poor before the Lord today as well. We must not think, "I have done this much, and so it is enough," but must admit that without the help of God we can do nothing. We must ask God for the strength to bear the work the Lord has entrusted to us, must ask for the wisdom to keep the gospel rightly, and must ask for the faith to overcome our own greed. The person who relies on God looks weak, but in reality he is the safest person, within the power of God.

The latter part of Matthew Chapter 19 shows us two clear roads. One is the road of relying on one's own good conduct and possessions and then going away from the Lord sorrowful, and the other is the road of casting away one's own righteousness, believing the salvation that God accomplished, and following the Lord. It is impossible to obtain eternal life by the conduct of man. However, God completed salvation by the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, by the blood of the cross, and by the resurrection. To the person who believes this gospel He has given the remission of sin and eternal life without price.

We must examine who the master of our heart is, rather than whether our wealth is much or little. If our own righteousness and desire are the master, we can only draw back sorrowful before the word of the Lord. However, if the Lord is the Master, we entrust to Him both what we have and what we lack. Let us believe in God, who accomplished the salvation that was impossible for man, let us rely on that grace, and let us live for the gospel of life in which the Lord delights. The Lord knows our need and helps us on this earth as well, and He will make us fully enjoy eternal life and glory in the time to come. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Those who are rich in heart cannot follow the Lord

< Matthew 19:23-30 >

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

The situation of the world is truly precarious. It would be well if things went well, but there are matters in which everything that has been built up collapses if things go wrong even once. Let us leave such matters to the nation, and our work

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is to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in our own place, to send out many books, and to do our work well.

Although a person loves another person, he cannot take responsibility for him. Even though the heart is earnest, it is man who cannot do it. That is why we believe in God. Our heart that wants to go to the kingdom of heaven is earnest, but by our own strength we cannot go. That is why we believe in God and believe in Jesus Christ, and it is by faith that we go.

Man is that much without ability. If so, we must rely on God and believe in Him. What is so great about man? The words of a person are bound to be inflated when he boasts of himself. The only One who is truly worthy to be believed is Jesus, and when we believe in Jesus the only document worthy to be believed is the Word of the Bible.

Jesus Christ is the Creator

Let us look at the word we read today. "*Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:23)*. Here, expressions such as "He said", "it is difficult", and "He will do so" are rendered in the Korean Bible in an elevated and highly respectful style. This highest level of respectful language is used because Jesus is God, not merely a man.

Because He is not a man but the Creator and the Savior, and because however much we exalt Him with words of respect we cannot exalt Him fully, He was expressed in the highest words. However, in some translations these days, the highest honorific forms are removed and the words are rendered as they would be for an ordinary man. God put on the flesh of a man and came to this earth as our Savior, and His name was called Jesus, but we

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cannot call Him carelessly in a lowered manner. The Bible must not be rendered like a novel.

Jesus is not one among many sages. Even though He put on the flesh of a man and came to this earth, look at the work He did and the words He spoke. It is written, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3).* He is the One who made this universe, and He is the One who came for a time as a man in order to save us. The One who is so high that however much we exalt Him we cannot exalt Him fully—He is Jesus Christ.

"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"

"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23). This word is just as it is. Does it mean, then, that one must sell all his property? When a person has much material wealth, his heart becomes rich. He becomes rich in heart. When a person is poor, his heart becomes low. When the heart becomes rich, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This is because he cannot believe.

A person who sets his heart much on the material things of this world, a person whose heart becomes elated and who puts on airs when he has a little money, cannot believe in Jesus. Therefore Jesus spoke again. *"And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).* It is that it would rather be better for a camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle. A camel might perhaps go through, but the person who is rich in heart can never enter.

Not long ago I went to receive a vaccination and saw many

children. One mother had come with two boys, and beside her an elderly person had come with a little girl. Looking at the children and at the grown people, the thought came to me that a person grows up like this and changes like this. However, whether a person is old or a little child, in fact they are one. Whether it is the picture taken at the first birthday or the appearance at sixty, it does not depart greatly from that.

The thought came to me that life comes like this and goes like this, and that the appearance is the same appearance and does not change. However much money a person has and however much he seems to have to put forward, he does not depart greatly from what he inherited from his parents. He is just as he was when he was young; he has only grown older and has gone through more of the storms of the world—he is simply a man.

It is coming once and going once, and yet because a person relies too much on the money of this earth and takes such great pride in what he has, he does not try to believe in Jesus. He does not submit before Jesus. He makes light of One who is so high. It is the word that such a person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Let us examine whether our heart is high or low

They asked, *"When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'" (Matthew 19:25).* Then *"But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:26).* However much a person strives, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by himself. But God does it.

When all people had become sinners, God Himself put on

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the flesh of a man, came to this earth, and established the plan to save man. Because it was so pitiful that we should go to hell, He received the baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River and so received the sins of mankind passed on to Him once and for all, and bearing the sin of the world He went and was nailed to the cross, and saying, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30).* He shed His blood and died, and He entered the tomb and rose again from death and ascended into heaven.

Therefore He is the God who gives salvation to anyone who only believes that Jesus Christ has saved me, that He has saved me from sin. This is what He meant by saying that with men it is impossible but with God it is possible. Now we must believe. It is by faith that we go. God had such great pity on you and me that He showed us mercy.

It is not because we had a qualification that we obtained salvation. It is written, *"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Romans 9:13).* The one who is chosen is a weak and lacking person like Jacob. A person who hunts well and has much strength of his own, like Esau, considers that he can live well even without God. The person who says that he has ability and that he is full of confidence does not receive the salvation that God has given. Therefore he does not receive salvation and does not obtain grace.

Therefore we must examine well whether our heart is high or low. We must quietly look back upon ourselves alone. We must ask who I am, what sort of person I am, what my heart is now relying on, and whether I rely on God or on material things. We must become those who believe in God and rely on Him.

Blessed is the one who has lost for the sake of the Lord

When Peter had heard all this word, there arose in him something he wanted to say. *"See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27).* It is that they met Jesus and cast away their nets and cast away their parents and their relatives and followed the Lord, and so what would they obtain?

Jesus spoke. *"So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'" (Matthew 19:28).* The Son of Man is the name by which He who came clothed in the flesh of a man, that is, Jesus, calls Himself. Because the Creator put on the flesh of a man and came to this earth, He is called the Son of Man.

At the last, Jesus Christ sits on the throne of glory and judges those who believe and those who do not believe. Who is the judge of the kingdom of heaven and of hell? It is Jesus. Jesus created the universe, Jesus also judges, and Jesus also accomplished our salvation. We obtain salvation by faith.

He said that the world would be made new. This world will not be maintained as it is. The population increases, and the strife over food will become more severe. However, it is written, *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea" (Revelation 21:1).* We must look with faith to the work that God will do. Not on this earth but in a new heaven and a new earth, we live newly and forever as new creatures.

It is written, *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for*

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My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29). The word of the Lord is true. The person who has lost much of the things of this world because of the Lord is a blessed person. On the contrary, the person who tries to take more by using the Lord as a pretext is a person who has nothing to do with faith.

I also lost everything, but you became my brothers and my family, and I also became your family. He said that one would receive many times as much, and truly I have received without measure. And He said that one would inherit eternal life. To inherit means to hand down. The One who originally lives forever is God, and it is the word that God, living forever, gives eternal life to us as well. We come to receive and enjoy it. It is to live forever in a new heaven and a new earth.

We come and go like sojourners in order to meet Jesus

Our captain is the King of that kingdom. He is the King of kings, and there is no one who can oppose Jesus. Such a One placed Himself for you and me in a weak position like ours for thirty-three years of His life. In that way He saved us.

To sum up this word, it is that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. However much of the things of the world a person has, he leaves them all behind and goes. That we buy land and prepare this and that is in the end for the sake of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and because you and I must have a place to stay. There is nothing else besides that. We live because of Jesus, and we are those who will inherit eternal life because of Jesus.

It is coming once and going, and we come and go on this

earth in order to know the truth. We come and go on this earth for a while in order to meet Jesus. In order to meet Him, to hear and believe His word, to receive the remission of sin and obtain eternal life, and to go and live in a new heaven and a new earth, a new world, we come and go on this earth like passing sojourners. The Bible also says concerning the people of faith that they *were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13).*

I give thanks that He met us, who are such as this. I give thanks that He made us inherit eternal life, and I give thanks that He repays us many times over. It is enough to live within the Lord while we live and then to go. These days we are diligently sending out books, and that we do such a work by the blessing of God even in the midst of a world so difficult is truly a great thing.

Before the age comes in which the gospel cannot be preached, let us diligently prepare and get the work done. That is what we must do and what those who go before must do. I am happy. Even though my body is not well, I am happy. Since in any case we are born, grow old, become sick, and die, I am happy that there is work to do today as well. If there is no work to do, one is rather unhappy. You also must not regard yourselves as unhappy because there is much work, but must regard yourselves as happy because there is work to do. Let us live well. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

We are those who absolutely need the help of God

< Matthew 19:23-30 >

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Perhaps because of the weather, these days I find things very hard. The air is so, and the hearts of people are so, and in the

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politics and the economy of the whole world also there seems to be nothing good. Even so, for us who serve this gospel within the Lord it is good, because every day the gospel is preached and books are translated and go out. Let us not stop here but bear the work entrusted to us more faithfully, and let us ask the Lord for help, so that even though the world becomes more difficult in the days to come, we may live well by faith, may preach the gospel much, and may do the work in which the Lord delights.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle

Today we read Matthew 19:23 through 30. I have not preached this word for a long time, but I remember preaching it at a certain funeral service in the past. Let us read it together. *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:23–26).*

When Jesus spoke to His disciples, the disciples were greatly astonished. The old word used here means a camel, and the eye of a needle means the small hole of a needle through which thread is passed. A young person threads it well, but an old person does not thread it well. It is that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through that needle's eye. That is to say, it is impossible.

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What sort of rich man cannot go to the kingdom of heaven?

What does this word mean? What sort of rich man does He speak of? The person who is rich in heart cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He is the person who says, I live well even without God, I am so happy living in this world, I have no need of God, I do not even want to pray to God, I can solve everything by my own strength. The person for whom it is good to live enjoying himself, for whom committing sin is pleasant, and for whom living in this world is so happy—such a person is the one who is rich in heart.

The person who has no need of God is rich in heart. Because his heart is rich, he says that he has no need to believe in Jesus and no need to receive the remission of sin by believing in Jesus. Will such a person enter the kingdom of heaven? It is that it is altogether impossible.

When we look at the way a person lives in this world, although there seems to be nothing at all to boast of, he does not ask God for help. When the heart of a person is rich, he comes not to believe in Jesus, and he comes not to believe even the work that Jesus came into this world and did. Therefore it is natural that he does not receive salvation, and it is natural that he goes to hell.

In our country as well there was a certain founder who had raised up a great enterprise. Having labored at his business, he contracted an illness, and in his last years he was slowly dying on his sickbed. While he was reading the Bible on his sickbed, he came to see this very word that we have read today. And that word seemed to be a word spoken directly to him.

Since it said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, he

received a great shock. Does it mean, then, that there is not a single rich man who will go to the kingdom of heaven? Does it mean that God does not let a person who lives richly in this world enter the kingdom of heaven at all? Is that not something unreasonable? So he said. He said that he now absolutely needed God, and that he wanted to go to the kingdom of heaven.

So he asked the clergyman who had come to visit him whether he might ask about the Bible, and asked with this word. It is said that he asked: Here it says that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven and that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle—does a rich man really not enter the kingdom of heaven?

That person was astonished when he heard that question. He could not give an answer. Must one not know something in order to give an answer? When someone opens the Word of the Bible right before him and asks him to explain this passage, he is at a loss. So, after hesitating, he politely said that he did not know well and that he would look into it and speak of it at his next visit, and he did not come until the man died, and the man departed from the world just as he was.

The one who is rich in heart, who has no need of salvation

In order to enter the kingdom of heaven, whether one is rich or poor, the sin in his heart must be removed. It is the person who has no sin who enters the kingdom of heaven, but how can that sin be removed? Our Lord spoke. *“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26).*

By man it cannot be done. It is like a camel not being able to

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go through the eye of a needle. Whether one has lived richly or has lived poorly, even though he wants to enter the kingdom of heaven, because he has sin he cannot enter. It is a dilemma. Therefore it is that with men it is impossible but with God it is possible. What, then, does the word that with God it is possible mean?

It is written, *"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).* It is that He sent His Son to this earth, and that the Son received the baptism from John the Baptist and so received the sin of the world passed on to Him, and bearing that sin was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and rose again from death, and so was judged in the place of the sinful person for his sin and washed him clean and made him a person without sin, so that he might be able to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore with God it was possible. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At that funeral service I read this word and bore witness that although with men it cannot be done, in order to save us from sin and to take us to the kingdom of heaven the Lord received the baptism from John and so received our sins passed on to Him and took them upon Himself, and was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died and rose again from death and saved us, and that therefore we have become those who can enter the kingdom of heaven by faith.

Honestly, it is not that a person cannot enter because he has much money, and neither is it that he cannot enter because he is poor. There is exactly one condition. The person who is rich in heart, that is, the person who says that he has no need of the help of God, no need of the mercy and the love of God, and no need of that love of salvation by which our sin was removed, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord blocks him. Only when

a person receives the gospel of the water and the Spirit into his heart does he receive the remission of sin and enter the kingdom of heaven.

When anyone faces death, how many things must even a person who lived richly regret as he looks back on his own life? He regrets and he repents. Every person, before he dies, must look back on his own sin before God and must come to God with the heart that says: God, wash away this sin; by my own strength I cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; I believe that the Lord has removed my sin; teach me this truth of salvation.

God of love, God who becomes the Judge

Is there among us anyone who says, I have no need of help, I am not so poor a person, I have ability and strength? There may also be a person who says, I will manage well on my own, so do not be concerned; God, do not interfere with me, telling me to do this and that. If there is such a person, it is a problem. He becomes the person who corresponds to the rich man who appears here.

Even though the Lord for our sake received the baptism from John and so received the sin of the world passed on to Him, and bearing that sin was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and rose again from death and accomplished our salvation, if a person is not thankful for it and does not receive it into his heart, he does not receive salvation. Although it is a plain fact that the Lord has saved us, because a person regards it as unnecessary for himself and does not take hold of it and is not thankful and does not receive it by faith, he does not enter the kingdom of heaven.

God sent His own Son to this earth in order to give you

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salvation, and had Him receive the baptism from John and so receive the sin of the world passed on to Him, and had Him bear that sin and be nailed to the cross and shed His blood and die, and had Him rise again from death, and made Him the Savior of you and me—so what reason is there not to believe? It is the work of salvation that the Lord did for you and me.

Is it not what we need? It is the faith and the gospel that is absolutely necessary in order to go to the kingdom of heaven, absolutely necessary in order to become the people of God, absolutely necessary in order to have a good relationship with God on this earth, and absolutely necessary in order to receive the blessing of God. Although God loved us and took our sin upon Himself and washed away our sin, people say that they do not like to be bound to God and that they do not like any interference that God gives. However, whether one likes it or not, one must receive the remission of sin in order to go to the kingdom of heaven, and so Jesus is necessary.

God is not one who only bestows love upon us. We must know the fact that God is our Savior, who saves us from sin, but that He is also the God who judges. If we do not receive the love that God gives while there is sin in our hearts, God becomes to us the God who judges. Can we survive before God, who becomes the Judge?

If it ended with death, then since one dies once and that is all, there would be nothing to fear even in death. However, because it is written, *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)* that is what is fearful. If the relationship with God has become uncomfortable so that it has become a relationship in which one does not receive His love, and one has become an object of judgment, will the days ahead be joyful?

Even though a person laughs outwardly, within his heart

there is anxiety. Even though he sees something funny and laughs out loud, within his heart there is anxiety. Since I have sin, and when I die I must be judged and go to hell, and there I must suffer forever in a fire that is not quenched, how can there be no anxiety? He himself knows that clearly. This is because there is sin within his own heart. Therefore even when he laughs, it is not really laughing.

Even after laughing until tears come, his heart is sad. It is the thought: I am going to hell, so what benefit is it to me that today is pleasant? Then that person cannot become a happy person. Who could be happy in this world while knowing that he is one who will go to hell? If a person's future is unhappy, then however much he tries not to think of it now, he becomes an unhappy person. Therefore man is a sorrowful being. He is born crying and he cries when he dies, and he lives sorrowfully while he lives and then dies.

Is there any corner where the help of God is not needed?

There are times when we absolutely need the help of God. When there is a matter that we cannot bear by our own strength, we need help. No, even in the most ordinary daily life we are those who need the help of God. Why is it so? It is because we are lacking ones and ones without ability.

How many things does a person need even in order to solve the matter of food, clothing, and shelter? In order to prepare a house in which to lay one body, one digs the ground, lays a foundation, sets down reinforcing bars, pours concrete, and so builds a house. Because a house has been fully built, can one live in it at once? There must be a bathroom, and there must be a

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toilet, and there must be water, and there must be plumbing, and there must be a septic tank.

Is that the end of it? The electrical wiring must be done. Since the house is dirty, there must be a vacuum cleaner and a cloth, and household goods must be brought in. The kitchen is not simple either. Even in order to sweep and wipe a room once, there must be a broom and a dustpan and a wastebasket. If one were to prepare all that alone, he could prepare until his head turned white and still not finish it all. That is why neighbors live helping one another.

When one considers it, life at one's workplace is also unimaginably complicated. Therefore the help of God is needed here and it is needed there. It is needed in order to marry and it is needed in order to live after marrying, and it is needed for the husband and it is needed for the children. The climate is not good, and it is needed in order to make this climate good, and it is needed in order to prevent war, and it is needed in order to raise animals.

Animals also do not simply grow up. If they become sick when they are young, they die at once. If one looks as though it is dying, one must give it an injection and must see to its food. I have also carried one inside my clothes and kept it alive, and in winter I have put one in a warm place and brought it food and stroked it and put it to sleep. Only when that is done does it barely grow up properly.

We need that much of the help of God in our living. God is not One who is needed only in order to send us to the kingdom of heaven; He is needed here and there and everywhere. The help of God is needed even in order to govern my feelings. Even though everything is there, if the heart is depressed everything is thought of negatively. Then it is a serious matter.

Therefore we ask: God, I am so weary; my health is not good

and my heart is depressed; whether You give me food or give me medicine or make my heart at ease, deliver me from this depression. God is One who is needed here and there. However, the person who is rich in heart does not ask for help. Would a rich man go to the house next door to borrow the price of a meal? When the heart is rich, that is how it becomes.

How much more, since we are people who must live asking God for help, if we do not know that, how shall we bow our heads before God? Therefore we must think about it ultimately. Is God One who is needed by you and me? Is He not needed in order to receive the remission of sin, needed in order to become the people of God, needed in order not to go to hell, needed in order not to receive judgment for sin, needed in order to eat and live, and needed in order to become happy? Is there any corner where He is not needed?

Then do you say that it would be enough to believe something other than God? There is no living One like God there. Since they have no strength and no ability, they cannot help. A certain famous monk, when he was dying, confessed that everything he had preached until then was false, and that since he had deceived a great many people he feared that he might fall into hell, and so he died. He himself made clear that he was going to hell, and died.

To believe in God, who gives help, is happiness

Therefore those who believe other religions cannot go to the kingdom of heaven even though they want to. Those gods can do nothing, but God is living and loves all mankind, saves them, helps them, and makes them happy. In a word, He is a truly good God. Therefore there is nothing in our living, whether we know

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it or not, that we live without receiving the love and the help of God.

Even the fact that we have lived through this one day is that we have lived by the help of God. Let us say that something delicious has come. A person says that it came although he never prayed for it. However, if we trace it to its source, someone prayed and asked for the sake of the kingdom of God, and what was needed came, and it came so that we might serve God. When we understand it, it came because of God. That there is any good thing while we live on this earth is all because of God.

We must know that the very fact that we live in a country that has freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly is the help and the blessing of God. Freedom is truly a good thing. In this country we believe what we want to believe, we gather when we want to gather, and we speak when we want to speak. However, there are also countries that do not allow these three things. One must speak only what he is told to speak and must believe only what he is told to believe. Therefore, because we are in such a country as this, we hear the Word of God and we offer worship in this way.

Therefore the person who lives receiving the help of God and yet thinks that there is no help of God is a foolish one. Whether our ability is great or small, we do the work that the church does and live serving the Lord. The person who says in his heart that he has no need of God, that is, the person who is rich in heart, is unhappy. We must know that we are those who need the help of God at all times. We need God. We know that we need Him, and we also believe. In the days to come also God will continue to help us.

That is why we pray in every work we do. We ask, God, help us. It is not something we merely try because we are bored. When we must meet a person and speak coherently and also

make a request, we go forward beforehand with faith, saying, God, I desire that You would help me, I believe that You will help me—and so it comes to pass.

Therefore there is nothing that we live without receiving the help of God. It seems as though I live by doing this and that, but the strength to work, my health, my heart, my thoughts, and my environment have all come about because God helped. There is nothing that has come about of ourselves. Therefore we must believe with faith that God is living.

It is written, *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).* When we go before God and pray and ask Him to help us, He is the God who helps in this and helps in that. He is the One who helps us with the remission of our sin, with our eternal life, with going to the kingdom of heaven, and with living well on this earth as well. Therefore that we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit is happiness. It is a good thing. To believe in God is truly a good choice. This happiness belongs to you who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

What have we cast away in order to follow the Lord?

< Matthew 19:27-30 >

"Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

What is it that we must cast away?

Peter and the other disciples of Jesus at that time cast away their boats and their nets, and while they had been working together with their parents they left their side and followed Jesus about. It may be said that they cast away such things. That is why Peter said to Jesus, *"See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27)*. If that is so, what have you and I cast away?

I know that you and I also, like the disciples, have in many cases cast away our occupation, our former colleagues, and the friends of our hometown. However, those who have grown up

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within this church through their parents and have lived a life of faith will have little of that. It is written, *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29)* but those who have grown up within the church have little occasion to cast away such things.

What, then, is there for us to cast away? To cast away our stubbornness, or the pride that is not seen with the eyes, and our own thinking, is also casting away. What is seen with the eyes can also be cast away. However, that is not something we cast away by our own casting away. If our parents oppose this gospel and oppose Jesus and oppose those who believe, we cannot live together with them. Therefore it is not that we cast them away by casting away, but that we live apart because they oppose. Even though they are in our hearts, it comes to be so.

Deny and break your stubbornness and your pride

However, while we are within this church there are truly many things to cast away. They are our stubbornness and our pride. Concerning following the Lord it is written, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. To deny oneself means to break one's own pride, and it means to cast away one's pride, and it also means to cast away one's own thinking.

To cast away one's pride is exceedingly hard. It is because the Lord is right that I cast away my pride. It is because the Lord has saved us that we can cast away even our pride. Because the Lord came to this earth in order to save me and received the baptism from John and so received all our sins passed on to Him

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and took them upon Himself, and bearing those sins shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again from death, doing this work of sacrifice, and so saved you and me—because we are thankful for that grace, we cast away our pride.

However, even after receiving salvation, there are some who cannot cast away their self-regard or their pride. If we are to follow the Lord, there are times when we must certainly deny our own pride and our own thinking. In the work of believing, following, and serving the Lord, it is also necessary to have self-respect. However, when something does not agree with one's own thinking and pride gets in the way of following the Lord, there are times when a person says that he can yield everything else but cannot cast away this one thing, his pride. To cast away such things is also necessary in order to follow the Lord.

Everyone who has cast away such things follows the Lord, receives the blessing of many times as much because of the Lord, and also inherits eternal life. That is why the Lord said, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30).*

Only when we cast away our own rightness can we follow the Lord

After meeting the Lord, how much of what is seen with the eyes have you cast away? For the person who has nothing visible to cast away, how much of the pride of his heart, his own thinking, and his own rightness has he cast away? Whatever stubbornness we put forward, and even though we put forward our own claim to be right, if the Lord says in the Word that it is not so, we must be able to cast it away at once. And we must cast it away.

However right my own thinking may be, if the Lord says that it is not right, and if the will of the Lord is different from our thinking and different from what we consider to be right, we must cast it away. If we cannot cast this away, it is hard to follow the Lord. We cannot follow.

To cast away what is seen with the eyes may perhaps be easy. Since it does not agree and opposes me, and so I cannot live together with it, I may cast it away at once. However, to cast away my own claim to be right is exceedingly difficult. Every person has pride, and has what he considers to be right, and has what he aims at. He has lived holding on to that one thing, and then, coming into the church, it is sometimes trampled upon and sometimes disregarded. At such a time, if he looks to the Lord he can cast it away, but if he looks at it as man against man he cannot cast it away. That is why there are also many who have given up the life of faith. It is because they cannot cast away what they consider to be right.

Therefore we must always look at what the Lord says and at what is profitable for the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If it seems that this is my own rightness and not the rightness of the Lord, and that this is my own benefit and not the benefit of the Lord, we must boldly cast it away. I also am a person who has nothing excellent about him and who lacks a great many things. My disposition is also rough, and I am one of those who cannot endure it in any situation when they see what is unrighteous.

I have been saying that what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong, but having met the Lord I found that in many cases my temperament and my own rightness were rather a hindrance. However right I may be, I am not more right than the Lord, and however righteous I may be, I am not more righteous than the Lord. If I think a little more deeply, there are many things that are wrong. Therefore I must cast them away. In order

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to cast them away I must deny them. I must admit that my thinking is a fault and that my own rightness is a fault.

It is hard. It is very hard. It is hard to the point that one cannot digest, and hard to the point that the blood rushes backward. At such a time, if my character and my own rightness are not profitable to the kingdom of the Lord, one casts them away. This is the attitude of the one who lives a life of faith. Such a person becomes one who goes ahead and one who follows the Lord closely. The person who cannot do this becomes one who is last.

If the Lord says it is right, it is right

It is not that a person is one who is first because he was saved first. There are also those who were saved first and so became first, but the person who cannot cast away his own claim to be right and his own thinking for the benefit of the Lord becomes exactly as it is written, *"Many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30)*. It is an exceedingly difficult thing. However, it is not something that one may do or may not do; it is something that must certainly be done.

The Lord said to cast away what is seen with the eyes, but concerning what is not seen with the eyes He also said, *"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. We must cast away our own rightness and our own stubbornness. If it seems that this is my stubbornness and my own rightness and is not profitable to the kingdom of the Lord, we must cast it away. Only when a person knows how to cast away at least ten or more of the things his heart holds to be right can he follow the Lord. Otherwise he cannot follow the Lord closely, and he can only continue to complain against the Lord and to insist on his own rightness.

If we keep putting forward our stubbornness, the work of the Lord is not accomplished. That a person becomes angry is not profitable to the kingdom of the Lord. Even though we become angry and want to shout, we soften that heart, speak gently, and, if the other person does not realize it, wait until he realizes it. Such things are difficult.

To receive salvation is rather easy. If a person properly hears the truth and acknowledges the work that the Lord has done, he receives salvation at once. However, following the Lord is not like that. We must cast ourselves away. Our own rightness and our own stubbornness, and the world—these two or three things must be cast away. Sometimes material things must also be cast away, and sometimes there are times when one cannot be together even with his family.

However, it is not that we cast them away first. It is only that because they oppose us we cannot be together. To cast away my parents because the Lord told me to cast them away—this is not what the Lord desires. It is not that we cast away by casting away, but that it comes to be so because they oppose. Even so, because it is grievous, we go and try to preach the gospel, but as soon as we bring up the matter of the gospel they become angry and oppose, so what are we to do? Is that person the only soul? Before God every person is a soul.

Therefore you and I also must know how to cast away our own rightness and must know how to cast away our own stubbornness. If we only put forward our own stubbornness, the Lord is grieved and the Holy Spirit who is within your heart is also grieved. He says, Is that not for your own benefit and not for Mine?

When a person has been born again, if the Lord is not pleased we are sorrowful. If the Lord does not say that it is right, within our hearts the Holy Spirit rebukes and groans. There is not the

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least joy in the heart. However, when we have cast away our own rightness and cast away our stubbornness, through the Holy Spirit who is within us we come to know that the Lord is pleased. That is why it is different.

The person who has been born again, the person who truly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the person who knows and believes that Jesus Christ is our God and our Savior, is different. Because the Holy Spirit is within his heart, he is different. He is completely different from the person who knows only by theory. Therefore, if the Lord says it is right, we too must say it is right, and if the Lord says it is not so, we too must know how to say it is not so. This is the life of faith.

Let the standard of the Lord be my standard, and the joy of the Lord my joy

To preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world is the work in which the Lord delights. But what is our thinking? Does it not seem right to us to earn much money on this earth, to preach the gospel only a little, and to use the rest for ourselves? Only when we cast that away does it suit the Lord. The gospel must be preached to the whole world, and we do it putting that first. Therefore it is different. The one who is first is very different from the one who is last.

In the life of faith, the one who is said to be first is the one who has cast away much of himself. He is the one who has cast away much for the Lord, for the benefit of the Lord, and for the preaching of the gospel. A person must be wise. If the Lord dislikes something, it is enough for us also to say that it is not so, and if the Lord delights in something, it is enough for us also to say that it is right.

After receiving salvation, even if a person says that he will make an effort and succeed in his own life, there is nothing in it. It is simply being born, growing old, becoming sick, and dying. The conclusion is that we go before the Lord, and if we do the work in which the Lord delights on this earth and then go, that is a successful life. This is because in any case we shall inherit eternal life from the Lord. To inherit means to receive by succession. Because He is the One who lives forever, He gives eternal life to us also.

The life of this earth is not everything. That is why we prepare for the work of the Lord. If it seems right to do this, then it is enough to live that way, as the Lord delights. We must learn this. We can know it by looking at what those who go before you are doing. It is to do as the Lord desires. What does He desire of me through this church? If He desires the preaching of the gospel to the whole world, then that is what we do.

Who is there that writes books for the people of the whole world? One may also be put to shame. However, even though I am put to shame, I believe that I am bearing witness to the work that the Lord has done. When I think about it, it is because I am following the Lord that I do so; if I were not following the Lord, it could truly be called a reckless thing.

At one time I looked into how various famous mission organizations were presenting their own ministries. And what I truly felt while looking was that they only boasted of what work they themselves had done, and that there was almost nothing that spoke of the work Jesus had done. They put themselves forward and collect offerings. Looking at that, the thought came to me that although we are lacking, this is truly the precious food of life for the people of the whole world.

We must see in what the Lord delights in this age. The world is changing truly fast. An age is coming in which machines take

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the place of the work that people used to do, and in which machines assist the thinking of people. When that happens, the affection and the leisure between people will disappear. The more it is such an age, the more clearly we must know what the work is in which the Lord delights.

It is not a matter of arguing about who is first and who is last. That the Lord says, My faithful servant, means that a person has denied himself and cast away his own stubbornness. It means that the Word of the Lord has become the standard, so that if the Lord says it is right it is right and if the Lord says it is not so it is not so, and that this standard has been established within his heart. We must not put forward our own standard, but must look at the standard of the Lord and follow that standard.

Therefore length of years is not what is important. According to whether one follows as the Lord desires and as He says is right, the order of the one who is first and the one who is last is reversed. When we cast away our own thinking, our stubbornness, and our claim to be right, we live the life in which the Lord delights.

I think so and I believe so. If we live the life that the Lord desires, that is a successful life. Let us live in that way. Even though it does not go well, let us try once to cast away our stubbornness. Let us try to cast away our own standard. Let us take the standard of the Lord and what the Lord says is right. Then our life becomes different, and living itself becomes different, and our faith becomes different, and the standard of our judgment of value becomes different. When it becomes so, the Lord receives much glory through us. You and I must become such people. ✉

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CHAPTER

20

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Matthew Chapter 20

< Matthew 20:1-34 >

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own

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things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen. Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying,

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‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, that our eyes may be opened.’ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 20 continues to explain the word recorded at the end of Chapter 19: *“Many who are first will be last, and the last first.”* Through the parable of the laborers in the vineyard it shows that the kingdom of God is given not by the merit of man but by the grace of God, and then it sets the foretelling of the suffering of Jesus over against the dispute of the disciples over position. At the end it records the event in which two blind men recognized Jesus and followed Him, and so it shows what a true disciple is like.

1. The owner who calls the laborers into the vineyard (verses 1–7)

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a landowner who went out to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. Early in the morning the owner went out, agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, and sent them into his vineyard. At that time one denarius was the ordinary wage for a day.

The owner went out to the marketplace and called men also at the third hour, about nine in the morning, and at the sixth hour, which is noon, and at the ninth hour, which is three in the

afternoon. Even at the eleventh hour, about five in the afternoon, when the work was almost over, he went out and sent into his vineyard the men who were still standing there. They had not been working, not because they hated to work, but because no one had hired them, just as they said, *"Because no one hired us."*

What appears first in this parable is not the ability or the merit of the laborers but the active calling of the owner. It was the owner who went to the people first, gave them an opportunity to work, and brought them into the vineyard. The mercy and the goodness of the owner are revealed above all in the fact that he did not turn away from the men who had not been chosen until the day was almost over, but called them.

2. The owner who gave a denarius to everyone (verses 8–12)

When evening came, the owner told his steward to give the wages beginning with the men who had come last. The men who had come at the eleventh hour and had worked only one hour also received a denarius. When the laborers of the early morning saw this, they expected that they would receive more. But to them also was given exactly what had been promised, one denarius.

The men who had come first complained against the owner, saying that they had toiled the whole day and borne the heat, and yet had been treated the same as the men who had worked only one hour. But the owner had not cut down their wages, nor had he broken his promise. To the men who came first he gave exactly what he had promised, and to the men who came later he gave generously according to his own good will.

This parable is not a story told in order to settle the wage system of ordinary society. It is a parable that teaches that the grace of the kingdom of God is not a payment given by calculating the labor and the merit of man. The problem of the

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laborers who came first did not lie in their having received little. It lay in the fact that, seeing another person receive grace, they regarded the goodness of the owner as unfair.

3. *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"* (verses 13–16)

While making it plain to the complaining laborer that he had not broken his promise, the owner said, *"I wish to give to this last man the same as to you."* Then he asked, *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"*

The grace of God is not something that can be weighed by comparison with another person. The one who was called early was called by grace, and the one who was called late was received by the same grace. If a person demands the grace of God as though it were his own right because he has believed for a long time or has done many works, he falls into the same heart as the laborers who came first.

Jesus closed this parable with the word, *"So the last will be first, and the first last."* This does not mean that it is fine to believe late and that one should therefore deliberately put off faith. It means that if a man puts forward his own career and merit, the one who was first becomes last instead, and that the person who was regarded as having no qualification at all also receives the grace of God and becomes first.

4. The third foretelling of the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus (verses 17–19)

As He was going up to Jerusalem, Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and told them what was about to happen. He made plain in detail that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, that they would condemn Him to death, that He would then be delivered to the Gentiles and suffer mocking and scourging, and that He would be crucified. At the

same time He also said that He would rise again on the third day.

Jesus did not go to Jerusalem without knowing what would happen to Him. Jesus bore the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and although He knew the suffering and the death of the cross, He went that way in order to accomplish salvation. Moreover the death of Jesus is not a death that ends in failure. Behind the cross the resurrection surely follows. Therefore the baptism and the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus are one process of the work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another.

5. James and John ask for high positions (verses 20–23)

Right after the foretelling of the suffering, the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with James and John. She asked that in the kingdom of the Lord her two sons might sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of the Lord. From the Gospel of Mark we can see that James and John themselves also took part in this request.

Jesus said, *"You do not know what you ask."* The disciples thought of the kingdom of Jesus as a political kingdom that would be established in the world, and they tried to take a high position within it. But in Jerusalem Jesus was facing not a throne but the cross.

The *"cup"* of which Jesus spoke points to the suffering and the sacrifice that the Lord would receive. James and John answered confidently that they were able to drink that cup, but they did not sufficiently understand the weight of what they were saying. To follow Jesus is not only to seek a place of glory but also to bear suffering and sacrifice for the sake of the Lord. Yet who will sit on the right hand and the left hand of the Lord is not decided by the ambition or the competition of the disciples but belongs to the will and the authority of God the Father.

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6. The way to become a great person in the kingdom of God (verses 24–27)

The other ten disciples heard the request of James and John and were angry. But they were angry not because they themselves had no such desire. They too were competing over who was the greater, and therefore they were displeased that the two brothers had asked for a high position first.

Jesus said that the rulers of the world use their power to dominate people, but that among the disciples it must not be so. The Lord said that the person who desires to be great must become one who serves, and that the person who desires to be first must become a slave.

The greatness of the kingdom of God does not lie in how many people one moves according to one's own will. It lies in how low one goes down in order to serve others. Office and authority are not a means for exalting oneself but a responsibility entrusted to a person so that he may save and care for others.

7. Jesus, who gave His own life as a ransom (verse 28)

Verse 28 is the word that stands at the center of Matthew Chapter 20.

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus did not teach only an attitude of service; He Himself lived a life of service. The summit of that service is the very cross on which He gave His own life as a ransom for many. A *"ransom"* means the price paid in the place of a slave or a captive in order to set him free. Jesus gave His own life as the price in order to save the people who were bound under sin.

Therefore the cross is not an event in which Jesus lost His power but an event of salvation in which He gave Himself in order to save sinners. While the disciples were striving to obtain

high positions, Jesus was going down to the lowest place in order to give His own life.

8. He heals the two blind men of Jericho (verses 29–34)

As Jesus was leaving Jericho, two blind men were sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, *"Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" "Son of David"* is a title that points to the promised Messiah. Although the eyes of their flesh could not see, they recognized who Jesus was.

The multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but the two men asked for the mercy of the Lord all the more loudly. Jesus did not pass by their cry but stopped His steps. And He asked, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* When they answered that they wanted their eyes to be opened, Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes and healed them.

After their eyes were opened, the two men immediately followed Jesus. The heart of this event does not end simply in the healing of the eyes of the flesh. They believed in Jesus as the Son of David and asked for mercy, and after they had received grace they became men who followed Jesus. Moreover, we must not automatically view a disability or disease as a punishment for a person's individual sin. This passage does not condemn the sin of the two men; it shows the mercy of Jesus, who does not turn away from the cry of a suffering person.

9. The overall lesson of Matthew Chapter 20

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the kingdom of God is given not by the merit of man but by the grace of God. James and John held a worldly desire to take a high position. But Jesus made plain that He was not a King who came to be served but a King who came to give His life for many.

The two blind men at the end stand in contrast to the disciples

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who were striving over high positions. They put forward neither their own merit nor any position, but cried out only, *"Have mercy on us."* And after they received the grace of the Lord, they followed the Lord. The person who enters the kingdom of God is not the person who boasts of his own labor but the person who asks for the grace of the Lord, and the great person in the kingdom of God is not the person who takes a position higher than others but the person who serves others after the example of Jesus.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 20 is the word that the kingdom of God is given not by the merit of man but by the good grace of God, and that Jesus, the King of that kingdom, humbled Himself and served to the point of becoming the ransom for many, so that the person who follows the Lord must also walk the way of service and mercy rather than the way of position.

2) Matthew Chapter 20 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 20 proclaims that God called sinners who had no merit at all and gave them the same and complete salvation, and that in order to accomplish that salvation Jesus gave His own life as a ransom. It also teaches that the person who has received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not be a person who seeks a high position, but a person who, giving thanks for the grace of the Lord who saved him, serves the gospel and souls.

1. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard shows the salvation received by the grace of God (verses 1–7)

From early in the morning to the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and the eleventh hour, the owner of the vineyard went out again and again to the marketplace and called laborers. It was not that the laborers went to the owner first and asked him to hire them; the owner went to them first. Salvation did not begin from the side of man but is a work that God began first and completed.

We were people born in sin who could not solve the problem of sin by ourselves. However well a man may live and however much he may keep the Law and offer prayers of repentance, he cannot wash away all the sin of his heart by his own strength. Therefore God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this earth, made us hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and called us into salvation.

That the owner went to the men even at the eleventh hour means that he did not give up even on the person who seemed to have been hired by no one and to have been cast away. God likewise does not call only those who are excellent in the eyes of the world. The person who came to know the gospel late, the person who is discouraged because of his sin, and the person who has no righteousness and nothing to boast of also receive the same remission of sin and eternal life if they believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

But we must not receive this as though it meant, "You may believe later, so for now you may live as you please." The laborers of the eleventh hour were not men who had deliberately refused to work; they were men who said, *"Because no one hired us."* Therefore, when we have heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not put it off but must receive it in our hearts now.

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2. The one denarius shows the grace of salvation that is given completely to everyone (verses 8–10)

When evening came, the owner gave the wages beginning with the men who had come last. The man who had worked one hour received a denarius, and the man who had worked from the morning also received a denarius as promised. In this parable the one denarius represents the complete salvation of the remission of sin, the new birth, and eternal life, which is given alike to everyone who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Whether one was called early or called late, everyone who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all the sin of his heart, becomes a righteous person, becomes a child of God, and obtains eternal life.

Some people have attended church since their childhood, and some hear the gospel near the end of their lives. Some have done many works, and some, having been saved only a short time ago, may not have been able to do many works. But the remission of sin is not given by half or twice over according to the length of a person's religious career or the amount of his service. Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sin and becomes a child of God.

To believe in Jesus is not simply to acknowledge that Jesus existed. It is to believe in the heart that the Son of God put on flesh and came to this earth, that through the baptism He received from John the Baptist He bore all the sin of mankind, and that bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again on the third day.

That Jesus received baptism at the Jordan River in the form of the laying on of hands by John was not because the sinless Lord had any sin of His own to wash away. It was in order that, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of all mankind, He might take the sin of the world over onto His

own body and fulfill all the righteousness of God. The baptism that the Lord received from John is the "water" of the gospel, and the blood and the death of the cross are the judgment of that sin, which He received in our place. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this Jesus is the Son of God and that His baptism and cross and resurrection are the truth of true salvation.

Therefore, what we have received is truly "a tremendous salvation," a grace so great that no man can calculate its price. That Jesus washed away our sin with the water and the blood and made us righteous people without sin cannot be compared with any reward of the world.

3. The complaint of the laborers who came first warns us against a faith that puts merit forward (verses 11–16)

The laborers who came first also received the one denarius that had been promised, but they complained against the owner because they had received the same as the men who came later. Their problem was not that they had been treated unjustly by the owner but that they tried to calculate the grace of the owner on the ground of their own labor.

Before the gospel of the water and the Spirit no one can boast of his own righteousness. Long attendance at church, much service, fasting and repenting with tears, and having lived more morally than others cannot be made the ground of the remission of sin. This does not mean that such deeds have no meaning in the life of faith; it means that by them one cannot wash away sin or buy salvation.

Even the man who came first could not have entered the vineyard if the owner had not called him. In the same way the person who was saved early was not saved because of his own ability. He was saved because the Lord had already washed away all his sin by His baptism and the cross, and because the Holy

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Spirit made him hear the gospel and believe.

The word of the owner, *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"* rebukes the heart that envies the grace another person has received. That I was saved first is no proof that I am higher than another person. If the one who became first boasts of his own merit, he becomes last, and even the person who heard the gospel later, if he purely believes the grace of God and gives thanks, lives with the faith of one who has become first.

4. The foretelling of the suffering of Jesus shows how salvation was actually accomplished (verses 17–19)

Jesus said beforehand that in Jerusalem He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, that He would suffer mocking and scourging at the hands of the Gentiles, and that He would be crucified and die and rise again on the third day.

Here we must not think of the cross by itself, apart from everything else. The reason Jesus died on the cross is that before it He had received baptism from John the Baptist and had borne all the sin of the world. If the baptism He received from John is the event in which He took the sin upon Himself, the cross is the event in which He received in our place the punishment of the sin He had taken upon Himself.

Jesus was not judged because of His own sin. The Lord originally had no sin at all. But because by the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River He bore at once all our sin of the past and the present and the future, He went to the cross in order to pay the wages of that sin. The Lord was scourged and shed His blood and died, and so He received in our place the judgment of sin that we had to receive.

And by rising again on the third day He showed that He is the Son of God and the Savior. The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that our sin was actually dealt with and that the power of

death was broken down. Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that believes the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the cross, and His death and resurrection as one.

5. The disciples who sought high positions show a heart that puts self before the gospel (verses 20–24)

Right after Jesus spoke of the suffering of the cross, the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked that James and John might sit on the right hand and the left hand in the kingdom of the Lord. Jesus was going to die in order to save sinners, but the disciples were thinking of the positions they themselves would occupy.

Even after a person has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sin, the fleshly desires of man do not disappear. That a person has received the remission of sin does not mean that the flesh itself has become perfect. The Holy Spirit dwells in the believing person, but the thoughts of the flesh, which still want to be treated well and to become higher than others, also rise up.

Therefore the person who has received the remission of sin must examine his own heart before the gospel every day. He must look at whether he is serving the gospel or whether he is using the gospel in order to exalt himself. It is not an office or a career within the church that makes a person great. The person who is precious in the kingdom of God is the person who remembers the grace of the Lord who saved him and gives himself for the gospel and for souls.

The *"cup"* of which Jesus spoke means the suffering and the sacrifice that a person will receive in following the Lord. On the road of believing and preaching the gospel, misunderstanding and persecution and loss sometimes follow. But that is not a price paid in order to obtain salvation. It is the fruit of faith that a person who has already been saved without price bears

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willingly because he loves the Lord and the gospel.

6. The person saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit serves the gospel rather than being served (verses 25–27)

The power of the world is easily used in the direction of dominating others and pressing through one's own will. But Jesus said to the disciples, *"Yet it shall not be so among you."* In the kingdom of God the great person is not the person who presses others down and rules over them but the person who serves.

Here we must not understand service merely as flattering people or as unconditional human helpfulness. The most fundamental service is to preach to people the gospel that gives life and to help them hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin. To take part in the work of spreading the gospel with one's body, one's time, one's material things, one's prayers, and the Word is to serve the Lord.

The person whose faith is young is disappointed when he is not served and complains when he is not recognized. But when faith grows, he thinks of how the Lord saved him and comes to rejoice in serving. Because he is thankful that all his sin was washed away by the water of the baptism and the blood of the cross, he comes to desire that others also may know this gospel and be saved.

Yet this does not mean that salvation is completed by doing much service. Salvation was completed by Jesus, and we receive it by faith. A life of serving the gospel is not a condition of salvation but the fruit of thanksgiving that appears in the person who has been saved.

7. The meaning of Jesus giving His own life as a *"ransom"* (verse 28)

Matthew 20:28 is the word in which the gospel of the water and the Spirit is most clearly revealed in this chapter.

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

A *"ransom"* means the price paid in the place of another person in order to release him from bondage. As the wages of sin we had to receive judgment and death, but Jesus gave His own life in our place. However, for the death of Jesus to become our redemption, He must first bear our sin. That bearing of sin was accomplished precisely through the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

Jesus took the sin of the world over onto Himself through His baptism, and on the cross He said, *"It is finished!"* and paid the price of that sin with His own blood and life. In this way the baptism of the Lord and the cross cannot be separated from each other. If we speak only of the death of the cross without the baptism, it does not become clear what sin Jesus was bearing when He died. On the other hand, if we speak only of the fact that He bore sin by the baptism and leave out the blood of the cross, we cannot explain how the judgment of sin was carried out. And Jesus rose again on the third day and gave righteousness and eternal life to those who believe.

Jesus is not One who only commanded us to wash away our sin. He is the One who Himself took charge of all our sin and removed it. What we could not do, the Lord accomplished completely with the water and the blood. This is the greatest service by which the Lord served sinners, and it is the heart of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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8. The event in which the two blind men received sight shows the faith that understands the gospel and follows the Lord (verses 29–34)

The two blind men of Jericho could not see with the eyes of the flesh, and yet they called Jesus *"Son of David."* Believing that Jesus was the promised Savior, they cried out, *"Have mercy on us."* Even when the multitude hindered them, they asked for the mercy of the Lord all the more loudly.

We must not interpret this event simply as though every disease came about because of the personal sin of a person. Neither must we turn an actual event of healing entirely into a symbol. Yet seen in its application to the gospel, until the Holy Spirit makes him understand the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a man is like a spiritual blind man who cannot rightly see his own sin and the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

Many people say that they believe in Jesus and yet still say that there is sin in their hearts. This is because they do not see that Jesus bore all their sin through the baptism He received from John and that on the cross He received the judgment of that sin completely. When the Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes through the Word, we come to see how completely the Lord has accomplished our salvation.

After their eyes were opened, the two blind men immediately followed Jesus. True faith does not stop at knowing that one has received the remission of sin. Giving thanks to the Lord who had compassion on him and saved him, a person follows Him, and this leads on to a life of preaching this news of salvation to those who have not yet seen the gospel.

9. The heart of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 20 conveys

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, salvation is

given not by the merit of man or the amount of his service but by the good will and the grace of God. The foretelling of the suffering of Jesus shows that the Lord completed salvation by being judged on the cross for the sin He had borne through the baptism He received from John, and by rising again. The dispute of the disciples over position teaches that even after being saved we must cast away the thoughts of the flesh that seek to exalt ourselves, and must serve the gospel. The healing of the two blind men shows that the person whose spiritual eyes have been opened by receiving the mercy of the Lord comes to follow Jesus.

We were not saved because we entered the vineyard first and worked much. We were saved because God called us first, because Jesus bore all our sin through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and because, bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again. We have believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit in our hearts and have received the remission of sin. Therefore, the person who has received the remission of sin must not try to show how great a person he is, but must live a life of giving thanks for the tremendous salvation which the Lord has given, and of serving the gospel and souls.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 20 is the word that Jesus, who by grace called sinners who had no merit at all, bore all their sin through the baptism He received from John and gave His own life as a ransom on the cross and so accomplished complete salvation, so that the person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sin must not exalt himself but must serve the gospel and souls and follow the Lord. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 20

Salvation is given not by the labor of man but by the grace of Jesus, who came to serve sinners

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 20 begins by explaining the kingdom of heaven with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. A landowner went out several times from early in the morning until late in the afternoon, called laborers, and sent them into his vineyard, and when evening came and he gave the wages, he gave one denarius alike to the one who came first and to the one who came last.

When the laborers who came first complained, the owner said, *"Friend, I am doing you no wrong."* He also declared that he had the freedom to give of his own as he wished, by grace. This parable shows that salvation is not a wage calculated according to the amount of the labor of man, but the same grace that God gives without price.

Going up to Jerusalem, Jesus foretold His suffering for the third time. He said that the Son of Man would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes and condemned to death, and would be delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and would rise again on the third day. This was the way in which He humbled Himself for our salvation.

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When the mother of James and John asked that her two sons might sit in high positions in the kingdom of the Lord, Jesus said that the person who desires to be great among them must become one who serves. He said that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

As He was leaving Jericho, two blind men cried out, *"Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"* Although the crowd rebuked them, they cried out all the more, and when Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes, they immediately received their sight and followed Him. The person whose spiritual eyes have been opened believes in Jesus as the Savior and follows the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished.

Matthew Chapter 20 breaks down the heart that tries to calculate salvation by the merit of man, and proclaims the grace of Jesus, who came to serve and to become the ransom for sinners. Now, looking at the words of the text in order, we will consider the salvation and the way of service that are given by grace, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit that opened that way.

The one denarius given to the laborers in the vineyard represents not the labor of man but the same and complete salvation that God gives by grace

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to

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them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:1–16).

This parable is connected with the last word of Matthew Chapter 19. After Jesus had said, "*Many who are first will be last, and the last first,*" He told the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Therefore the center of this parable is not who worked longer, but how the one who is first and the one who is last are judged in the kingdom of God.

In the parable the owner of the vineyard went out to the marketplace from early in the morning in order to hire laborers. He agreed with the men he met early in the morning for a

denarius a day and sent them into his vineyard. Here the owner of the vineyard points to God, and the vineyard represents the kingdom of God and the church, which God rules and in which He makes the fruit of the gospel to be borne.

What is important is the fact that it was not the laborers who went to the owner first, but the owner who went to them. They were not men who entered the vineyard by themselves and began their own work. They were able to enter the vineyard because the owner came and called them. Salvation does not begin from the choice and the merit of man; it begins from the calling and the grace that God bestowed first.

The owner went out to the marketplace also at the third hour and the sixth hour and the ninth hour. Even at the eleventh hour, when the day was almost over, he went out and found men still standing there. He asked them, *"Why have you been standing here idle all day?"* They answered, *"Because no one hired us."*

These men were not so much men who had hidden themselves because they hated to work, as men who had not obtained an opportunity because there was no one to call them. They had no authority to enter the vineyard by their own strength, nor could they enter into a relationship with the owner by themselves. Only when the owner came and called them, saying, *"You also go into the vineyard,"* did they obtain a place to work.

Spiritually also, a man is born in sin and stands outside the kingdom of God. He cannot enter the kingdom of God by his own good deeds and religious efforts, nor can he wash away his sin by himself. God comes with the gospel and calls him, and when a man hears and believes that word of salvation, only then does he receive the remission of sin.

When evening came, the owner commanded his steward to give the wages beginning with the men who had come last. The man who came at the eleventh hour and worked only one hour

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also received a denarius. To the man who had not obtained an opportunity to work the whole day, the owner gave in full the wage needed to live out a day together with his family. Here the good heart of the owner, who has compassion on the weak, is revealed.

When the laborers who came first saw the men who came last receiving a denarius, they expected that they would receive more. But they too received the one denarius that had been promised at the first. The owner did not break his promise, nor did he take away their wages. Yet they thought that the owner was unfair, and they complained.

They looked at their own labor rather than at the grace of the owner. Saying, "We have borne a whole day of toil and heat," they compared themselves with others by the standard of their own work. At first they were satisfied with having been promised a denarius, but when the men who came later received the same thing, their thanksgiving turned into complaint. The comparing heart made even the goodness of the owner look evil.

The owner said, *"Friend, I am doing you no wrong."* He gave exactly what he had promised at the first. He also said, *"I wish to give to this last man the same as to you."* That he gave a denarius to the man who came last was not that he took away what belonged to the man who came first and divided it out; it was grace that the owner bestowed out of his own possessions.

The word *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"* shows how the self-righteousness of man distorts the grace of God. When a man himself receives grace he rejoices, but when a person who seems to him more lacking receives the same grace, he thinks it unfair. Yet the goodness of God is revealed in the very fact that He bestows salvation even on the person who has no merit.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the one denarius given to all the laborers represents the

complete remission of sin and the eternal life that God gives alike to those who believe. No one receives a half remission of sin. Whether one believed the gospel first or later, whoever believes the true gospel receives the remission of all his sin and becomes a child of God.

In order to give this salvation to sinners, Jesus bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. He took over the sin of all people from Adam to the last person of the world, and He became the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the world. Included in this is not only the sin of the person who was called early but also the sin of the person who met the gospel near the end of his life.

Bearing that sin, Jesus was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so He received the judgment of all sin. And rising again on the third day, He became the Savior who gives eternal life to the person who believes. This salvation does not differ according to the hours a man has worked or according to his religious career; it rests on the righteousness that Jesus completely fulfilled.

The baptism that Jesus received from John, the cross, and the resurrection are one continuous work of salvation. By the baptism He bore all sin, on the cross He paid the wages of that sin, and by the resurrection He overcame sin and death. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth that has completely fulfilled the righteousness of God.

Therefore even a person who has attended church for decades, if he does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, has only a religious career. On the other hand, even a person who has come to church for the first time, if he hears the meaning of the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of

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Jesus and believes it in his heart, immediately receives the remission of all his sin. The remission of sin is not a reward received after living a long life of faith but the gift of God received when one believes the gospel.

There is something to be careful of when we understand the one denarius as a symbol of salvation. It does not mean that salvation is a wage paid for the labor of the laborers. Rather, the very fact that the wage of a whole day was given even to the man who worked only one hour shows that this wage was not a payment calculated by the amount of labor. This parable does not teach the merit of man; it shows the grace of God, which is bestowed beyond all calculation.

A man sometimes thinks that if he offers many tears and much fasting and many prayers of repentance he can receive a more complete remission of sin. But such deeds cannot add anything to the salvation that Jesus accomplished. When we realize our sin we must acknowledge our fault and turn back, but the power that washes away sin does not lie in our prayers or our tears; it lies in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

The complaint of the laborers who came first shows the appearance of a legalistic faith. If a man thinks, ‘I have believed for a long time and have served much, so I ought to be recognized more than others,’ then he does not serve God as the Lord of grace but treats Him as though He were in debt to his own labor. Service and devotion are not the paying of the price of salvation but the fruit of faith offered out of thanksgiving for the salvation already received.

Within the church also, the person who believed first must not look down on the person who came later. That one came to know the gospel first is not a merit to boast of but a grace that calls him to serve first. The longer the career of a person’s faith,

the more he must help a newly come soul with love and serve him with patience so that he may rightly understand the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who came later must also not forget that he was saved by grace. Just as the man who worked only one hour and received a denarius had to give thanks to the owner, so the person who has received the remission of sin without any merit must serve God humbly. Grace does not justify laziness; rather it makes a person more faithful out of thanksgiving.

The word *"The last will be first, and the first last"* means that the fact that one came to church first does not determine the spiritual order of the kingdom of God. Even the person who was called first, if he boasts of his own merit and condemns others, goes far away from the joy of grace. Even the person who was called later, if he thankfully receives the goodness of the owner and is humbly faithful, becomes a person who is ahead in faith.

We must not receive this word as though it meant that one may put off the gospel until the last moment of life. No one knows when he will die, and no one can guarantee that there will be another opportunity to hear the gospel. When God calls with the gospel today, a man must not hold on to his own thoughts but must answer immediately with faith.

Moreover, this parable does not mean that every kind of reward is always the same. The Bible says that after a person is saved, God remembers and repays the faithfulness and the labor that each person has spent for the Lord. But the remission of sin, the standing of a child of God, and eternal life are not divided into greater and smaller portions according to the merit of man. They are the complete salvation given alike to everyone who believes.

Matthew 20:1–16 teaches that the kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom run by the merit and the comparisons of man but a

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kingdom of grace given by the sovereignty and the goodness of God. We must not boast that we believed first or that we have done many works, but must thankfully receive the complete salvation, like the one denarius, that Jesus has given through His baptism and the cross and the resurrection. And whether we were called first or called later, we must not compare ourselves with one another or complain, but must rejoice in the grace of the Lord who called us into the vineyard and faithfully serve the gospel and souls.

Jesus became the ransom for sinners and showed the example of service, and the great one in the kingdom of God is the person who follows that Lord and serves souls

"Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not

Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:17–28).

On the road going up to Jerusalem, Jesus called the twelve disciples aside. And He said that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and that after being condemned to death He would be delivered to the Gentiles and would suffer mocking and scourging and be crucified. Jesus already knew exactly the suffering that would come upon Him.

Therefore the death of Jesus on the cross was not an unexpected tragedy or a political failure. Jesus went up to Jerusalem of His own accord in order to fulfill the will of God the Father, who purposed to save mankind from sin. The responsibility for the evil that the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers did lies with them, but through that event God accomplished the salvation of mankind.

Jesus did not speak only of suffering and death but clearly said, *"And the third day He will rise again."* The cross does not end in defeat. After receiving the judgment of sin, Jesus rose from death and overcame the power of sin and death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the news of complete salvation that includes not only the baptism and the cross of Jesus but also His resurrection.

Yet right after Jesus spoke of His suffering and death and resurrection, the mother of the two sons of Zebedee came.

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Kneeling down before Jesus, she asked that her two sons might sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left hand, in the kingdom of the Lord. She wanted her sons to take the highest places when Jesus became King.

In this request there was to some extent a faith that Jesus is King and that His kingdom would come. But the kingdom they had in mind was still a kingdom of worldly power and glory. Jesus was speaking of the suffering of the cross, but the disciples were thinking about what position and authority they would obtain through the Lord.

Jesus said, *"You do not know what you ask."* A man thinks that he knows what he wants, but he does not also know the responsibility and the suffering that follow that desire. The disciples wanted the place of glory, but they did not know that the way that leads to that glory is self-denial and sacrifice and service.

In the word in which Jesus asked, *"Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"* the cup means the suffering and the death that Jesus would bear. This is not a word that points to the baptism of water that Jesus received at the Jordan River. Jesus was speaking of the cup of suffering that included the mocking and the scourging and the pain of the cross.

Without sufficiently knowing the weight of that cup, the disciples answered confidently, *"We are able."* A man easily guarantees his own faith and faithfulness, but when suffering actually comes he may be afraid and draw back. Therefore faith is not boasting of one's own will but asking for the help of the Lord and obeying the Word step by step.

Jesus said that the disciples would indeed drink His cup. This does not mean that the disciples too would become redeemers who bear the sin of mankind. The work of redemption can be accomplished only by the sinless Jesus. The cup that the

disciples would drink means the persecution and the sacrifice that they would receive in the course of preaching the gospel and following the Lord.

Jesus did not decide the places on the right hand and the left hand by human request. He said that they would be given to those for whom God the Father had prepared them. The places of the kingdom of God are not obtained by blood ties and human relationships, by requests or by competition. God knows exactly the faith and the inmost heart and the faithfulness of each person, and He entrusts them according to His own will.

When the other ten disciples heard that the two brothers had asked for high positions, they were greatly displeased. But their anger was not pure and righteous indignation. They too were interested in high positions, and therefore they were displeased that the two brothers were trying to take those places first. In the end, in the hearts of the twelve disciples also there was a spirit of competition to become higher than one another.

Jesus called the disciples and taught them that the power of the world and the power of the kingdom of God are different. The rulers of the Gentiles govern the people according to their own will, and those who are great exercise their authority over others. In the world the person who moves others and is treated well is regarded as the great one.

But Jesus said, *"Yet it shall not be so among you."* In the kingdom of God the great one is not the person who presses others down and exalts himself. The person who desires to be great must become one who serves others, and the person who desires to be first must become the slave of all.

This word does not mean that responsibility and order within the church are to be done away with. The authority to teach the Word of God and to correct what is wrong is necessary. But that authority must not become a means of dominating people for

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one's own honor and profit. The offices and the leadership of the church must be a service that protects the flock, preaches the gospel, and saves souls.

If a person wants only to be treated well because he believed first in the church or received a high office, he is walking a way opposite to the way of Jesus. The more faith matures, the more one bears with the lack of others, teaches the Word to the person who does not understand the gospel, and looks after the soul who needs help. The great person in the kingdom of God is revealed not by how much service he has received but by how much he has given himself for the gospel and for souls.

Jesus did not teach that principle only with words. He said that *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."* The Son of God, who has all the authority of heaven and earth, put on the form of a servant, came to this earth, and served sinners.

The greatest service that Jesus accomplished is that He became the ransom for sinners. A ransom means the price paid in the place of a captive or a slave in order to set him free. The sinner was bound under sin and judgment, and the price of it was death. By giving His own life, Jesus bore in our place the judgment of sin that we had to receive.

But we must not explain the redemption of Jesus by the blood of the cross alone. Jesus first bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The sinless Jesus, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of sinners, took over all the sin of mankind and became the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the world.

Bearing the sin He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus was hung on the cross. There He shed His blood and died and so paid all the wages of

sin, and rising again on the third day He gave righteousness and eternal life to the person who believes. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this baptism and cross and resurrection are the work of salvation that completely fulfilled the righteousness of God.

That Jesus gave His own life as *"a ransom for many"* does not mean that He bore the sin of only some people. Jesus bore the sin of all the people of the world and accomplished a redemption sufficient for all people. Yet it is the person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished who receives, through this grace of salvation, the complete remission of sin and eternal life.

We do not buy salvation by serving the Lord. Jesus served us first and became the ransom and completed salvation. We receive that salvation freely by faith, and out of thanksgiving for the grace we have received we serve others and the gospel. Service is not a condition of salvation but the fruit that appears from the heart of the person who has been saved.

The service of Jesus was not an unconditional providing of convenience that covers over sin as though it were not sin. The Lord taught the truth and rebuked sin, and He sacrificed Himself in order to save sinners. Therefore evangelical service also is not a matter of flattering people but of helping that soul to hear the truth and receive the remission of sin.

The person who has believed the gospel must regard the service entrusted to him as more precious than a high position. Even though his name is not known, to preach the gospel, to bear the necessary work of the church, and to care for the weak is precious work in the kingdom of God. We must use our bodies and our time and our material things to serve the gospel, and we must do it not in order to obtain the praise of men but out of thanksgiving to the Lord who saved us first.

Matthew 20:17–28 shows the true relationship between the

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cross and glory, and between authority and service. Jesus is the highest of all, and yet He came down to the lowest place; after bearing our sin by His baptism He gave His own life as a ransom on the cross, and by His resurrection He completed salvation. We must believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin, and rather than seeking worldly position and honor we must become people who serve the gospel and souls according to the heart of Jesus.

The person whose spiritual eyes have been opened believes in Jesus as the Son of David and the Savior and follows the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished

"Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!' Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!' So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him" (Matthew 20:29–34).

When Jesus left Jericho and was going up to Jerusalem, a great multitude followed Him. Jesus had already said that in Jerusalem He would suffer mocking and scourging and be crucified and rise again on the third day. Therefore this road was the road on which He would go to the cross bearing the sin of the world that He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and would pay the wages of

that sin and rise again and so complete the mission of salvation.

By that road two men who could not see were sitting. They could not see Jesus with their eyes, but they heard with their ears the news that Jesus was passing by. And through the word they heard, they believed that Jesus was One who could help them. Seeing with the eyes of the flesh does not necessarily mean believing, and even without seeing with the eyes a person can hear the Word and rightly believe in Jesus.

The two men called Jesus *"Son of David."* This is a confession that Jesus is not merely a teacher who heals diseases well or a man who works miracles, but the Messiah and the Savior whom God promised to David. Many people saw the appearance of Jesus and yet did not know who He was, but these men, even in their blindness, acknowledged Jesus as the promised Savior.

The two men cried out, *"Have mercy on us."* They did not put forward their own merit or qualification. They acknowledged that they could not open their own eyes by their own strength and that they needed only the mercy of the Lord. Saving faith also begins with acknowledging that one is a sinner who needs help before God.

If a man does not know his own sin and his own helplessness, he does not ask for the mercy of God. If he thinks that he has lived a good life and has kept his religious life well, he feels no reason to ask the Lord for salvation. But the person who has discovered the sin of his own heart before the Word of God realizes that by his own good deeds he cannot escape judgment, and so he comes to seek the Savior.

The multitude rebuked the two men and told them to be quiet. Even while following Jesus, they hindered those who desperately needed help from coming to the Lord. They regarded the cry of the blind men only as a troublesome noise, and they

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did not consider the fact that these men absolutely needed the help of Jesus.

The church today can also commit the fault of hindering people rather than leading them to Jesus. We must not despise a person who wants to know the gospel because he lacks knowledge of the Bible or asks his questions clumsily. To treat someone carelessly because he is poor or sick or has no social standing is also contrary to the will of the Lord. To the person who is trying to come to Jesus we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit calmly and clearly.

The more the multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, the more loudly the two men called on the Lord. This was because meeting Jesus was more important to them than the eyes of other people or their own dignity. They must have thought that if Jesus passed by, such an opportunity might never come again. Therefore, even while they were hindered, they did not stop their cry toward the Lord.

Therefore we must not treat lightly an opportunity to hear the gospel. A man thinks that he will believe next time, but he does not know how much time is left to him. When God lets us hear the gospel, we must lay down the judgment of the world and our own stubbornness and open our hearts before the Word.

Yet the fact that the two men cried out with a loud voice does not mean that the loudness of their voice became the merit of their salvation. What is important is not the loudness of the cry but whom they believed in and called upon. They believed in Jesus as the Son of David and as the Savior who would have compassion on them. The power of faith lies not in the zeal of man itself but in Jesus, the object of faith.

Jesus heard their cry and stopped on the way He was going. Even in the midst of the important journey toward the cross, He did not turn away from two suffering men. The great multitude

regarded them as troublesome, but to Jesus two souls asking for help were precious. The Lord listens even to the cry of a person who is regarded in the world as small and weak.

Jesus asked, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* He did not ask because He did not know their need. He asked so that they might clearly confess their own need and make it clear from whom they were seeking help. The two men did not ask for some vague blessing but answered honestly, *"Lord, that our eyes may be opened."*

Jesus *"had compassion"* on them and touched their eyes. Here the deep mercy of the Lord toward suffering people is revealed. Jesus is not One who only looks at the pain of man from afar but One who comes near and touches and restores. That they immediately received sight shows that Jesus is the Creator and the Lord of life.

Yet we must not interpret this passage as though every disease came about because of the individual sin of that person or because of his lack of faith. The Bible does not say why these two men became unable to see. We must not add guilt to a person who has a disease or a disability, nor condemn him as having no faith. The sick person needs prayer and love, appropriate treatment, and practical help.

Moreover, just because Jesus immediately opened the eyes of these men, we should not promise that every believer will certainly be healed of a physical illness right now if they pray. God sometimes heals disease, but at other times He gives the grace to endure in the midst of suffering. The bodies of those who believe will be completely set free from all disease and death at the last resurrection.

The opening of the eyes of the flesh is precious, but a man needs a more fundamental opening of the eyes. The person who is under sin says that he knows Jesus, and yet he does not see

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that the Lord removed all sin by His baptism and the cross. Even if a person has attended church for a long time and has read the Bible much, if his own righteousness and his religious tradition hide the righteousness of God from him, he is spiritually in darkness.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, for the spiritual eyes to be opened is to understand through the Word and to believe how Jesus removed our sin. Jesus bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. He took onto Himself all our sin, including our unbelief and pride, our greed and our evil thoughts.

Bearing that sin, Jesus was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so He received the whole punishment of sin. And rising again on the third day, He became the Savior who gives the remission of sin and eternal life to the person who believes. That Jesus left Jericho and went to Jerusalem was also a step of obedience taken precisely in order to complete this salvation.

The baptism that Jesus received from John, the cross, and the resurrection are one salvation that cannot be separated from one another. By the baptism He bore the sin of mankind, on the cross He was judged for that sin, and by the resurrection He fulfilled complete righteousness. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the righteousness of God and true salvation.

The person whose spiritual eyes have been opened believes the Word of God rather than his own feelings. Even when guilt is felt in his heart, he looks at the fact that Jesus bore all sin and was judged for it. He does not deny his own lack, but he believes in the salvation of Jesus, which is greater and more complete than that lack. This is the faith that comes out of darkness into light.

After their eyes were opened, the two men did not return to their own way but followed Jesus. The grace they received from the Lord did not end merely in the brightening of their eyes. They followed Jesus, who had compassion on them and healed them, as the Lord of their new life. True salvation does not end in having the problems of the world solved but leads on to a life lived according to the Word of the Lord who saved us.

We too must not regard Jesus as One who only solves the difficulties of life. We may pray about the problems of health and material things and the family, but the greatest grace is the remission of sin and eternal life. Even if the problems of the flesh are solved, if sin remains as it is, one cannot escape eternal judgment. First we must have our spiritual eyes opened by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe in Jesus as the complete Savior.

The person who has already believed the gospel and received the remission of sin must also serve so that the eyes of other souls may be opened. We must not despise or condemn the person who does not know the gospel, but must tell him the salvation that Jesus accomplished by His baptism and the cross and the resurrection. Even though people hinder them, we must open the way so that the souls who seek the gospel may come to the Lord.

In Matthew 20:29–34 Jesus is the Lord of mercy who hears the cry of a suffering person, and the Savior who opens not only the eyes of the flesh but also the spiritual eyes that have been covered by sin. Like the two blind men, we must acknowledge our own helplessness and believe in Jesus as the Son of David and the Savior. And after receiving the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not return to the world but must follow Jesus, who saved us, and preach this gospel of life to other souls as well. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 20

[Question] 1. What is the way of service that Matthew Chapter 20 speaks of, and what events reveal it?

The way of service that Matthew Chapter 20 speaks of is to humble oneself and become the slave of others, and Jesus Himself showed the example of it. Matthew Chapter 20 is made up of the word concerning the grace of the kingdom of heaven, the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus, the attitude of service, and the healing of the two blind men.

First, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in verses 1–16, the owner called laborers and set them to work from early in the morning until the eleventh hour, and gave a denarius to every one of them. The men who came first complained, but the owner gave the same wage even to the men who came last, according to his own good will. The salvation and the blessing of the kingdom of heaven are given not by the merit of man but by the grace and the sovereignty of God.

"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16).

Second, in verses 17–19 Jesus foretold that in Jerusalem He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes and be put to death, and that after suffering mocking and scourging at the hands of the Gentiles He would be crucified. At the same time He also said that He would rise again on the third day.

Third, in verses 20–28 the mother of the two sons of Zebedee asked that her two sons might sit on the right hand and the left

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hand in the kingdom of the Lord. Through this the desire of the disciples for position and authority was revealed. Jesus taught that in order to become great in the kingdom of heaven one must become a person who serves others.

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Fourth, in verses 29–34, as Jesus was leaving Jericho, two blind men called Him *"Son of David"* and asked for His mercy. Jesus had compassion on them and opened their eyes, and the two men who were healed followed Jesus.

Therefore the central content of Matthew Chapter 20 is that the kingdom of heaven is given not by the merit of man but by the grace of God, and that the great person in the kingdom of heaven is not the person who exalts himself but the person who, like Jesus, humbles himself and serves others. Moreover Jesus is the Savior who gave His own life as a ransom in order to save many people and who rose again from death.

[Question] 2. In Matthew 20:1–16, explain the relationship of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard to the content of Matthew Chapter 19.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is a parable that explains in concrete terms the word at the end of Matthew Chapter 19, that the one who is first becomes last and the one who is last becomes first.

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30).

Peter asked what they would obtain, since they had left everything and followed the Lord. While promising a reward, Jesus warned that they must not boast of their own sacrifice and

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merit on the ground that they had followed the Lord first.

In the parable of the vineyard in Chapter 20, the laborers who came first thought that they ought to receive more wages because they had worked longer. But the owner gave the same one denarius even to the laborers who came last. The salvation and the blessing of the kingdom of heaven are not a wage received according to the hours a man has worked or according to his merit; they are given by the good will and the grace of God.

"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16).

Therefore the relationship between Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 is as follows. In Chapter 19 Jesus spoke of the reward and of the principle of the one who is first and the one who is last, and through the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Chapter 20 He explained that before the grace of God one must not put forward one's own merit or compare one's reward with that of another person.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 20:1–16, what persons appear in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard? Name them all.

The persons who appear in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard are as follows.

The landowner, who is the owner of the vineyard; the steward, who gives out the wages according to the command of the owner; the laborers hired early in the morning; the laborers hired at the third hour; the laborers hired at the sixth hour; the laborers hired at the ninth hour; and the laborers hired at the eleventh hour

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard"

(Matthew 20:1).

In the parable the landowner represents God, the vineyard represents the kingdom of God and His field of work, and the laborers called at various hours represent the people who received the calling of God at different times. The steward has the role of giving out the wages to the laborers according to the will of the owner.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 20:1–7, in what manner were the laborers of the vineyard hired and set to work at that time?

The laborers of a vineyard in ancient Israel were day laborers who had no fixed employment. They gathered early in the morning in the marketplace or the public square and waited for someone to hire them, and the owner of a vineyard chose the number of men he needed and set them to work for one day.

The working hours of a day at that time were generally from about six in the morning, when the sun rose, until about six in the evening, when the sun set. The third hour points to about nine in the morning, the sixth hour to noon, the ninth hour to about three in the afternoon, and the eleventh hour to about five in the afternoon.

The laborers who were hired first agreed with the owner beforehand on the wage for the day.

"Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:2).

One denarius was the ordinary wage of one day for one laborer at that time. To the men who were hired later, instead of a fixed amount, the owner promised, "*whatever is right I will give you,*" and so they trusted the judgment of the owner and

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went into the vineyard.

It was the rule that the wage be paid on the evening of the very day the work was finished. This was because a day laborer had to support himself and his family with the wage he received that day.

"Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it" (Deuteronomy 24:15).

Therefore the custom of the laborers of a vineyard was a form of day labor in which they waited in the marketplace to be hired, agreed with the owner on the wage for the day, worked in the vineyard, and received the wage of that day when the sun went down. The men who remained in the marketplace until the eleventh hour were not men who hated to work; they were people in a poor and unstable condition who had no one to hire them.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 20:1, 3, 5, 6, at what hours did the owner of the vineyard hire the laborers?

The hours at which the laborers of the vineyard were hired are as follows.

Early in the morning: about six in the morning

The third hour: about nine in the morning

The sixth hour: about twelve noon

The ninth hour: about three in the afternoon

The eleventh hour: about five in the afternoon

"And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace" (Matthew 20:3).

"Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and

did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle" (Matthew 20:5–6).

At that time about six in the morning, when the sun rose, was reckoned as the beginning of the day. Therefore the laborers hired at the eleventh hour were men who entered the vineyard about one hour before the work of the day was over.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 20:2, 9, 10, 13, about how much was the one denarius promised to the laborers worth at that time?

One denarius was a silver coin used in Rome at that time, and it was the ordinary wage that one common laborer received for working one day.

"Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:2).

The laborers hired early in the morning agreed with the owner to receive one denarius on the condition that they work the whole day. Yet the laborers of the eleventh hour, who worked only one hour, also received one denarius alike.

"And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius" (Matthew 20:9–10).

Therefore, rather than a great fortune, one denarius corresponds to a daily wage that can support a laborer and his family for a day. It is difficult to convert exactly into today's currency, but in meaning, it is a day's wage for a day laborer.

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[Question] 7. In Matthew 20:3, what kind of place was the marketplace for the laborers?

The *"marketplace"* was the public square that stood at the center of a village or a town at that time. It was a market where things were bought and sold, and it was also the place where people gathered and shared news, where trials and public business were handled, and where day laborers waited to be hired.

"And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace" (Matthew 20:3).

That the laborers here were "standing idle" does not mean that they were loafing because they hated to work. It means that they were waiting in the marketplace because they had not met an owner who would hire them. The owner of the vineyard went out to that place, called the laborers, and set them to work in his own vineyard.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 20:8–10, in what order and in what manner did the owner of the vineyard give the wages to the laborers?

When the day came to an end, the owner of the vineyard had his steward call the laborers and pay out the wages. The order of payment was from the man who had come last to the man who had come first.

"So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first'" (Matthew 20:8).

The laborer who came at the eleventh hour and worked only one hour also received a denarius. When the laborers who came

first saw this, they thought that they would receive more, but they too received one denarius each, as had been promised.

"And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius" (Matthew 20:9–10).

Therefore, although the hours they had worked were different, one denarius was paid alike to every laborer. The owner bestowed grace on all the laborers according to his own good will.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 20:11, 12, on what account did the laborers who were hired first complain against the owner?

The laborers who came first were displeased that, although they had toiled the whole day in the heat, they had received one denarius just like the laborers who came last and worked only one hour, and so they complained against the owner.

"And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day'" (Matthew 20:11–12).

They had received exactly the wage they had agreed on with the owner, but comparing themselves with others they thought that they ought to receive a greater reward. In this dissatisfaction there appears a heart that puts forward its own labor and merit and is displeased with the grace the owner bestowed on the men who came last.

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[Question] 10. In Matthew 20:13–15, how do the words the owner spoke to the laborer show the sovereign providence of God?

The owner's words reveal the sovereign providence that God has the absolute authority to give what is His own according to His will, and that He does injustice to no one.

"But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'" (Matthew 20:13–15).

The owner paid exactly the one denarius he had promised to the laborer who came first, and therefore he was not unjust. At the same time he showed the goodwill of giving the same wage also to the laborer who came last.

God is not One who gives salvation and blessing and reward as a payment for the merit of man, but One who gives them according to His own good will and grace. Therefore the believer must not envy the grace of God bestowed on another person, nor put forward his own labor, but must believe the sovereignty and the goodness of God.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 20:15, *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"*—what character of God is contained in this word?

As the word *"Is your eye evil because I am good?"* says, God is a good and merciful One who bestows His grace and blessing abundantly according to His own good pleasure.

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15).

The owner gave the laborer who came first the whole wage he had promised, and so he did no injustice. Not only that, but he also gave generously the wage that was needed even to the laborer who came late and worked little. The grace of God comes not from the merit of man but from the goodness of God.

On the other hand, to regard something as evil points to the heart that envies and is displeased when another person receives grace. Therefore this word shows the goodness and the abundant mercy of God, and at the same time it rebukes the evil heart of man that envies the grace another person receives.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 20:16, compare how this saying and the saying of Matthew 19:30 are expressed differently.

The two words have the same content, but there is a difference in the order of the expression and in the point of emphasis.

Matthew 19:30 speaks by putting the one who is first in front.

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30).

Matthew 20:16, on the other hand, puts the one who is last in front.

"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16).

The differences in expression are as follows.

Matthew 19:30 speaks in the order of the one who is first and then the one who is last, and the word *"many"* is added to it.

Matthew 20:16 changes the order and speaks in the order of the one who is last and then the one who is first.

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Matthew 19:30 is the word that leads into the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, and Matthew 20:16 closes that parable with the word *"So."*

Therefore in Chapter 19 the weight lies in warning against the pride of the one who is first, while in Chapter 20 the fact that even the one who is last can become first by the grace of God is emphasized still more.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 20:17, how is the time at which Jesus gave the third foretelling of His suffering made plain?

The time at which Jesus foretold His suffering for the third time was while He was going up to Jerusalem together with His disciples. Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and spoke to them of what He would suffer.

"Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them" (Matthew 20:17).

This was the time when the earthly ministry of Jesus had reached its last stage and the suffering and the death of the cross had drawn near.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 20:17–19, what meaning does this foretelling of the suffering have in the context before and after it?

A man receives the same remission of sin and the same salvation not by the greatness or the smallness of his merit or labor but by the grace of God. That grace of salvation was fully accomplished through the baptism that Jesus received from John

the Baptist, through the death of the cross, and through His resurrection from death.

By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself. And He said beforehand that, bearing that sin, He would go up to Jerusalem and be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, that He would suffer mocking and scourging at the hands of the Gentiles, that He would be crucified and die, and that on the third day He would rise again from death. The death of Jesus was not a failure that happened unexpectedly; it was the work of redemption that God had foreordained in order to save sinners.

Moreover this word forms a clear contrast with the dispute of the disciples over position that follows. Jesus spoke of bearing the sin of men and of giving up His own life, but the disciples were thinking about who would sit in the higher place in the kingdom of the Lord.

Jesus, who is the highest of all, laid aside the glory of heaven and bore all the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He received the punishment of that sin on the cross and completed salvation by rising again from death. Therefore verses 17–19 foretell the salvation that would be accomplished by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and at the same time they prepare the lesson that follows, namely that the one who follows the Lord must humble himself and serve for the sake of the gospel and of souls rather than seek a high position.

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[Question] 15. In Matthew 20:18, 19, what feature does the third foretelling of the suffering have in comparison with the foretellings that came before?

The greatest feature of the third foretelling of the suffering is that Jesus spoke far more concretely than before of the course of the suffering He would undergo and of the manner of His death.

"The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again" (Matthew 20:18–19).

Its features are as follows.

• He made plain that the place where He would suffer was Jerusalem.

• He said that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes.

• He foretold that the Jewish leaders would condemn Jesus to death.

• He said that He would be delivered to the Gentiles.

• He made plain in concrete terms that He would suffer mocking and scourging.

• He did not simply say that He would be put to death but clearly said that He would be crucified.

• He again foretold with certainty that after He died He would rise again on the third day.

Therefore the third foretelling of the suffering is the prophecy that showed most concretely the whole course of the arrest and trial of Jesus, His being delivered to the Gentiles, the mocking and the scourging, the death of the cross, and the resurrection. The death of Jesus was not an accidental event but the way of redemption that the Lord walked, knowing it beforehand, in order to save sinners.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 20:20–28, against what background were this request and this teaching made? Explain the circumstances in detail.

The request and the teaching of Matthew 20:20–28 were made right after Jesus, going up to Jerusalem together with His disciples, had foretold His own suffering and death and resurrection for the third time.

Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and spoke concretely of what would happen to Him in Jerusalem. Jesus made plain that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes and be condemned to be put to death, that He would be delivered to the Gentiles and suffer mocking and scourging, and that after being crucified He would rise again on the third day.

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again" (Matthew 20:18–19).

Yet even after hearing the word of Jesus, the disciples did not fully understand the way of the cross that He would walk. They thought that when Jesus went up to Jerusalem He would at once establish a glorious kingdom. That Jesus had earlier said to the twelve disciples that they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel also made their expectation great. The interest of the disciples lay not in the suffering of Jesus but in the position they themselves would occupy in that kingdom.

At that very time the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her two sons, knelt down, and asked one thing. The two sons of Zebedee were James and John. The mother asked that in the kingdom of Jesus one son might sit on the right hand of the Lord and the other on the left hand. The right and the left

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of a king meant the places that enjoyed authority and glory second only to the king himself.

Matthew records that their mother made the request, but Mark 10:35–37 records that James and John themselves asked Jesus directly. The two records do not contradict each other. The mother brought her two sons and spoke their will on their behalf, and James and John also took part in that request.

This request came from understanding the kingdom of Jesus as though it were a kingdom of this world. They had an interest in the glory of which Jesus spoke, but they did not understand the way of suffering and service that comes before that glory. Therefore Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"You do not know what you ask"* and He asked whether they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink.

The cup of which Jesus spoke points to the suffering and the death of the cross that He would receive according to the will of God the Father. In Mark, along with the cup that Jesus drinks, *"the baptism that I am baptized with"* is also mentioned. The baptism here is a figurative expression that represents being plunged into suffering and death, and it does not point to the same event as the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

James and John answered confidently that they were able to drink that cup. Jesus said that they would indeed drink His cup. This indicates that they too would suffer persecution and affliction for the sake of the gospel. But He made plain that the places on His right hand and His left hand are not obtained by human request or by ties of blood, but are given to those for whom God the Father has prepared them.

The remaining ten disciples who heard this request were angry with James and John. But they were angry not because they had understood the principle of service. Because they too had a desire to take a high position, they were displeased that the

two brothers had asked for a special place first. In the end all twelve of the disciples were looking at the kingdom of Jesus from the point of view of worldly authority and rank.

Jesus called these disciples and taught them that the authority of the world and the order of the kingdom of God are different from each other. The rulers of the Gentiles govern people at their own will and exercise authority over them, but among the disciples of Jesus the person who desires to be great must become one who serves others, and the person who desires to be first must become a slave.

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Matthew 20:26–27).

Jesus made them find the most perfect example of such service in Himself. Jesus is not a king of the world who came in order to be served, but the Savior who came in order to serve sinners and to give His own life as a ransom for many.

By the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body. And bearing that sin, He went up to Jerusalem and received the punishment of sin by shedding His blood and dying on the cross, and He completed salvation by rising again on the third day. This is the service in which Jesus gave His own life as a ransom for many.

Therefore verses 20–28 are the scene in which Jesus, who was facing the suffering of the cross, and the disciples, who were seeking high positions, stand in clear contrast. Jesus corrected the mistaken desire of the disciples for authority and taught that the person who is truly great in the kingdom of God is not the person who exalts his own position but the person who serves other souls for the sake of the Lord and the gospel.

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[Question] 17. In Matthew 20:20, who was it that came with her sons, knelt down, and made a request?

The person who came to Jesus and made the request was the mother of James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. She came to Jesus with her two sons, knelt down, and asked something.

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him" (Matthew 20:20).

She asked that her two sons might sit in the kingdom of Jesus, one on the right hand and the other on the left hand. This was a request that sought high position and glory.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 20:21, what places did Salome ask of Jesus for her two sons?

Salome asked that her two sons, James and John, might sit in the kingdom of Jesus, one on the right hand and the other on the left hand.

"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom" (Matthew 20:21).

The right hand and the left hand mean the high places that attend the king most closely. Therefore Salome was asking that, when Jesus established His kingdom, He would give her two sons the highest position and authority.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 20:22, what did Jesus mean by the word *"You do not know what you ask."*

The word *"You do not know what you ask"* means that James and John, not knowing the true meaning of the place they had asked for and the suffering that goes with that place, were asking only for glory and authority.

"But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able'" (Matthew 20:22).

Thinking of the kingdom of Jesus as though it were a kingdom of this world, they asked for a high position. But the way that Jesus was going was not the way of enjoying authority; it was the way of the cross, on which He would suffer and give up His life.

"the cup that I am about to drink" means the suffering and the death that Jesus would receive. Therefore, before they sought a place of glory, Jesus was asking whether they were ready to suffer together with the Lord and to serve. The disciples answered that they were able, but at that time they did not sufficiently understand its meaning.

[Question] 20. In Matthew 20:22, 23, what does the *"cup"* that He asked them whether they would drink point to?

The *"cup"* of which Jesus spoke means the suffering and the death that God had appointed. For Jesus it points to the suffering of redemption in which He had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body by the baptism He received from

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John, and, after suffering mocking and scourging, was crucified and died. Jesus had no sin, but because of our sin, which He bore by His baptism, He received on the cross in our place the judgment of all that sin.

"Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able" (Matthew 20:22).

Jesus said that James and John also would suffer persecution and affliction while following the Lord.

"So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father'" (Matthew 20:23).

Therefore to drink the cup means to obey the will of the Lord and to accept the suffering entrusted to one. Yet there is this difference: the suffering of Jesus was the suffering of redemption in which, after bearing the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John, He received in our place the punishment of that sin on the cross, whereas the suffering of the disciples is not a suffering that redeems the sin of men but the persecution and the sacrifice received for the sake of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and for the name of Jesus.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 20:24, what does the reaction of the ten disciples, who were angry with the two sons of Zebedee, show about their hearts?

That the ten disciples were greatly displeased with James and John shows that they too had a spirit of competition and envy that desired to obtain high position and authority.

"And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased

with the two brothers" (Matthew 20:24).

They were angry not so much because they were righteously rebuking the fault of the two brothers as because of the thought that the two had tried to take a high position ahead of them. Therefore the ten disciples also, like James and John, were understanding the kingdom of Jesus in terms of the power and the rank of a kingdom of this world.

This shows that the disciples of that time had not understood the cross of Jesus and the spirit of service, and that they were held fast by pride and by a spirit of competition to become higher than one another. Therefore Jesus went on to teach that in order to become great one must become a person who serves, and that in order to be first one must become a slave.

[Question] 22. In Matthew 20:25, how did Jesus explain the ruling order of the Gentiles?

The system of order of the Gentile world was a structure of rule from above in which rulers of high position governed the people at their own will and men of authority exercised power over those beneath them.

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them'" (Matthew 20:25).

Such an order of the world is a way in which the one who is high uses his power to dominate the one who is low and to make him submit to his own will. But Jesus taught that the community of the kingdom of heaven must not follow this principle of power and domination. In the kingdom of heaven the one who is high does not lord it over others; rather he must humble himself and become one who serves.

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[Question] 23. In Matthew 20:26, 27, explain the order of the kingdom of heaven and the way to become a great person.

The system of order of the kingdom of heaven is the opposite of the way of the world, in which the high person rules over the low. In the kingdom of heaven the person who desires to be great must become one who serves others, and the person who desires to be first must become the slave of all.

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Matthew 20:26–27).

Greatness in the kingdom of heaven is not decided by high position or by much authority. The person who humbles himself, loves and serves others, and sacrifices himself for their benefit is the great person before God. The service in which Jesus gave His own life as a ransom for many is the most perfect example of this order of the kingdom of heaven.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 20:26, 27, explain the original words for the two terms *"servant"* and *"slave"* and their meanings.

Matthew 20:26–27 says as follows.

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Matthew 20:26–27).

The Greek word for *"servant"* is diakonos (διάκονος). It means a person who cares for the needs of another and waits

upon him, and here it points to a person who humbles himself and actually helps others.

The Greek word for *"slave"* is doulos (δοῦλος). It originally means a servant or a slave who belongs to a master and obeys his will completely. Therefore it expresses a still more thorough humbling and devotion than 'diakonos' does.

Jesus said that the way to become great in the kingdom of heaven lies not in ruling over others but in humbling oneself and serving. It means that the person who desires to be first must not put forward his own rights but must devote himself like the slave of all.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 20:28, what two things are made plain as the purpose for which the Son of Man came?

Matthew 20:28 says as follows.

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The purpose for which Jesus came into the world is twofold.

First, He came not in order to be served by people but in order to serve sinners. Jesus is the Son of God, the highest of all, and yet He humbled Himself, cared for the sick and the weak, and preached the word of salvation to lost souls.

Second, He came in order to give His own life as a ransom for many and so to save them from sin and death. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had the sin of all the people of the world transferred onto His own body, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received in their place the punishment of sin. And by rising again from death He completed salvation.

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Therefore the *"ransom"* of which Jesus spoke does not mean simply that He gave up His life; it means that He bore the sin of mankind by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid the price of that sin in their place on the cross. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which Jesus served and saved sinners.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 20:28, how is this connected with Isaiah Chapter 53?

Matthew 20:28 is the word in which the ministry of the suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah Chapter 53 was fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Here the *"ransom"* means the price paid in the place of a captive or a slave in order to set him free. In order to save the people who were under the power of sin and death, Jesus gave not money or material things but His own life as the price of redemption. Jesus bore in their place the judgment and the death that the sinner had to receive.

Isaiah Chapter 53 prophesies that the Servant of God who was to come would, although He had no sin, bear the iniquities of men in their place and suffer.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Jesus did not suffer because of His own sin; He suffered because He bore the sin of mankind in their place. The word of Matthew 20:28, *"to give His life a ransom for many"* explains this very prophecy of redemption.

First, the Servant of Isaiah Chapter 53 and the Son of Man of Matthew Chapter 20 are both the One who serves by giving Himself willingly. Isaiah prophesied that this Servant would suffer in silence like a lamb led to the slaughter and would pour out His soul unto death. Jesus also said that He had come not to be served but to serve sinners and to give His own life.

Second, both words make plain that the redemption of Jesus is a work carried out in the place of sinners. Isaiah recorded that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and that He bore the iniquity of us all. Matthew records that Jesus gives His own life as a ransom for many. Therefore the death of Jesus is not a mere martyrdom or an example of love but the death of redemption in which He received in their place the punishment that sinners had to receive.

Third, the suffering Servant of whom Isaiah spoke is the trespass offering for sinners.

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

A trespass offering is a sacrifice that bears sin and transgression in the place of another and pays the price of it. Jesus offered His own body and life as the trespass offering for sinners. As a result the righteous judgment of God was carried out, and the person who believes in Jesus has been saved from sin and reconciled with God.

Fourth, both Isaiah Chapter 53 and Matthew 20:28 speak of a work that saves *"many"*.

"By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11).

Jesus is able to justify many because He Himself bore their iniquities and gave His own life as a ransom. The sinner is not

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justified by his own good deeds or by the works of the Law but is justified by believing the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished in his place.

Within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the word that Isaiah prophesied, *"And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* was fulfilled by the baptism that Jesus received from John. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body. After that, bearing the sin He had already taken upon Himself, Jesus was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died and so received the punishment of that sin, and He rose again from death and completed salvation.

Therefore Isaiah Chapter 53 is the word that prophesied beforehand that Jesus would bear the sin of mankind and suffer, and Matthew 20:28 is the word in which Jesus made plain that He Himself is the Servant of redemption who fulfills that prophecy. The person who believes the baptism of Jesus and the death of the cross and the resurrection receives the remission of all his sin, becomes a righteous person, and obtains eternal life.

[Question] 27. In Matthew 20:29, when did the healing of the two blind men take place?

The event in which the two blind men were healed took place when Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho and going up to Jerusalem. This was the time when Jesus was making His last journey toward Jerusalem, facing the suffering and the death of the cross.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 20:29, where is Jericho located geographically, and what history does the place have?

Jericho is an ancient town that lies in the Jordan Valley, west of the Jordan River and north of the Dead Sea. Because it was an oasis abundant in springs and palm trees, it was called in the Old Testament the *"city of palm trees."*

Jericho lay on the road that goes over the Jordan River and up to Jerusalem, and so it was an important place militarily, for travel, and for trade. In the Old Testament it is famous as the first town that the people of Israel conquered when they entered Canaan. In the time of the New Testament it became a prosperous city, for Herod built palaces and buildings nearby.

In Matthew Chapter 20, Jesus passed through this Jericho on His way up to Jerusalem in order to bear the cross, and as He was leaving the town He healed two blind men.

[Question] 29. In Matthew 20:30–34, explain the cry of the two blind men and the answer of Jesus.

The two blind men first believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the One who would save them. Therefore they called Him *"O Lord"* and *"Son of David!"* and asked for His mercy.

Although the multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, they cried out all the more loudly so as not to lose the opportunity of meeting Jesus. And when Jesus asked what they wanted, they clearly begged, *"Lord, that our eyes may be opened."* Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes, and they immediately received sight and followed Jesus.

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A man receives the remission of sin when he acknowledges his own spiritual blindness, believes in Jesus as the Savior, and believes the fact that the Lord has removed all his sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With such faith the two blind men received the mercy of the Lord and had their eyes opened, and afterward they became disciples who followed Jesus.

[Question] 30. In Matthew 20:29–34, what does the event in which Jesus healed the two blind men, who called on the Son of David and asked for mercy, reveal?

The account in which Jesus healed the two blind men has the following meanings.

First, that the two blind men called Jesus *"Son of David"* means that they believed in Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

Second, that they cried out all the more loudly even when people rebuked them shows an earnest and persistent faith that was certain of the mercy and the power of Jesus.

Third, Jesus is the true Savior who has mercy on the suffering person and saves him.

Fourth, that the men whose eyes were opened followed Jesus shows that true healing does not end simply in the recovery of the body but must lead on to a life of knowing Jesus and following Him.

Therefore Jesus is the Messiah who gives light not only to the eyes of the flesh but also to the spiritual eyes of man, which have been darkened by sin.

[Question] 31. In Matthew 20:34, explain the reason that this time, unlike the case of Matthew 9:30, He did not tell the blind men who were healed to tell no one.

Matthew Chapter 9 was in the early period of the ministry of Jesus. At that time Jesus did not want the rumor alone to grow through His miracles, or people to misunderstand Him as One who only heals diseases of the body, or as a king of this world. Because the time had not yet come for Him to accomplish the work of salvation on the cross, He commanded the blind men to tell no one.

But Matthew Chapter 20 was the last period, in which Jesus was going up to Jerusalem in order to bear the cross. For the two blind men this was, as it were, the last opportunity to meet Jesus as He passed by. After Jesus healed these men, the time had come for Him to enter Jerusalem openly and to show that He is the Messiah who came as the Son of David. Therefore there was no longer any need for Him to hide His ministry as before.

Furthermore, the two blind men in Matthew 20 followed Jesus immediately after their eyes were opened. This shows that they did not stop at simply making the miracle known, but became disciples who believed in Jesus as their Savior and followed Him. Therefore, the difference between the two events was not that Jesus' will had changed, but that the timing in His ministry was different—as He was now fulfilling salvation through the cross and resurrection after having borne the sin of the world through His baptism by John. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who has given us a fitting salvation

< Matthew 20:1-16 >

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did

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you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

The promise of one denarius

Today, through Matthew Chapter 20, I would like to share the word concerning the promise of one denarius of which our Lord speaks. The Lord said this: *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1–2).*

A certain landowner went out early in the morning to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. Here the vineyard means the church, and the laborers mean the saints who are in the church. Whether one is a saint or a worker of God, only the position is different; they are the same in serving the Lord and in living for the Lord.

Now this owner of the vineyard made the promise of one denarius to the laborers and sent them into his vineyard. When he went out at the third hour, there were men standing idle in the marketplace because they had no work. In a hard time when there are no jobs, are there not many people idle like that? The owner told those men also that he would give them a denarius, and he sent them into his vineyard.

"And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go

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into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive'" (Matthew 20:3–7).

According to what the owner promised

When evening had come, the owner of the vineyard told his steward to call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first. This word is very easy. It says that the owner of the vineyard had his worker gather all the men who had no work on the road, settled a wage of one denarius, set them to work in his vineyard, and gave them a denarius as the payment for it.

The problem, however, is that there were men who came in early in the morning, and men who came in during the day, and men who came in one hour before the work was finished. Let us say that the day's work ends in the evening. When it becomes dark one cannot work, and so one must receive the wage and go home. Now the owner first called the man who had worked only one hour and gave him a denarius.

Since he received the same wage for one hour as for a whole day of work, how glad that man must have been! He greeted the owner, saying, "Thank you; I worked only one hour, and yet you have given me so much," and went away. To the next man also the owner gave a denarius. This man too had expected to receive more, and when he received the same, his face was not bright. He had received it, but he thought that it did not stand to reason.

To the next man also he gave a denarius. Because this man had seen everything that the men before him received, at last he raised a protest. Sir, he demanded, where in the world is there such a rule as this? We have suffered so much in the burning sun; what is this? It was the same with the men who had worked from early in the morning. They complained that these last men had worked only one hour, and yet he had made them equal to those who had borne the whole day of toil and heat.

Then the owner answered one of them. *"But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'" (Matthew 20:13–15).*

One denarius speaks of the salvation that is equal for everyone

What promise has God made with us within the church of God? When you first believed in Jesus, with what promise did He bring you into this church and make you serve God and do His work? He made the promise of one denarius.

Then what is the one denarius? That one denarius promised alike to the man who came at the third hour, to the man who came at the sixth hour, and to the man who came at the eleventh hour—it is salvation. It is the remission of sin. It is this blessing of being born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit; God has given this remission of sin, within the church, to everyone who believes in Jesus, to everyone who believes in Jesus and does the work of God. The man who came in late also received one denarius, and the man who came in early also

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received the same one denarius.

Therefore the Lord said, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30)*. Does a man receive salvation first because he came to church first, because he believed in Jesus first? That is not necessarily so. Then does a man receive salvation late because he believed in Jesus late? Must there be ten years, must there be twenty years, in order to receive salvation? That is not so.

There is a man who believed in Jesus first but did not know this word of blessing about being born again of water and the Spirit—that is, the meaning of the baptism that Jesus received from John and of the blood that He shed on the cross—and who, thirty years after he first believed in Jesus, heard this word and received the remission of sin. One man received it after twenty years, and another after ten years.

There was a man who did not know Jesus at all, who had never once given an offering, and who did nothing but slander those who believed in Jesus; but the brothers and sisters urged him earnestly, and he came into the church almost as though he were pushed, and he came to hear the Word. It happened that on that day the gospel was being preached.

That man heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It was the word that in the Old Testament the laying on of hands passed sin on to the sacrifice, and that in the New Testament Jesus received baptism from John, the representative of mankind, and had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself, and bore that sin and went and was judged in our place on the cross and died, and rose again on the third day, and so removed all the sin of you and me. When he was asked whether he had sin or not, this man sat blankly for a while and then understood. If He took away all the sin of the world, he thought, then He took away my sin also; then I am not a sinner, I am a righteous person, I have

received salvation. Some people receive the remission of sin even one day after they believe in Jesus.

There was another man who served the church with his whole strength for fifty years. At the age of twenty he met an evangelist and began to believe in Jesus in a tent chapel, and he laid the bricks and set the foundation and built a chapel, and he faithfully served that one church alone, doing the work of God and preaching. Yet it was only when he had reached the age of seventy that he came to hear this word of blessing about being born again of water and the Spirit. Before that, although he had studied theology and had learned this and that, he had never once heard it.

That elder received the remission of sin at that time. At that time he was born again of water and the Spirit. Ah, he had thought that believing in Jesus was strange; he had thought that there was something different between the Bible and himself; and now he understood that there had been such a secret as this—that Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John in order to fulfill all righteousness, and that He received it in order to remove all the sin of this world, and that bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and died and rose again.

Yet although he had received the remission of sin and was so glad, one corner of his heart was uncomfortable. For he himself had received the remission of sin after serving for fifty years, while another man had come in that very day as he was passing by, had heard the same word, and had received the remission of sin that day. I have served Jesus for fifty years, he thought, and only today have I heard this word and received the remission of sin; and you, who have never once swept the chapel with a broom, have received the remission of sin—is that not too unfair?

It is precisely this part that our Lord was speaking of. The purpose for which the Lord called us into the church of God and

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made us believe in Jesus was to give us the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, the blessing of becoming children of God and righteous people, the remission of the sin of our hearts. The purpose for which He made us believe in Jesus was that we might know and believe the salvation that Jesus has accomplished—that is, that He has remitted all sin by the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the cross—and so receive the remission of sin, become children of God, become righteous people, obtain eternal life, and live forever.

The fitting recompense Jesus gives

Our Lord said, *"You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you" (Matthew 20:4)*. What is it that the Lord has given as what is right? While telling you and me to go into the vineyard and work, He promised to give what is right; then what is that thing that is right? What is the fitting recompense? To have believed in Jesus and received salvation—that is the fitting recompense. It is to have received something exceedingly great.

Do you know how great a thing it is that, believing in Jesus, our sin has been removed, that we have become righteous people, that we have received salvation? This is exceedingly great. It cannot even be compared with having seen a vision, having spoken in tongues, having received an office, having built several chapels, or having been healed of disease through believing in Jesus. Such things are very small when set beside this salvation. This salvation that God has given us, this remission of sin, this blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, is truly to have received a price that is right.

The owner has given us what we could never receive by our

work, what we could never obtain by human effort. Because the owner is God, He has given us salvation. It is salvation, becoming righteous, the remission of sin, the blessing of the new birth.

By the water and the blood of Jesus Christ, by His sacrifice, by His bearing our sin, He has given salvation to you and me. How great is this salvation! The person who has received this salvation goes to the kingdom of heaven, obtains eternal life, and lives forever together with God. Even if this body dies, when Christ comes it will rise again and live again with a spiritual body that does not become sick and does not decay.

Because of this one salvation we have received, we have obtained the right to call God our Father. Although we are people who commit much sin in this world, like a mist, there is no sin in our hearts. There is none at all. We have received the recompense that is right. We have received the salvation that is right.

If it were an owner of a vineyard on this earth, he would calculate the payment for the work by the hour and be done with it; but our God the Father has given a great salvation to everyone who believes in His Son Jesus Christ, to everyone who believes in the baptism the Son received from John and in the water and the blood He shed on the cross and in His resurrection, to everyone who comes into the church and hears the Word and receives it and does the work of God. Therefore you and I receive the remission of sin by faith.

"The answer of a good conscience toward God"

It says, "*There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer*

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of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). It says that a good conscience seeks God.

I cannot tell you how thankful I am that the Lord received baptism from John for us and that He died on the cross and rose again for us. Even His dying on the cross alone is truly a thing to be thankful for. We were people who ought to have been stripped of our clothes and spat upon and struck on the cheek and beaten with the scourge, and who ought to have suffered every kind of mockery and received judgment because of the sin we had committed. You and I were people who ought to have become such.

Yet although the cross alone is a thing to be thankful for, whenever I am weak I take hold of this word again: that Jesus received baptism from John and had all my sin, all the sin of mankind, transferred onto Himself, and that because of that sin He was judged on the cross and shed His blood and died and rose again. I cannot tell you how thankful I am for this. It is truly a good thing. I am truly thankful.

All of us cannot but be lacking and weak in this world. How thankful a thing it is, then, that the Lord has already borne even the sin we will commit in the future! If a man from his birth until his death is one who commits sin like a mist, like a thick cloud, how good a thing it is that Jesus has borne all that sin! If a person is honest before God, if a person knows the weakness of man, he comes to know how good and how thankful a thing this is.

It says that it is not the removal of the filth of our flesh. It means that He did not do this in order to make us into people who believe in Jesus and give up drinking and give up smoking. It means that He did not do it in order to make us into people who do not commit sin. Then for what did He do it? Knowing that you and I would commit sin, He did it in order to remove all

the sin of you and me, in order to wash it away.

When Jesus received baptism from John He had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself, and on the cross He was judged for that sin and died and rose again; how then could I say in my conscience that I have sin before God? If I were to say that I am a sinner, I would be going against my conscience shamelessly. If a person believes in that baptism and in the blood of the cross, how can he say that he has sin before God? If he has a conscience, he cannot say that he has sin.

That is why it says, *"But the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21)*. It is to give thanks, saying: Lord, thank You; although I am so lacking, You have borne all my sin; that other person also is lacking, and You have removed his sin too; You have borne even the sin of that person passing by; it is truly a good thing; I am truly thankful.

The rich man who cannot enter the kingdom of God is the one who follows his own thoughts

Then, once we have received the remission of sin, is there nothing more? That is not so. Let us look at the word of the previous chapter. *"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:22–26).*

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That young man went away because he had great possessions. He said that he kept the Law well. But when the Lord said that there was one thing he lacked, that he should sell his possessions and give to the poor and follow Him, the young man went away sorrowful. Therefore Jesus spoke to His disciples. Can a camel go through the eye of a needle? It means that a rich man can no more enter than a camel can go through the eye of a needle.

Some people explain that beside a house in the land of Judea there was a small gate through which one person could enter, that this was called the eye of a needle, and that a camel might perhaps get through it. That does not make sense. Our Lord did not use such a metaphor. He spoke exactly as it is. For a rich man to enter the kingdom of God is like a camel going through the eye of a needle, and so it is utterly impossible.

Then how is a man born again? How can he receive salvation? He said that with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. The person who is rich in heart can never obtain salvation.

Even when we say that the Lord received baptism from John in order to fulfill all righteousness and had the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and that bearing that sin He said on the cross that it was finished and died and rose again and saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the person who is rich in heart says that it cannot be so. As far as I know, he says, this word seems to be wrong; a certain scholar said such and such. Not to receive what does not fit one's own thoughts, because one has learned much and knows much—that is being rich in heart.

That is why, when the Lord came to this earth, He said not to forbid the little children to come to Him. A little child is pure. If an adult passing by gives him a coin and tells him to buy a snack, he says thank you and takes it at once. But try giving it that way to an adult. He thinks a thousand thoughts: Is this

person making fun of me? Is he trying to get something out of me? He is full of suspicion.

God had pity on us, who could not keep the Law and could not but die because of sin, and He sent His Son. He raised up John the Baptist and had him give baptism to His Son, and He passed all the sin of the world onto His Son. And He nailed that Son to the cross and judged Him, and after three days He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand. And He said: whoever you are, believe that My Son has borne your sin and has saved you; if you believe, I will give you salvation.

Then one has only to receive it. One has only to say thank you and receive it. I cannot receive salvation by keeping the Law; I am not able; but You have saved me with the water and the blood; thank you—one has only to receive it that way, and yet the rich in heart do not receive it, saying that what they know is otherwise. It says in Romans 3:10 that there is none righteous, they say; how then can a man become righteous by believing in Jesus? However you put it, they say, I still commit sin.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus has taken away even the sin we will commit in the future. All people were sinners, but in order to make us righteous Jesus came as the propitiation and received baptism from John and had that sin transferred onto Himself and died in our place on the cross and rose again. So one has only to receive it when it is given, and yet people do not receive it. That is why it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is impossible.

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True salvation is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

People say of salvation that it is only the foundation. However much a man believes in Jesus, if he does not receive salvation, if he does not receive this blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, it is of no use at all. The birth of Jesus, the baptism He received from John, the blood of the cross, His death and His resurrection—the meaning of all of them is that He did these things in order to make us born again, in order to make us be born as new people. All the work that Jesus Christ has done from the creation of the heavens and the earth until now He has done in order to make us born again, and yet people treat it as though it were nothing.

Is it really nothing? What use is it to cast out demons and to act as a prophet and to receive an office and to rise to a high position without receiving salvation? When a man stands before the Lord, if he has not received salvation he goes to hell. In Matthew Chapter 7 it is written thus: *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22–23).*

The one who practices lawlessness is the one who says that he has sin even while he believes in the Lord. He is the one who says that he has not been born again even while he believes in the Lord. The Lord came once to this earth for us and received baptism from John and had our sin transferred onto Himself and was nailed to the cross and died and rose again on the third day and bore witness for forty days and ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. He removed all the sin of our whole life

once for all; how then can we say that we have sin? Would He then have to come down again and die once more? That is what He is saying.

People regard being born again as a very easy thing. They think that a man may be born again while walking along the road, or born again while dreaming a dream, or born again while praying a prayer of repentance—that one is born again as a pastime. But our Lord said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. What are the water and the Spirit? The baptism that our Lord received from John and the blood of the cross and the resurrection—these are they.

Everyone in whose heart the word of the water and the Spirit is, is one who has received the witness before God. It says, *"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10)*. What witness is it? It is the faith that when Jesus received baptism from John He had my sin, all the sin of mankind, transferred onto Himself and bore it, and the faith that bearing that sin He received all the judgment on the cross in my place and rose again. It means that those words He spoke are believed in the heart: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29), "For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), "It is finished!" (John 19:30)*.

The person in whose heart the Word of God is not, when he is asked by what he was born again, says only that he was born again by the blood of the cross. All the people of the world know about the blood of the cross. But a man is not born again by the blood of the cross alone; he is born again by believing the word of the water and the Spirit. Peter said, *"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23)*. A man is

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not born again by speaking in tongues or by power or by a burning experience or by seeing a vision.

Even if a man believes in the cross of Jesus five thousand times, even a hundred million times, if he does not believe the word that when Jesus received baptism from John He had all his sin transferred onto Himself and bore it and died on the cross and rose again, then although at the moment of believing he seems to have no sin, when he commits sin the next day he becomes a sinner again. However much he prays prayers of repentance, it does not work. And so in the end he falls into the doctrine of imputed righteousness. He has sin, they say, but because he believes in Jesus God overlooks it and counts him righteous, God calls him a righteous person. That is a doctrine made by men; it is not the Word of the Bible.

When we look at the Bible, our Lord actually made us righteous and then declared us righteous. *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24–26).*

He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* In this manner—that is, by the most righteous manner, apart from which it could not be done—Jesus received baptism from John. Just as in the Old Testament the laying on of hands passed sin on to the sacrifice, He received baptism from the representative of mankind and had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself and bore it, and He was judged in our place on the cross and died and rose again, and so He made righteous those who believe in Him.

And He said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. The Lord put on the body of man and came to this earth, and in the thirtieth year of His life He received baptism at the Jordan River from John, the representative of mankind, and had all our sin transferred onto His head; and bearing that sin on His back He went toward the cross for three years. And on the cross He was judged in our place and died, and on the third day He rose again.

Therefore the Lord looked at the paralytic and said, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*, and He looked at the woman caught in the very act of adultery and said, *"Neither do I condemn you" (John 8:11)*. It is the word that He does not judge her, because He has borne her sin. Therefore it says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1–2)*. It is complete liberation. This is the salvation that is right.

To the person who is poor in heart the kingdom of heaven is opened. He said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:3–4)*. The person who is poor in heart says that though he repents of his sin every day it does not work, that though he weeps it does not work, that though he prays with fasting the sin he has committed does not disappear. Even if he fasts forty days, the sin recorded in his heart does not disappear. But He said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. It is the Word that sets us free. Once a man knows this salvation and believes it in his heart, whatever sin he has committed, all that sin disappears like white snow.

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The one who denies himself is acknowledged before God

It is by believing in that way that a man obtains salvation. He said that with men it is impossible but with God it is possible, and God has done it. And after a man has received salvation, persecution comes. That is why He said, *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:29–30).*

After a man has received the remission of sin, people say this to him: If you say that you have no sin, that you are a righteous person, that you are a child of God, do you mean that this whole world is wrong? What would happen if at such a time a man could not endure the persecution and blurted out that salvation is by the blood of the cross alone and that his sin was not transferred to Jesus when Jesus received baptism from John? The baptism that the Lord received from John, the cross, and the resurrection are one connected work of salvation. If a man confesses again that only original sin has been remitted and that the sins he commits daily must be remitted by praying prayers of repentance every day, and if he thereby denies that baptism which the Lord received from John, that man will in the end perish.

If a man is truly born again, he may lose even his friends. He no longer has fellowship of heart with a friend with whom he once got on well. This is because the person in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells and the person in whom He does not dwell are different. They hate him, saying: You have become a strange person; you are not the person you used to be. If because of that he spits out again the faith of the water and the Spirit, he fails of

eternal life. That is exactly the evil person who is picked out from among the righteous. Before God there are three kinds of people: the righteous, the sinner, and the evil person.

The evil person is the one who knows what Jesus Christ has done and yet deliberately tramples on it. If a man knows that when the Lord received baptism from John He had all his sin transferred onto Himself and died on the cross and rose again, and yet denies it again, there is no way for that man to receive the remission of sin again. This is not the story of some denomination. This is the Word of God. If the baptism that Jesus received from John is taken out of the Word of God, then the transferring of the sin of mankind disappears, and the way for our sin to be remitted disappears as well.

Our God is a righteous God. Because He is righteous, He passed the sin of the world onto His Son and made Him die in our place on the cross and raised Him again, and so He saved you and me. If He had died on the cross without receiving baptism, would that have become salvation? Our Lord righteously bore our sin and saved us. That is why He told us to believe in Him, and why He said that if we believe we obtain salvation.

And to those who after being born again have gone through much persecution and have lost the things of this world, to those who purely believe the word of the Lord and follow the Word alone as Abraham did, He says: you are the one who is first, you are the one who has faith, you are a leader. It is not a matter of what theology one has studied, or how long one's career is, or how much one has given, or how old one is. He said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).* The person who truly knows how to deny himself, the person who says "so it is" when the Word says so, that person is truly a person of faith and a

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person acknowledged before God.

Can we say that what I learned long ago is right and that this also is right? Where is there a question with two right answers? The Lord said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)*. There is only one truth. Our own thoughts cannot become the truth, and theology and doctrine and denomination cannot become the truth. I too graduated from a theological school, and I cannot tell you how hard it is to lay down what one has learned. It is for this reason that our Lord has given you and me the salvation that is right. He has given us a great salvation.

We are those who have obtained a great release from debt, a great gift, and eternal life

In the kingdom of God there is nothing but salvation. It says, *"Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:30)*. He makes the person who has received the remission of sin His own son. The person who has sin in his heart can neither enter the kingdom of God nor call Him Father.

That is why in the Lord's Prayer it says, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. One must receive the remission of sin of the water and the Spirit and then pray to God the Father; the person who has sin in his heart cannot call God Father. The first subject of prayer is to receive the remission of sin. It is to receive the remission of sin and then to hallow the name of the Father.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Only those who have received the

remission of sin enter the kingdom of God. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the holy place was torn from top to bottom. He opened the way so that whoever believes in the water and the blood of Jesus Christ may enter the kingdom of heaven. The door of heaven has been opened, but it must also be accomplished in the hearts of you and me. We must believe it in our hearts.

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Just as we eat the food of the body, we must hear the Word every day and eat it every day. *"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12)*. God has remitted all our sin; what then if we cannot forgive one another?

It is like the parable of the debtors. The master released two men who had no ability to pay from all their debt, but the man who had been released from the great debt went out and seized by the throat a friend who owed him a small debt and tried to put him in prison. Then God says: you have been released by me from all that great debt; how is it that you cannot forgive that man? It means that the person who has received the remission of sin is to be generous and to forgive. Because we have received the remission of all our sin, we are to forgive them as well.

"And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). If we fall into things that are too hard, we may stumble and fall. So it means that we are to pray: God our Father, keep us from falling into hard things; protect us. There are truly many evil things in this world. A building is a church only in name; the church that God looks at is the place where the righteous gather and worship. And the church is the place where, when a sinner comes in, the gospel is preached to him so that he may receive the remission of sin. Even after we have received the remission of sin we must not go into wrong places.

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Our God has given you and me the salvation that is right. He has given us a gift that is right. He has given us eternal life. This salvation is eternal life, it is becoming righteous, it is having no sin in the heart, it is the remission of sin. Our God has brought us into the vineyard, that is, into the church, and has made us believe in Jesus and has made us born again.

I worked for ten years and then was born again. After believing in Jesus and studying theology, it was only after ten years that I was born again of water and the Spirit. After how many years were you born again? Some after ten years, some after one year, and some perhaps after fifty years. But in any case we have all received one denarius.

This is the salvation of which the owner speaks to us, and this was the promise of one denarius. You and I, the people who rightly believe in Jesus Christ, have all received one denarius. With that one denarius we enter the kingdom of God. This was the result and the recompense of believing in Jesus. It was the salvation of one denarius received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I truly give thanks. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Let us live bound as the laborers of the Lord and receive the wage that the Lord gives

< Matthew 20:1-16 >

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men

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have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

I cannot tell you how hard a thing it is for a man to have no work. We think that idleness is good, but if a man passes his days with nothing to do, he grows weary instead. His heart falls sick, and it is like having all the joy that a man may enjoy taken away from him. Now God has given us work to do in the church of God, and so there is thankfulness in my heart. As we work we may grow weary, and the thought may come that we would like to rest a while. But when we actually stop working, we come to know how hard it is not to work. It is truly a happy thing to have met the Lord and received the remission of sin and become a child of the Lord and a worker of God, and to be able to work together with you. I give thanks to God.

The kingdom of heaven is opened equally to everyone

In verse 1 of the word we have read today He said, *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1).* What is the kingdom of heaven like? He said that it is like a

landowner. He spoke in a parable, saying that it is like a landowner who hires laborers and sends them into his own vineyard and sets them to work and gives them their wages.

The whole content of this word is as follows. A landowner who had a vineyard went out to hire laborers, and he gathered men and sent them in and set them to work and gave them their wages. He gave them one denarius, but since even the man who had worked only one hour received one denarius, the men who had come first and had worked many hours complained. But the owner had done nothing wrong. Therefore He said, *"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16).*

There are various deep meanings in this word. One part of it says that, although many who became workers of God and many of the people of God have lived in this world and passed away, the people who work later—that is, the people who work until the day the Lord comes again—have in the sight of the Lord done more work and preached the gospel more. Another part of it says that what the people who come into the church of God and believe in Jesus ultimately receive is the kingdom of heaven, and that they receive the kingdom of heaven as a gift.

We are laborers who work in the vineyard of God

Here the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and the eleventh hour appear. This is the timetable of the Jews. Without going into detail, we may take it that the day's work begins in the morning and ends when the sun goes down. The owner called men and set them to work, and those men had been idle in the marketplace because they had no work. He called men who were idle and set them to work, and he went out again at the third hour and again at the sixth hour and again at the ninth hour and

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gathered men and set them to work. When he went out at the eleventh hour and saw that there were still men standing, *"Why have you been standing here idle all day? They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive'" (Matthew 20:7).*

The vineyard is the church of God. The laborers of that church are you and I. There are men who came in early and men who came in late. Now when the owner of the vineyard had set them all to work and the sun had gone down, *"So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first'" (Matthew 20:8).*

You and I are laborers. We are workers of God who have received the remission of sin and who do the work of God on this earth, who work in the vineyard. Now here He says *"When evening had come"* and He says *"give them their wages"*. The day was drawing to a close, and so the owner stopped the work, and saying that they would go this far today, he gathered them and gave them their wages.

When evening had come, He said to give them their wages

Then think about this once. If a laborer had stopped working in the middle, what would have happened? If the man who came at the third hour had worked only until the ninth hour and had stopped because it was hard, would he have been able to receive his wage in the evening? If the man who came at the ninth hour had worked until the eleventh hour and then stopped, would he have been able to receive his wage? Generally he would not. If a man has gone to work at another man's house, he must stay until

the evening, when the owner says that the day's work is finished and tells him to put things in order and take his wage and go.

This part may also be compared with the parable of the talents. There were a man who received five talents and a man who received two talents and a man who received one talent, and the man who received one talent did not work but buried it in the ground, and when the master came and settled accounts he heard the rebuke, *"You wicked and lazy servant" (Matthew 25:26)*. And He said, *"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30)*. Far from receiving a reward, he was cast out instead.

The reason I am giving you this word is that we are now serving the gospel in the last age. We are now working in the vineyard; if we work only until the eleventh hour and then stop, will we be able to receive that one denarius? It is not so.

The Lord said that the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a vineyard. That is, the kingdom of heaven is like the heart of the owner. It is that he sets men to work and gives them their wages. God has saved us from sin and has given us the work of God and the church and has made us work here. There will be various kinds of people: those who received the remission of sin early, those who received it in the middle, those who received it late, and those who received it just before dying. But on the side of the owner, he settled the account when all the work was finished.

The one who stops in the middle does not receive his wage

So for a man to come in at the ninth hour and work until the

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eleventh hour and then stop is a great problem. As you and I live through this age, our hearts go out toward the world even while we see clearly with our eyes, and a certain slackness arises, and the work has no end; and so I am giving you this word in order to make us watchful.

Let us suppose that I now stop in the middle of my work. In fact, if I leave this church I cannot serve the gospel. However great a man's own ability may be, if there is no church he can never serve the gospel. If there are no fellow members and no fellow workers, one cannot serve the gospel. The heart may be willing, but it cannot be done. However small a work may be, one cannot do it alone. That is why the church is necessary and the vineyard is necessary. However many laborers there may be, there must be a vineyard. One must spread fertilizer and dig the ground and prune the branches and put on the bags and spray and catch the insects and tend it so that the sunlight comes in well; and all that work can never be done alone. Have you ever seen a man farming all by himself?

If I were to stop in the middle of my work and leave the church, would I receive a wage? What would it be like when the Lord came? Would He not say: you wicked and lazy servant, why did you not work when you knew everything? It means that one would come into the same condition as the man who received one talent.

I too am not a man who came and worked at the third hour. I am a man who came at about the ninth hour. The children who have grown up within the church from their youth came at the third hour, the young people are next, and I and those of middle age came at the ninth hour, and the elders who came in their old age came at the eleventh hour. Those who came at the eleventh hour need only endure a little. But if a man works until the ninth hour and then stops, can he receive his wage? Even if the man

who came at the ninth hour works until the eleventh hour and then stops, he does not receive it. We must apply this to our own lives.

When evening had come, the owner brought the work to an end and gave out the wages. So it means that the Lord sets His laborers to work until the end—in the life of each one of us until it is finished, and in terms of the age until this age is finished, until the Lord descends to this earth, or until we go before the Lord—and that to those who have worked until that time He gives the kingdom of heaven as their wage.

There are turning points in the heart of a man. When one gives all one's strength to a certain work, one grows accustomed to that work, and then the desire arises to rest now. When the thought comes that one has done enough, one wants to rest. Then the mind of the flesh comes in and one falls into temptation, and the period of rest becomes too long, and there are many people who are not in their place when the time comes to receive the wage.

Whether you and I came at the third hour or at the sixth hour or at the ninth hour or at the eleventh hour, we must work until we receive our wage, until the owner declares that the work is over. Personally, until we can work no longer before the Lord; and in terms of the age, until tribulation comes and natural disasters come and the Antichrist appears and He says to stop now—only if we work until then do we receive that kingdom of God which the Lord has granted.

The word of truth holds us up in hardship and in error

Then you will say: is this not strange? The remission of sin

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is received by grace, you say, so why is the kingdom of heaven different? Whoever believes receives the remission of sin. But it is because the Lord said that He clearly separates the wicked servant and the lazy servant and the faithful servant. He said, *"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:48)*. It means that the Lord does this even among those who have come into the church, even among those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is the righteousness of the Lord. It is altogether fair.

Let us say that a person who has received the remission of sin does not work for the gospel, does not tell others so that they may be saved, and lives in the world keeping it to himself and pretending not to know. If such a person, who does not take part in the spreading of the gospel and does not even come to the vineyard and work, goes to the kingdom of heaven just the same and receives the same reward, the righteousness of God collapses. This is the part the Lord was speaking of, and it is the word that you and I must not let our hearts grow slack.

He said, *"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48)*. The Lord is holy and good and love, and He is also righteous. Would that righteous Lord give a wage to a person who, after meeting the Lord, does not hold fast to the gospel and work in the vineyard until the day his life ends or until the day the Lord comes, but stays outside?

That is why we must know the truth. We must know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and we must also know what it is to be born again. We must know why we ought to serve the Lord and why we ought to work even while enduring hardship. If we know the word of the truth of the Lord that appears in the

Bible, then when our hearts begin to go wrong that Word takes hold of our hearts and leads us on. But if we do not know the word of the truth of God, when our hearts begin to go wrong there is nothing at all to take hold of us.

What is that truth? It is that our Lord received baptism from John in order to fulfill all righteousness and had all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and that bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so delivered us completely from sin. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit of which He said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. Only the person who knows and believes this truth has the strength to work in the vineyard to the end.

From our birth we were donkeys

What is the difference between the person who is within the church and the person who has already packed up and gone? The effort was the same. For the one who went out and for the one who has remained, the hardship was the same. But the person who is within the church remains because he knows the truth, because there is not much to do even if he goes out, and because although it is hard here, this work is nevertheless right, and because this is the way into happiness. The effort was the same, but because of what he knows, because of what he believes, he remains here.

The person who is not so says: give me freedom; I want to live without being bound. But what is being bound, and what is not being bound? Even if a man goes out into the world, he is bound to someone. If he is within the church he is bound to God;

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but if he does not do the work of God and goes out into the world, he is bound to food and clothing and shelter, bound to making a living, bound to the people of the world. When a man is born, he is bound to be tied to something somewhere.

That is why, when the Lord entered Jerusalem, He said this to His disciples: *"Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them'" (Matthew 21:2–3).* You and I are donkeys. From our birth we are donkeys. We are stubborn and we were born with sin. Having been born a donkey, its mission is to carry burdens all its life. But what would happen if it said: I do not want that; I will go out into the wide meadow and run and play with the horses? A donkey cannot run like a horse, and so it would soon be caught by a beast.

The one who is bound to the Lord has hope

We must not hate being bound. I too do not like being bound. When documents that must be dealt with are piled up, a sigh comes out just from looking at them. To polish one sermon takes a whole day and still is not finished. And to have it translated as well is enough to take one's breath away. I too dislike being bound. But because I am bound to the Lord, I am happy. If I had not been bound to the Lord, it would have been too hard and I could not have lived.

If I had been bound to the world, I would have gone about trading and doing business every day. Is that not also being bound? And that work too is by no means easy. But God has saved you and me and has used us as laborers in the vineyard of God. He has used us. And He has bound us. The Lord has taken

hold of us and used us. We are happy.

Do not try to throw this off. As you serve the Lord you may find it hard and you may grow weary. But if that goes too far, you begin to want to throw it off. You begin to want to say: bind me no longer. But we cannot do that. We must be bound somewhere, and it is far better to be bound to the Lord than to be bound to the world. If we are bound to the Lord, there is hope.

What is it that we ultimately receive from God as we come into the church and work and serve? It is the remission of sin. And it is the kingdom of heaven. Is there any gift greater than this? These two things are exactly what God desires to give to everyone who believes in Jesus. And what He desires of them is just this: that they come into the church of God and do the work of God and so meet the Lord.

Your hearts may be pressed down by this and that, and pressed down by your own weakness. But if you overcome by faith, that is enough; and as for the things we cannot do, if we believe and depend on the Lord and follow Him, the Lord solves them and bestows grace and mercy. Only, when the heart has gone wrong and there is no spiritual faith and the heart is no longer renewed, if a man does not know the word of the truth of God he has no strength and comes to stop. Then he does not receive his wage. The word of Matthew 20:1–16 is speaking of exactly this part.

Therefore we must know the Word of God well. If we do not know it, we perish. I say this word because we ourselves are weak. It is a word I give not to you only but to myself as well. Let us come to ourselves by faith and stand firm, and work in the vineyard until the day the Lord says to stop, and receive the wage that the Lord gives. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Abide in the vineyard

< Matthew 20:1-16 >

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as

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to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

The owner who went out to call laborers

A very long time ago I preached this word, and today I have come to preach it again. I met you in the early days and preached this word, and so it has been a very long time. Here we see that the Lord spoke a strange and wonderful word. *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1).* He says that the kingdom of heaven is like this. It is like a landowner who went out to bring men to work in his vineyard.

Even today there are places where people gather early in the morning to sell their day's labor. If you go to an employment office, there are many people gathered together, shivering, whether or not they have eaten breakfast. The man who is going to hire them goes there and asks what work they know how to do, and if he is satisfied he tells them to come along and takes them. But these days he cannot take them all. He takes a certain number, and the rest wait and end the day with nothing.

It means that our Lord did the same. In order to bring men into the kingdom of heaven He made a vineyard, and He went out to find laborers to work there. In those days there was nothing like an employment office, and so the owner himself went around the village once. Some men were leaning against a sunny wall, and some were standing in the middle of the road. When he asked why they were standing there, they said that they were standing because there was no one to hire them, because

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there was no work. Then he asked whether they would go and work in his vineyard, whether they would work if he gave them one denarius a day, and they said that they would and followed him. In that way he brought this man and that man and used them.

The owner of the vineyard is the Owner of the kingdom of heaven. It is the word that this Owner brought men in that way and used them and gave them one denarius, in order to send them into the kingdom of heaven.

The wage of one denarius was given according to the standard of the owner

When we think about it, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven a man must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be born again. It is the person who has been born again who is a laborer; how can a person who has not been born again be a laborer? Now the owner brought in men who had been standing by the road and men who had been leaning against a wall, and used them, and afterward gave them a wage of one denarius; and here a problem arose.

There were men whom he brought in and used early in the morning, and men whom he brought in and used at midday, and men whom he brought in and used one hour before the sun went down. Yet he promised the very same one denarius to them all. And he began to give out the wage for the day. It is a very good thing to work and receive a wage. And it is even better to work that day and receive it that same day.

Beginning with the man he had brought in one hour before, he gave a denarius and sent him away. And to the man who had met him from early in the morning and had worked a whole day through the heat of the sun until the sun went down, he gave the

same one denarius. This man was inwardly upset. The man before him had worked only one hour and had taken the same money, he thought, and I have worked the whole day and my face is burned black, and yet it is the same money.

So they poured out on the owner at once all their grumbling and complaining and dissatisfaction, saying, *"These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day" (Matthew 20:12)*. Then the owner said, *"But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'" (Matthew 20:13–15)*.

It is an entirely reasonable word. Did I not say that I would give you one denarius? I have given you a denarius; what is wrong with that? Take what is yours and go. That I gave one denarius to the man who came last is my giving what is mine; what business is it of yours? That is what He is saying.

"The last will be first"

And afterward He speaks this word: *"So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16)*. What in the world does this mean? We must look at it from the heart of the Lord.

Would the man who worked only one hour and took away a whole day's wage be glad or not? He ought to have received only one hour's share, and he received many times more, and so he would think that he had received it for nothing. This is exactly what the Lord meant. It means that this man felt great thankfulness for the day's wage he had received, while the man

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who had worked the whole day and received a day's wage felt little thankfulness.

If we take this word as a whole, it is like this. We believe in God and work within the church, and God calls both those who believe and those who do not believe and sets them to work within the church. And speaking of it as a whole, it means that if a person who has received salvation does not do the work of God, He calls that person an evil person. He calls the person who has received salvation but ends his life doing only his own work an evil person.

So it means that God sends us into the kingdom of heaven, but that as its condition He tells us to work in the vineyard. It means that working in the vineyard is necessarily the precondition. If a man does not work in the vineyard he is an evil person. Now there are men who come to the vineyard and work only one hour, and men who work many hours. And it is the word that the one who feels more thankfulness is the man who worked only one hour and received one denarius.

The grace of God placed in the church

That we enter the kingdom of God is grace. It is a gift received freely by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Whether one has worked much or little, it is a gift. The person who came into the church late and received the remission of sin while working feels more thankfulness. But the person who has worked with all his strength from the beginning to the end may feel less thankfulness for being sent into the kingdom of heaven. This is because the thought comes to him that he is only receiving what is naturally his to receive. It means that what they feel in their hearts is different.

And to say it in a word, it means that within the church there are people who have not yet received salvation. But it is the word that as they work they also receive salvation and enter the kingdom of heaven. This is the part the Lord spoke of in this way. So it is not altogether strange that there are people within the church who have not yet been saved. Rather than running out of the church, they are to stay in it, and while working, if at some time it seems that they have not been saved, they may hear the Word and be saved.

But if a man runs out, that is the end. If he leaves the church he cannot return. Once he leaves, from that time the devil puts an evil heart into him and stirs up an evil heart against the church, so that even if he wants to come he cannot. That is the reason why those who have left the church cannot come back. So if it seems to you that you have not received salvation, you have only to speak to the servants of God and hear the gospel again.

Is it good for us to live within the church? It is good. In this age it is hard even to make a living. This country and that country suffer difficulties from disasters and abnormal weather. A man never knows how to be content. When spring comes he waits for summer, when summer comes he waits for autumn, and when autumn comes he waits for winter. Even so, how many things we have to be thankful for!

Our Lord is King and Priest and Prophet

Look at yourselves. Look at how lacking and how weak you are. And if you look at how perfectly the Lord has accomplished your salvation, receiving the remission of sin is not a hard thing. It is because a man does not know how to see his own weakness that the greatness of the Lord is not clearly seen.

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It says, *"Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matthew 16:16)*. In a certain body this confession is only recited every day. But its meaning is not well known. Our Lord is the Christ. He is the King who made the universe and the Creator, and He is our High Priest.

He put on a body and came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist and had our sin transferred onto Himself and bore it, and He received in our place on the cross the judgment for that sin and was nailed there and shed His blood and died, and He rose again and became our Savior. And He also fulfilled the office of a prophet, making this fact known to us. The Christ who is King and Priest and Prophet—this is the meaning of that confession.

Jesus said, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17)*. It means that the Holy Spirit made him know it. Among the disciples Peter alone made such a confession. Peter made many mistakes, but by this confession he received a passing mark.

It is the same with you. First, you must acknowledge God. You must know God and you must believe God. God is living. That God put on a body and came to this earth for us. He received baptism from John the Baptist and had our sin transferred onto Himself. And He went to the cross and shed His blood and died in our place and rose again. And so He became our Savior. And He made that fact known to us through His disciples. He taught us everything: that the water and the blood and the Spirit are our salvation, and that He has saved us in this way.

We are created beings and weak. Someone compared the heart of man to a swaying reed. But a reed at least has its roots fixed in the ground, so only its upper part sways, whereas a

person is shaken all the way down to the roots. At times he seems as though he could sweep over the whole world, and yet he is a being less than a speck of dust. We are like a glass vessel that is easily broken.

Abide in the vineyard with patience

We are now preparing much and working. We are doing well. The gospel is beginning to blossom. I think the time has come for it to blossom. If we put up a picture of the books on the screen, will not more people request them? Then we can correct what needs correcting, and print the books and send them, and I believe that in that way the effect will be much better. It says, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. If we look with the eyes of faith, everything is seen. I think that very good days have come back.

I too met the Lord only ten years after I believed in Jesus. So to meet Him after twenty years is also all right. I cannot tell you how hard the work of preaching the gospel has been for me. Although I preached and preached, there are some who received the remission of sin only after twenty years had passed. I have truly learned patience.

I hope that you also, even though life may be hard for the moment, will be patient for a long time. I hope that you will endure. Some day the day of blossoming comes, and some day good days come. Whether one has received salvation or not, if he leaves the church that is the end.

Have you received the remission of sin? If you have received the remission of sin, from now on you are to live working in the vineyard. If you go outside the church, even making a living is

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uncertain. The life of man is all like that. Is there anything special? There is not. In whatever field, nothing at all is easy.

The Lord, who for you and me received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred onto Himself and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again, has called us into this vineyard. Holding fast to this gospel of the water and the Spirit and to that promise of one denarius, we must abide in this vineyard to the end and receive the wage that the Lord gives. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who called us by grace and gave us a fitting salvation

< Matthew 20:1-16 >

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have

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borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew Chapter 20 shows that the kingdom of God is established not by the merit of man but by the good will and the grace of God. The owner of the vineyard went out early in the morning and called laborers, and afterward he called men also at the third hour and the sixth hour and the ninth hour. Even at the eleventh hour, when the work of the day was almost over, he went to the men standing in the marketplace and sent them into his vineyard. It was not that they went to the owner first; the owner went out to the marketplace again and again and sought them out and called them.

This vineyard shows the church, in which God gathers His own people and makes them serve the gospel. The laborers point to the believers who have received the calling and have come into the church and serve the work of God. One person meets the gospel early, and another meets the gospel in the middle of his life. And another hears the word of salvation only when his life is almost over. Yet the fact that the time of the calling differs does not mean that the substance of the remission of sin and the eternal life that the Lord gives becomes different.

The owner who sought out the men standing in the marketplace

The men standing in the marketplace were not so much men who had no desire at all to work as men who were waiting because no one would hire them as laborers. The owner saw them and asked why they had been standing idle all day. When they answered that there was no one to hire them, the owner told them to go into the vineyard also. In these words there is the heart of an owner who has compassion on a man who has not obtained an opportunity to work and who receives him into his own vineyard.

From his birth a man does not live as a worker of the kingdom of God. Born under sin, he follows his own desires and stands in the marketplace of the world without even knowing what he ought to live for. He strives to obtain wealth and honor and pleasure, but these do not solve the sin of his soul or give him eternal life. Even though in the world he may appear to live diligently, if he does not know the righteousness of God and lives with no relation to the gospel, then in the spiritual sense he is a man standing there having lost his purpose.

The Lord came first to such a man. God did not examine the qualifications of men and then call only those who were fit to use. He made the gospel to be heard by the man who ought to have been cast away because of sin, and He gave him the opportunity to live as one of the people and a worker of the kingdom of God. That we have come into the church and heard the Word and come to serve the gospel is not the result of our having found the way by ourselves; it is the grace of the Lord, who called us first.

Therefore we cannot boast of the hour at which we came into the vineyard. Even the man who came in early in the morning

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would have remained in the marketplace if the owner had not called him, and the man who came in at the eleventh hour would have ended his day without any hope if the owner had had no mercy. The one who believed first and the one who believed later, the one who has learned much and the one who has learned little, the one who has been given a great work and the one who has been given a small work—all have come to be within the church by the calling of the Lord.

To have been called by God is a wonderful blessing. That we have received the remission of sin and have become a people of the kingdom of heaven is already an unspeakably great grace, and yet the Lord has also entrusted to us the work of serving the gospel. A life that was spending its time without any worth has come to be used for the work of saving souls, and a man who followed only the things that decay and perish has come to preach eternal life. That He has given us an opportunity to work is itself grace, and the very fact that we belong to the vineyard of the Lord is a great blessing.

We must not regard the fact that we have a work entrusted to us within the church as a burden only. In the world a man may be pushed out of his place of work if his ability is lacking or if he grows old, but God entrusts to each person a work that is fitting for him. It is not only those who speak well who serve the gospel. The one who helps with prayer, the one who supports with material things, and the one who quietly cares for the brothers and sisters also work in the vineyard. The owner does not set every laborer to the same work only, but places him in the position that is needed for the vineyard.

The fact that even the man called at the eleventh hour had an opportunity to work is a great comfort. A man may look back on the years that have passed and be discouraged, thinking that it is too late. He may think that he wasted the days of his youth in the

world and that the ability he has is small. But if the Lord calls today, he may go into the vineyard from today. He must not hesitate because the time that remains is short, but must begin by faith with the small work that the Lord has entrusted to him. God does not put the one who came late to shame, but uses him honorably within His grace.

The life given alike to everyone

When the day drew to a close, the owner had the wages given beginning with the men who came last. The man who came at the eleventh hour and worked one hour received one denarius, and the man who had worked from the morning also received one denarius. The men who came early in the morning saw the men who came late receiving one denarius and expected that they themselves would receive more. But when they received the one denarius that had been promised, they complained against the owner. The owner answered that he had never broken his promise, and that it was his own will to give the same thing also to the man who came last.

In this parable the one denarius shows the blessing of the remission of sin and eternal life that God gives to those who believe. The remission of sin is not a reward given in graded amounts according to the order in which men have attended church. It is not that because a man has believed in Jesus for several decades his sin is washed away more completely, and that because a man believed the gospel today only a part of it is washed away. Everyone who sincerely believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit alike receives the remission of all his sin and becomes a child of God.

Some people have lived a religious life for a long time and

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yet still live with sin in their hearts. They know the cross of Jesus, but they do not know what meaning the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist has. Believing that original sin has been remitted but that the sins committed daily must be washed away by prayers of repentance, they remain sinners for long years. On the other hand, another person, though he has come to church for the first time, hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believes it and immediately receives the remission of all his sin. This is the appearance of the one who is last becoming first.

By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to His own body. And bearing the sin of the world, He was hanged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the whole punishment of that sin. On the third day He rose again and gave new life to those who believe. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this salvation of the water and the blood is the true gospel accomplished by the righteousness of God. Whoever believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of sin and is born again of water and the Spirit.

This salvation is not a wage handed out in proportion to the hours worked. If we calculate by the deeds of man, it seems unfair that the man who worked one hour and the man who worked the whole day should receive the same wage. But the remission of sin is not obtained by our labor; it is a gift received by believing the righteousness that Jesus Christ accomplished. It is not that salvation is completed only when we add the merit of ten years of prayer and service. At the moment we believe the salvation that Jesus completed by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the cross and the resurrection, God declares us righteous.

That the one denarius is the same for everyone does not mean

that the worth of salvation is small. Rather it means that He has given fully to every believer the salvation that is right, which cannot be exchanged for anything in the world. Where is there anything greater than the blessing of having sin removed and becoming a righteous person, of becoming a child of God, and of being delivered from eternal judgment and entering the kingdom of heaven? We have offered a small labor and have received eternal life. In truth, even if all our labor were added together, it could not pay the price of this salvation.

Just because salvation is compared to a wage, we must not understand it as though a person receives the remission of sins as payment for working in the church. The emphasis of the parable lies, beyond the difference in the amount of work, in the goodness of the owner, who gives to every man what he has promised. The work of accomplishing salvation was done not by the laborers but by Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Owner. We believed the salvation He accomplished and came into the vineyard, and we work out of thanksgiving for the grace we have received. To work in order to be saved and to work because one has been saved are entirely different.

The person who works in order to be saved keeps calculating his own labor. He examines whether he has prayed much, how much he has given, whether he has served more than others, and with that he demands a recompense from God. But the person who works because he has been saved thinks first of the grace he has received. Because the Lord has removed all his sin and given him eternal life, he knows that whatever he offers he cannot repay. Therefore even if he has done much work he does not boast, and even if he has served poorly he depends on the righteousness of the Lord and takes strength again.

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The complaint that arose from a comparing heart

The reason the men who came first complained was not that they had failed to receive the wage that had been promised. It was that the men who came last had received the same thing as they. They did not give thanks as they looked at the goodness of the owner, but compared themselves with others and regarded their own labor as great. At that moment the joy of having worked in the vineyard and the thankfulness for the promised wage disappeared, and a sense of injustice and complaint filled their hearts.

Within the church also, a comparing heart takes away thanksgiving. If a man thinks that he has worked longer and sacrificed more, he becomes displeased with the love and the recognition that another person receives. If a newcomer is used honorably he envies him, and he complains that his own labor is not acknowledged. At first he served because he was thankful for the grace of the Lord, but if with the passing of time he begins to calculate his own merit, he comes to see even the goodness of the owner as evil.

Before we judge the portion of another person, we must think how precious the one denarius we have received is. I was a sinner who ought to have perished, but the Lord has removed all my sin. When no one would hire me, the Lord called me and made me serve the gospel within the church. If we remember this grace, we come to rejoice that other souls also receive the same salvation. When a man who came late receives the remission of sin, we do not regard him as a rival but give thanks that one soul that was lost has been made alive.

The owner said that it was his own will to give the same wage to the man who came last. The sovereignty of salvation belongs to God. That God loves the sinner and gives the complete remission of sin to whoever believes the gospel is something no

man can hinder. Neither is it so that a new believer becomes a child of God only after receiving the permission of one who has believed a long time. The church must not be a place that limits the goodness of God but a place that preaches the same gospel to every soul.

In the complaint of the laborers who came first there was the fault of having turned grace into a right. At first they would have been thankful merely to have obtained a place to work and to have received a promise. But after they saw what others received, they thought that their own labor had made the owner their debtor. The longer one's life of faith continues, the more one must guard against this heart. If a man thinks that because he has labored for the church people must treat him specially and God too must grant his will, then service becomes not thanksgiving but a transaction.

The person who knows the grace of God welcomes a newly come soul. He desires that the newcomer may quickly understand the gospel and be used within the church. He is not afraid that his own place will be taken, and he shares without sparing the Word he has learned and the experience he has had. Even when he sees a younger worker doing better than himself, he does not envy but rejoices that the kingdom of God is being enlarged. Such a heart is a heart that rejoices together with the goodness and the will of the owner.

Even so, this does not mean that the labor of one who believed first and served long is without meaning. The time spent working together with the owner inside the vineyard is not time wasted in the marketplace of the world. While a man labors for the gospel, souls come alive, and the laborer himself learns the will of God and his faith grows. The Lord knows the faithfulness and the labor of each person and gives a fitting reward. Only, a man must not turn salvation itself into the

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payment for his own labor, or make it a ground for thinking himself superior to others.

The one who works with thanksgiving to the end

The person who has received the calling of the owner and has come into the vineyard must keep his place until the work is finished. If a man came in early but leaves the vineyard in the middle, he cannot boast of having been called first. Even the man who came in late, if he works to the very end according to the word of the owner, receives the wage that was promised. The question of becoming first and becoming last is not merely a matter of the order of time, but a matter of whether one believes and follows the will of the owner to the end.

The person who has received the remission of sin has a responsibility to serve the work of the kingdom of God. Salvation is not the payment for our work, but the person who has been saved works out of thanksgiving for that grace. He preaches the Word, distributes the books of the gospel, prays for the church, and faithfully bears the work entrusted to him. It is not only the work that catches the eye that is precious. To care for the chapel and to prepare meals, to help brothers and sisters in difficulty, and to support the spreading of the gospel in places unseen are all precious work done in the vineyard.

To work in the vineyard does not mean that each one moves in his own way. The laborers must hear the will of the owner and work together. Within the church also, believers must gather their hearts for the one purpose of the gospel. If a man insists that only his own thought is right, the work is scattered even within the same vineyard. When we consult one another and respect order and responsibly bear the part entrusted to us, the

fruit of the gospel is borne.

We must also be careful not to throw away our place in the middle because the work is hard. There is a difference between resting when the flesh is weak and needs rest, and casting off responsibility without faith. When difficulty arises we must not endure it alone and then leave, but must share our hearts with the church and ask for help. If we try to do the work the Lord has entrusted to us by our own strength alone we grow weary, but if we ask for the Word and the help of the Holy Spirit and share the burden with fellow workers, we can rise again.

As we work, there are times when the flesh grows weary and the heart is discouraged. We may feel that others seem to be resting while we alone labor. At such a time, if we compare ourselves with people, complaint arises; but if we look at the salvation we have received from the Lord, we take strength again. We serve the gospel not in order to receive praise from men but because the Lord who called us is good. The Lord knows our circumstances and our labor and supplies the strength and the wisdom we need.

The church must also seek out the people who are still standing in the marketplace. Just as the owner went out even at the eleventh hour and called laborers, so the nearer the end of the world comes, the more diligently we must go out to the souls who have not heard the gospel. We must not say that it is too late because a man is old or because he has failed in the world. While he is alive, if he hears and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit he obtains the remission of sin and eternal life. Even one man who comes in at the last hour is precious to the Lord.

The gospel we preach is not a gospel that demands different conditions of different people. Neither is it a gospel that gives a little grace to the good man and demands more merit from the great sinner. It is the same gospel: that Jesus had the sin of all

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men transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that on the cross the price of that sin was paid in full. Whoever believes this fact receives the same remission of sin, the same Holy Spirit, and the same eternal life.

When we preach the gospel we must also not judge a person by his outward appearance. We must not think that only a man with much religious knowledge will believe well, nor conclude that a man who has lived roughly in the world will find it hard to receive the gospel. A man who has attended church for a long time may refuse the Word because of his own thoughts, and a man who has come for the first time may receive the Word of God just as it is and receive the remission of sin. Because calling and saving are the authority of the Lord, we must preach the gospel to all people without partiality.

The parable of the vineyard in Matthew Chapter 20 makes us look again at the worth of the salvation we have received. We were people who lived without any spiritual purpose, like the men in the marketplace whom no one would hire. But the Lord came and called us into the church, and made us believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and remitted all our sin. Beyond that, He entrusted to us the work of God that saves souls. Where is there a grace that is more right and more precious than this?

Therefore let us not be proud because we were called first, nor be discouraged because we were called later. Let us not compare ourselves with others and doubt the goodness of the Lord, but let us thankfully receive the salvation and the mission He has given us. Let us be faithful to the end in the place the Lord has entrusted to us, and call into the gospel the souls who are still standing in the marketplace. We must become people who rejoice that those who came last also receive the remission of sin and eternal life together with us, people who believe the good will of the owner and work with thanksgiving. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Follow the Savior who served us and opened our eyes

< Matthew 20:17-34 >

"Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him

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be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!' Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!' So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him."

In the latter part of Matthew Chapter 20, Jesus spoke concretely of the suffering and the death and the resurrection that He would undergo in Jerusalem. But the interest of the disciples lay not in the way of the cross that the Lord would walk but in the question of who would sit in the higher place. The two sons of Zebedee, together with their mother, asked for the places on the right hand and the left hand of the Lord, and the other disciples heard it and were greatly displeased. To such disciples the Lord taught that the great one in the kingdom of God is not the one who exercises authority but the one who serves.

Next Jesus met two blind men by the road at Jericho. The multitude told them to be quiet, but they called on the Lord all the more loudly. Jesus stopped on the way He was going and called them and asked what they wanted, and having compassion on them He opened their eyes. The disciples who sought a high position and the blind men who asked for mercy stand in clear

contrast. The disciples were thinking of what they would receive, but the blind men acknowledged their own helplessness and asked only for the grace of the Lord.

The Lord who walked toward the cross

Jesus did not undergo by accident the things that happened in Jerusalem. He already knew that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, that by those who condemned Him to death He would be delivered to the Gentiles, that He would suffer mocking and scourging, and that He would be nailed to the cross. He also said that He would rise again on the third day. Although the Lord knew all these things, He did not avoid them but went up toward Jerusalem.

The death of Jesus is not the tragedy of one righteous man defeated by the power of the world. The Lord came in order to give His own life as a ransom for many. A ransom is the paying of a price in the place of another in order to set him free. In order to set free mankind, which had become the slave of sin, the sinless Jesus bore our sin and received its judgment in our place.

Jesus first received baptism from John the Baptist and so had all the sin of the world passed on to His own body. Thus He became the ransom who bore the sin of mankind, and being hanged on the cross He shed His blood and died and so paid in full the wages of sin. And on the third day He rose again and overcame sin and death. This is the salvation that Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood, and it is the gospel of the water and the Spirit to which the Holy Spirit bears witness.

The baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and the cross are not two separate events. Because He bore sin by the baptism, He received the judgment of that sin on the cross; and

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because He paid the price of sin by the death of the cross, the complete remission of sin is given to the one who believes. The resurrection shows that this salvation is true and that the power of death has been broken. We must believe these three works of salvation as one.

The Lord did not hide from His disciples the mocking and the scourging and the cross that He would undergo. Salvation was not accomplished by beautiful words or by feeling alone. The judgment of sin was real, and the Lord bore all that pain in His own body. Here lies the reason we cannot regard the remission of sin lightly. If we know the price the Lord paid, we cannot love sin, and neither can we lower the gospel into a means of obtaining the blessings of the world.

At the same time the Lord did not foretell His death only, but also clearly spoke of the resurrection on the third day. The way of the cross did not end in defeat. The believer who meets suffering while serving the gospel must also remember this fact. The loss and the difficulty before our eyes are not the final conclusion. Because the Lord rose again and has prepared an eternal kingdom, we do not lose hope even in the midst of suffering for a little while.

A man tries to pay for his own sin with good deeds or with prayers of repentance, but the price of sin cannot be paid by human effort. However long a sinner prays and serves, he cannot remove the sin he has already committed, nor can he settle the sin he will commit in the future. That is why Jesus came as the ransom. Because the Lord bore all our sin and received the judgment, we receive the remission of sin by believing that completed salvation.

The way of the Lord was the way of service from the beginning to the end. He laid aside the glory of heaven and came down to this low earth, and He taught the Word to sinners and

healed the sick. At last He gave even His own life. The person who knows that the Lord served us in this way becomes a worker of the gospel. When a man knows that he himself first received great love and service, he gives himself for other souls.

The heart of the disciples who sought a high position

Right after Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection, the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked that her two sons might sit on the right hand and the left hand of the Lord. They wanted to obtain a high position when the kingdom of Jesus soon appeared. They had gone about with the Lord and had heard many words, and yet in their hearts there was still a desire that sought the authority and the honor of the world.

Jesus said that they did not know what they were asking. On the way of taking part in the glory of the Lord there follows the drinking of the cup that the Lord drinks. That is the way of suffering for the gospel, of denying one's own desires, and of being faithful. The disciples answered confidently that they were able, but at that time they did not sufficiently know the weight of that cup. Afterward they were led by the Holy Spirit and preached the gospel and actually bore much suffering.

To drink the cup of the Lord is not to go about seeking suffering itself or to torment one's own body. It is to accept by faith the sacrifice that comes unavoidably in the course of rightly keeping and preaching the gospel. If a man compromises the truth he may be comfortable, but he cannot save souls; and so he bears the loss and stands on the side of the Word. To live a life of partaking in the cup of the Lord means refusing to deny the salvation the Lord accomplished, even when misunderstood by family or society, and bearing the mission entrusted to us to the very end.

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That the other ten disciples were greatly displeased with the two brothers was not because their own hearts were purer. They too wanted a high position, and so they were displeased that the two brothers had made their request first. A man sometimes becomes angrier when he sees in another person the same desire that is in himself. Outwardly he criticizes unrighteousness, but inwardly he may regret that he himself did not take that place.

Within the church also, if office and ministry are made a means of raising one's own honor, the same strife arises. Men come to argue about who stands in front, whose word has the greater influence, and who is more recognized by people. The greater the office entrusted to a man, the more people he must serve; but if instead he demands service and tries to exercise authority, he grows far from the order of the kingdom of God.

The Lord said that He does not distribute the places on His right hand and His left hand at His own discretion, but that those for whom the Father has prepared them will obtain them. The glory of the kingdom of God is not obtained by human request or by competition. God knows the faith and the faithfulness of each person and appoints accordingly. Therefore we must not covet the place of another person but must serve sincerely in the place God has entrusted to us.

The person of faith does not throw away the work entrusted to him because he is not recognized. Even though in the eyes of men it seems a small work, if it is a work for the gospel and for souls he regards it as precious. On the other hand, he is not proud because he has been given a great work that many people see. This is because he knows that the opportunity and the strength to bear that work were also given by the Lord. Our concern must not be how high a position we rise to, but how faithfully we accomplish the will of the Lord.

The way of the kingdom of God for becoming great

The rulers of the world govern people with authority, and the great men display their own power. But Jesus said to His disciples, *"Yet it shall not be so among you"*. The order of the kingdom of God is different from the order of the world. The person who desires to be great must become one who serves, and the person who desires to be first must become a slave.

To serve does not mean to grant unconditionally everything that another person asks. It is to consider what is truly profitable for a soul and to help him stand rightly within the gospel. At times we must comfort him gently, and at times we must clearly admonish him of his fault. We must not merely provide comfort for the flesh, but must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which solves the fundamental problem of sin.

Discernment is also needed in service. If we allow everything the other person wants, we may appear for the moment to be a good person; but if that request nourishes sin and wrong desire, it is not true love. The Lord had mercy on the sick, but He rebuked the falsehood of the Pharisees. The worker of the gospel also must not merely suit the mood of people but must help them within the truth. When love and truthfulness are together, it becomes a service that actually saves one soul.

Service must also appear first toward those who are near. We must not speak of missions in a far place while despising the brothers and sisters who work beside us, nor speak of the great plans of the church while turning away from responsibility in the home. To listen to the words of the person beside us and to look after his small needs, and to keep faithfully what we have promised, are the foundation of service. To speak of serving great souls while being unfaithful in small things is empty.

The person whose faith is mature is not the one who receives

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much service but the one who serves more. He shares with the brothers and sisters the Word and the grace he has received from the Lord, he bears together the burden of the weak, and he seeks out and bears the work that the church needs for preaching the gospel. The one who serves rejoices together when the work of the gospel takes place, but the one who avoids service easily judges the work of the church from afar and complains.

A true leader is not one who forces his own will. He is one who first obeys the Word, who goes ahead and bears the hard work, and who prays for the souls entrusted to him. Authority does not come from a loud voice or from a title; it comes from a life that gives itself for the gospel. Just as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and gave even His own life, so the worker of God must give his heart to saving souls rather than to exalting himself.

This principle is the same in the home and in the workplace. Rather than giving one-sided commands because one is a husband or a parent, one must first care for the family and lead them rightly with the Word. If a man is in a high position at work, he must not treat people carelessly but must use the authority entrusted to him for the benefit of the community. A Christian must show the character of the Lord through service wherever he is.

Sacrifice follows service. We must give our time and our material things, and there are times when the flesh is weary. We may be misunderstood or hear no word of thanks even though we served with a good intention. But our service is not a transaction for obtaining a return from men. It is the fruit of faith offered out of thanksgiving to the Lord, who gave His life for us. If the Lord knows it and is pleased with it, that is enough.

Those who asked for mercy and followed the Lord

When Jesus was leaving Jericho, two blind men were sitting by the road and heard that the Lord was passing by. They could not see, but they believed that Jesus was the Savior who had come as the Son of David. Therefore they cried out, *"Have mercy on us, O Lord."* Although the multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, they called on the Lord all the more loudly.

The two blind men knew that they could not open their own eyes by their own strength. What they needed was not a little money or a moment of comfort but the fundamental grace that opens the eyes. Therefore, when Jesus asked what they wanted Him to do for them, they clearly answered that they wanted their eyes to be opened. The Lord had compassion on them and touched their eyes, and they immediately received sight.

Their appearance shows the attitude that a person who seeks the remission of sin must have. A spiritual blind man does not know even the reality of his own sin and does not see the salvation that Jesus accomplished. Even if he has religious knowledge, if sin remains in his heart he has not yet clearly seen the light of the gospel. He must acknowledge that by his own deeds he cannot remove sin, and he must meet the salvation of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has bestowed.

Before the person who seeks the gospel there may be many hindrances. The doctrine he has long believed, the reproach of people, his own face and his own stubbornness tell him to be quiet. But if the problem of the sin of his own soul has not been solved, he must seek the Word of the Lord more earnestly than the eyes of men. Just as the two blind men called on the Lord all the more loudly the more they were rebuked, so a man must hear the Word and make certain of it until he obtains true salvation.

Although Jesus was going a busy way, He did not turn away

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from the cry of the two men. He stopped His steps and called them, and He asked what they wanted and opened their eyes. Today also the Lord does not turn away from the person who realizes his own sin and seeks salvation. He opens the spiritual eyes of the person who believes the gospel that Jesus removed all sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the blood of the cross.

The two men whose eyes were opened did not return to their own way but followed Jesus. Salvation is not that a man has the problem of sin solved and then goes on living by following his own desires again. The person who has come to know who the Lord is follows Him, and he preaches the gospel so that other souls also may have their eyes opened. The person who has received the remission of sin has a responsibility to serve those who do not yet see the Lord.

The two blind men heard the news that the Lord was passing by and did not lose the opportunity. Faith is not vaguely waiting for a good time but answering when one has heard the Word. If a man hears the gospel and puts it off, saying that he will believe next time, he cannot guarantee that the next opportunity will surely come. If a man knows that there is sin in his heart and the gospel of the water and the Spirit has been preached to him, he must check that word against the Bible and believe it now.

That the Lord asked, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* was not because He did not know their need. It was to make them confess by faith what they truly wanted. We too must make the purpose of our life of faith clear. We must not seek only that our circumstances in the world may become a little better, but must first seek that all the sin of our hearts may be remitted and that we may be reconciled with God. When our spiritual eyes are opened, the standard by which we see the problems of the world also changes, and we are led by the Lord.

Around us and throughout the world there are people who, like the two blind men, are waiting for the word of salvation. There are those who, though outwardly they live without any lack, do not obtain peace because of the sin of their hearts, and those who have followed many doctrines and yet have not obtained a certain remission of sin. The most important work the church must do is not to stop at giving them temporary help but to preach the gospel that solves the fundamental problem of the soul.

For this we must preach the Word that contains the gospel in many languages, and must make it possible for people to meet the truth through writing and through voice and through direct preaching. One book and one act of preaching can open the eyes of one soul. We must not settle down because we have done much work until now. If even one person remains who has not yet met the Lord, there remains work for the church to do.

The work of preaching the gospel is not entrusted to a few special people only. One person preaches the Word directly, another does translating and editing, and another helps with finances and with prayer. And another invites a near neighbor to worship and hands him a book of the gospel. The roles are different, but the purpose is the same. It is to help the person who does not see spiritually to know and believe the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

We must not judge the result of the gospel hastily. We may be discouraged when there is no immediate response after we have preached the Word, but the seed may remain in the heart and bear fruit later. What is important is not to persuade a person by force but to preach exactly the salvation to which the Bible bears witness and to wait in love. When the time comes, the Holy Spirit makes him understand that Word and opens his spiritual eyes.

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The latter part of Matthew Chapter 20 shows us the heart of Jesus. The Lord did not try to take a high position but gave His own life as a ransom in order to serve sinners. When the blind men by the road cried out, He stopped His steps and opened their eyes. This is the Savior whom we must believe and follow.

We too must come out of the heart that seeks to be served and become people who serve the gospel and souls. Believing the fact that Jesus completely removed our sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the cross and the resurrection, we must preach this word of life to those who do not yet see. Rather than seeking a high position, let us become people who hear the cry of souls in a low place and help them with the love we have received from the Lord. That is the way of following the Lord, and it is the way of becoming truly great in the kingdom of God. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Live for the gospel

< Matthew 20:20-28 >

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

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Let the one who desires to be great become one who serves

Today I would like to share the word centering on this word that He spoke: *"But whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Matthew 20:26–27)*. If we have been entrusted with a work we must be faithful in it, and if it seems that we cannot be faithful we must lay it down. It is the same with any work. The one among us who desires to be first must become one who serves the Lord.

There were two sons of Zebedee, and their mother came to Jesus and asked that her two sons might sit in the kingdom of the Lord, one on the right hand of the Lord and the other on the left hand. When our Lord asked whether they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink, they said that they were able. Then the Lord said, *"So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father'" (Matthew 20:23)*. It is the word that they would suffer persecution and would be martyred for His sake, but that to make them sit beside Him was not His to do.

And the Lord spoke in a comparison. *"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them'" (Matthew 20:25)*. It is the word that the great ones of this world are served instead and rule over others, but that in His kingdom the great one serves the small one.

The one who serves the gospel with strength is the high one in the kingdom of God

In the world where men live there are very many dealings of trade. It is not only merchants who trade; those who are not merchants also trade. What is more, there are very many people who carry on even their life of faith as though they were trading. In their life of faith, rather than becoming the lowly one they try to become the higher one and to be treated well.

But in that kingdom of which our Lord speaks it is exactly the opposite. Whoever desires to be great must become one who serves, and whoever desires to be first must become a slave. Of course we must not receive this with a fleshly thought. It is not the word that the one who has faith must wait upon the one who has no faith in a fleshly way. This word means that the high one in the kingdom of God is the one who serves the gospel of God with strength and serves it well.

The saints within the church and the servants of God truly desire to become the high one. Even when only two people are gathered, in one of them there is the heart that says: I am higher than you, I am better than you. When three or ten or a hundred or a thousand are gathered, such things increase all the more. Everyone has the disposition of wanting to become the high one.

Yet while the heart that desires to become the high one is there, the heart that asks how much one will really serve the Lord and how far one will follow the gospel and how much one will sacrifice is small by comparison. Our Lord admonished His disciples and so taught us that wrong part.

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The highest One came to the lowest place

Our Lord is the Head of our church and the Head of the church of God. Our Lord is the highest of all things in this universe. Who is the One who is to receive glory from us? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. He made us, and in order to save us He laid down His own life for the sheep.

He laid aside the glory of heaven. He laid aside His own glory. And for His own people who were to be saved He suffered shame and made every sacrifice and gave all that He had. Our Lord spoke thus: *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).*

How did the Lord become the ransom? In order to fulfill all righteousness He received baptism from John and had all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and by rising again from death He completely removed our sin. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The highest One of heaven came down to the lowest place and served us. It says, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5–7).*

The one whose faith has grown desires to serve

Then what heart do our saints, the disciples of the Lord, have? Is it a heart that desires to be served, or a heart that desires to serve? The person whose faith is mature desires to serve. The

person who truly has faith sacrifices himself and serves. But the younger a man's faith is, the more he desires to be served. Somehow he tries to become the high one, and when he is invited to a feast he tries to sit in the high place and to be treated well.

That is a sign that his faith is young. A little child unconditionally wants to be served. He frets and is peevish and demands that the whole world serve him. That is the characteristic of one who is young. But when he grows up and becomes mature, he comes to like serving rather than being served.

What does he like to serve? He likes to serve the gospel and to serve for the kingdom of God. He rejoices when he serves in order that the kingdom of God may somehow be established and the gospel may be preached. It means that he rejoices to serve in many ways—with his body, with his time, with his material things, and spiritually. Therefore the more grown a man's faith is, the more he desires not to be served but to serve. It appears in that way because of the Holy Spirit who is within us.

It is all right even if one does not become first. But in order to have a mature faith, in order to become one who has a mature faith, one must serve rather than be served. All the servants of God who went before us were like that. Jesus was like that, and the twelve disciples were like that, and those who went before you cast away all that they had and gave all that they had for the flock, for souls. And so they became those who go ahead, and at times they were also served. Yet they still remain as those who serve. I do not mean that they serve men; I mean that they still remain as those who serve the Lord.

The one whose faith is truly mature, the one who has faith, is not the one who is served but the one who desires to serve. When a man becomes such a one, he comes to learn faith and to know the heart of God and to understand more deeply the truth

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of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The one who serves rejoices and is glad together with the gospel. The one who does not serve is always full of dissatisfaction and complaint. He is annoyed at what the church does, and he only judges, and he tries all the more to be served. Fundamentally, the heart of Jesus Christ is a humble heart and a serving heart. Our Lord has placed such a heart in the hearts of you and me.

The one who lives for the gospel is the very first

Yet here is the problem. Within the church people gather in their own groups and say: I received salvation earlier, I am the senior. In fact, even among the disciples there was strife over who was the chief. Such a thing happened even among the twelve disciples. That is why the two sons of Zebedee also put their mother forward and asked for a place. Because they could not say it themselves, they made their request through their mother.

But when we gather, ought not the talk we share be about how much faith we have had for the Lord and how much we have served the gospel? Yet there are people who say that they received salvation first and that the other person received it later, that the other person has no sense, that even in serving the Lord one must serve with calculation, and that if one serves like that what one has will run out; and so they serve while calculating in their heads. I have not paid attention to such things. Even without looking, it is plain to me. I am not speaking about whether one has much or little in the way of material things.

There are believers who follow the Lord in a calculating way from the start. They follow while reckoning whether now is the time for them to come forward or not. To follow after calculating

is the faith of a merchant. It is a faith that follows standing far off, and it is a dead faith. The person who follows regarding what is the Lord's as his own and what is his own as the Lord's—that person rather takes charge of what belongs to the Lord and enjoys it and serves the Lord with more strength.

Who is the high one within the church? Whether one is of middle age or a wife or a young person or a student or a minister, the one who gives himself for the gospel of the Lord, the one who follows wholly, the one who serves wholly, is the high one. Whether one is old or young in the flesh, and who received salvation first and who received it later, have nothing at all to do with it.

To have faith in the heart, to be thankful that the Lord has saved oneself, to be grateful that He washed away one's sin by the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the cross and by the resurrection, and so to set one's heart on being together with this gospel somehow—that heart which desires to go where the Lord goes and to remain where the Lord remains, that faith is precious faith. What does it matter within the church whether one received salvation first or received it late, whether one is old or young, whether one has material things or not?

In the true kingdom of God the one who lives for the Lord is the high one, and the one who serves the gospel and lives for the gospel is the very first and the highest one.

Cast away the faith of a merchant, which follows by calculating

Therefore we must not have fleshly eyes. It is the same when the ministers are gathered. Without selfish motives and without calculation, the minister who offers this one body to the Lord

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and gives himself for the Lord in whatever position he is placed, who desires to live for the gospel, and who the more he serves the more gladly desires to serve still more—that minister, I believe, is the high one. I never believe that a man is the high one because he received salvation first or because he was appointed a minister first.

It is exactly the same and fair for me as well. If I myself truly live for the Lord and live for the gospel, I am a high one; and if I do not live within the gospel, I am a low one. This is what the law of the kingdom of God is like.

Those who have been born again know one another even without speaking. Even when nothing at all is said, they know plainly. Who is the youngest one in each of our departments? The one who only desires to be served, the one who pretends to serve as though he were trading and yet does not serve—that person is the youngest one.

You will ask how I know that. I know nothing at all of what appears outwardly. Honestly, I do not know who has given an offering and who has not. The brothers in charge of the accounts do not report to me person by person. Since this church was established there has never once been a report that a certain saint gave a certain amount. We have no such thing, but in the kingdom of God there is such a thing. It is in our hearts, and it is in the ledger of God.

Yet to serve the Lord according to one's faith and one's circumstances is different from a merchant's reckoning. I hope that you will not bring a merchant's reckoning into the church. It does not work. In the Bible there is the story of a poor widow who gave two mites. He said, *"So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out*

of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood'" (Mark 12:43–44). This was a word spoken about the weight of the heart; it was not a word spoken about whether the material things were many or few. The Lord does not look at the deed only; He looks at the heart.

When a man has this much and desires to serve the Lord this much and serves accordingly, there are times when, although his circumstances make it impossible to serve, the Lord fills him and he comes to serve. Although he has nothing, the Lord gives and he comes to serve again. Every one of us has such a testimony within himself.

Therefore you and I must cast away the faith of a merchant, which follows by calculating, and must take on that serving heart of the Lord, who for us received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred onto Himself and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again and saved us. Let the one who desires to be great become one who serves and the one who desires to be first become a slave, and let us live only for this gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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CHAPTER

21

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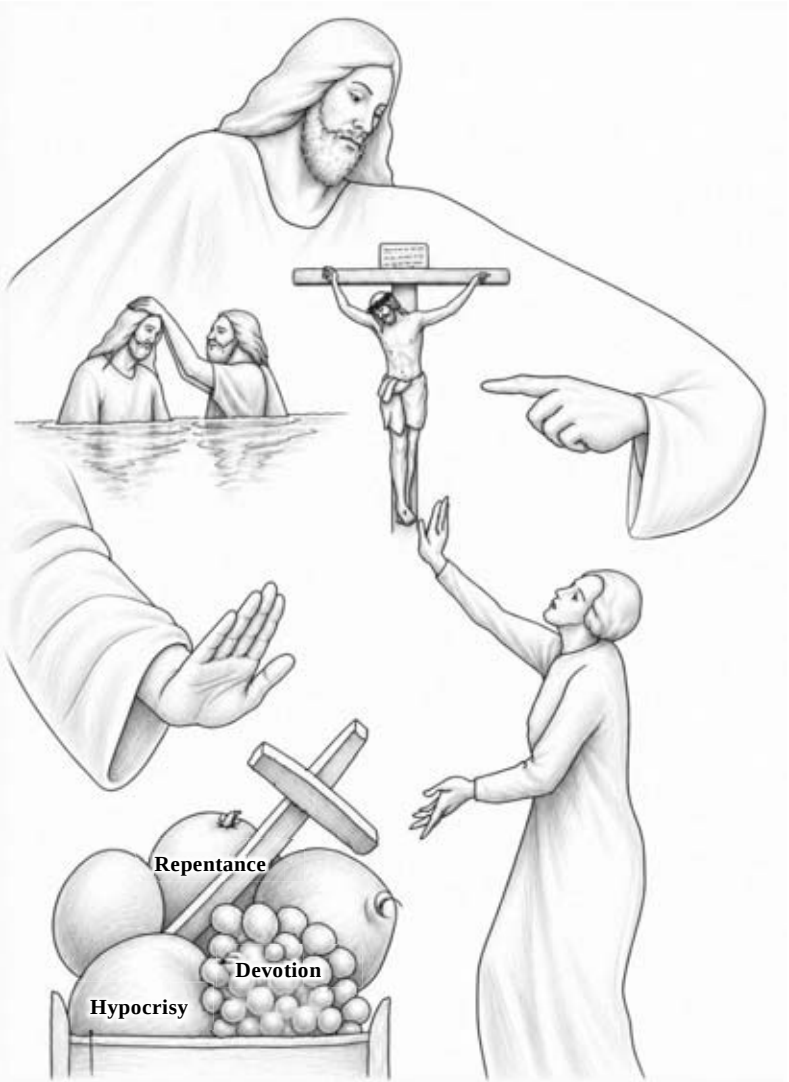

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Matthew Chapter 21

< Matthew 21:1-46 >

"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them.' All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'Tell the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."' So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" Hosanna in the highest!' And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.' Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves."' Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the

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temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes. Have you never read, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise"?' Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, 'How did the fig tree wither away so soon?' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.' Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men," we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know.' And He said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what

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authority I do these things. But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, "Son, go, work today in my vineyard." He answered and said, "I will not," but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him. Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?' They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes"?

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.' Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet."

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 21 begins with the scene in which Jesus enters Jerusalem as King. Yet Jesus was not a king of the world who puts military power in the forefront, but a lowly King who comes riding on a donkey. Jesus laid bare the corruption of the temple, judged the fig tree that had no fruit, and required of the religious leaders true repentance and the fruit of faith. Matthew Chapter 21 proclaims that we must not stop at words that welcome Jesus, but must believe and obey His word.

1. Jesus, who entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey (verses 1–11)

When Jesus had come to Bethphage, which is near Jerusalem, He sent two disciples into the village opposite them. As Jesus had said, the disciples loosed the donkey and the colt that were tied and brought them. The word that they were to answer, *"The Lord has need of them"* if anyone asked the reason, was also fulfilled exactly as it was spoken.

That Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey is an event in which He fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet Zechariah. Jesus was the promised King of Israel, but He did not come in

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the form of a king who rides a warhorse and conquers his enemies by force. He came as a lowly and gentle King, riding on a donkey, the foal of a beast that bears a yoke.

The multitude spread their clothes and branches on the road and cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Hosanna"* is a word that originally has the meaning, *"Save now, I pray."* The people welcomed Jesus and called Him the Son of David, but many among them did not sufficiently understand the character of the salvation that Jesus would accomplish. They expected a political king who would set them free from the rule of Rome, but Jesus was going toward the cross in order to save people from sin and death.

When all Jerusalem was moved and asked, *"Who is this?"* the multitude answered that Jesus was *"the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."* That was not a wrong word either, but Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ, who is greater than a prophet. To welcome Jesus fervently and to know rightly who He is and believe in Him are two different things.

2. Jesus, who cleansed the temple (verses 12–17)

Jesus, having entered Jerusalem, drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. In the buying of animals for the sacrifice and in the changing of money for the payment of the temple tax there was a practical necessity in itself. The problem was that the temple had turned into a market that pursued profit, and that the purpose of praying to God and worshiping Him had been hidden.

Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"* The religious leaders of that time managed the system of the temple, and yet they did not stop the greed and the corruption that were

being carried on within it. Jesus revealed His own authority over the temple and made plain that the work of serving God must not be turned into a means of filling the desire of man.

After Jesus had driven out those who bought and sold, the blind and the lame came to the Lord in the temple, and Jesus healed them. The temple ought not to have been a place where powerful people gained profit, but a place where weak people came to God and obtained grace and restoration.

When the children praised Him, saying, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* the chief priests and the scribes were indignant. Even while they saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, they did not rejoice. Rather they were displeased that the children praised Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus answered their blame with the word of the Psalm, which says that God has perfected the praise that comes out of the mouth of little children.

3. He judges the fig tree that had no fruit (verses 18–22)

Early the next morning Jesus was hungry, and He saw a fig tree by the road. But on the tree there were only leaves in abundance and no fruit. When Jesus said that it would bear fruit no more, the fig tree withered at once.

This event is not one in which Jesus poured out His feeling upon a tree because He was hungry. It is a symbolic act of judgment by which, through the fig tree that had no fruit, He showed the religious reality of that time, which was splendid only in outward form and had no fruit of the faith and the repentance that God seeks. The temple was splendid and the religious ceremonies also continued, but within it there was no fruit of prayer and mercy and justice.

However excellent the religious appearance may be that a man sees, like leaves that are many, if there is no fruit that God seeks, it is not a complete faith. The fruit that God desires is not

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the boasting of one's own righteousness, but believing God and obeying His word, and practicing repentance and love and mercy.

Jesus went on to speak concerning faith and prayer. The word that faith moves a mountain does not mean that if a man uses religion he can accomplish whatever personal desire he has. It means that in a faith that trusts God and does not doubt, the power of God is revealed, which accomplishes even what cannot be done by the strength of man. The prayer of faith is not a means of carrying through one's own greed, but a prayer that asks while trusting the will of God.

4. The religious leaders who ask about the authority of Jesus (verses 23–27)

While Jesus was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came and asked by what authority He did these things and who had given Him that authority. They made an issue of the authority of Jesus, who had cleansed the temple and was teaching within it.

But their question was not an honest question asked because they desired to know the truth. They had no intention of acknowledging Jesus, and they tried to use His answer in order to accuse Him. Jesus asked them in return, *"The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"*

They knew that if they said that the baptism of John had come from heaven, they would receive the rebuke of why they had not believed John, and that if they said that it had come from men, they were afraid of the multitude, who counted John as a prophet. Therefore they answered, *"We do not know."* It was not that they really did not know, but that they calculated an answer that would not be to their own disadvantage.

They feared the reaction of people rather than fearing God. Rather than what the truth was, they considered which answer

would be favorable to their own position. The people who did not believe the ministry of John did not receive the authority of Jesus either, to which John had borne witness.

5. The parable of the two sons (verses 28–32)

Jesus spoke a parable of a father who had two sons. To the father's word to go and work in the vineyard, the second son answered that he would go, but in fact he did not go. The first son answered at the beginning that he would not, but afterward he regretted it and went to the vineyard.

The one who did the will of the father was not the second son, who promised obedience only with his mouth, but the first son, who regretted his wrong attitude and actually acted. The second son points to the religious leaders, who said that they served God well and yet did not believe the way of righteousness that John proclaimed. The first son points to the tax collectors and the harlots, who lived in sin, but who heard the word of John, acknowledged their own fault, and believed.

It is not that Jesus acknowledged the past life of the tax collectors and the harlots as right. They acknowledged that they were sinners and believed the word that John proclaimed, and therefore they came to enter the kingdom of God first. The religious leaders, on the other hand, said outwardly that they obeyed God, but they held on to their own righteousness and did not relent and believe to the end.

True repentance does not end in saying with the mouth, "I have done wrong." It is to turn from one's own wrong thought and way and to believe and obey the word that God has sent. God looks not at the past career or the religious appearance of a man, but at whether he now believes that word and follows it.

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6. The parable of the wicked vinedressers (verses 33–41)

A certain landowner planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, and prepared even a winepress and a tower, and then leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. When the time of harvest came, the owner sent his servants in order to receive the fruit, but the vinedressers beat the servants, killed one, and stoned another. The owner sent more servants, but they too suffered the same thing.

Last of all the owner sent his own son, thinking that the vinedressers would respect his son. But the vinedressers killed the son and tried to take the vineyard. In this parable the landowner points to God, the vineyard points to the church that God has established and the gospel that He has entrusted to that church, and the vinedressers point to the religious leaders who say that they work within the church. In that time the chief priests and the Pharisees were the wicked vinedressers, and today this applies also to the religious leaders who have not been born again and who use the church and the gospel as though they were their own possession. The servants whom the owner sent point to the prophets and the servants of God who were persecuted while proclaiming the word of God, and the son who was sent last points to Jesus.

God gave the law and the prophets to the people of Israel and bestowed much grace upon them. But rather than caring according to the will of God for the people entrusted to them, the leaders regarded their authority as their own possession and refused the prophets of God. And now they were seeking to kill even Jesus, the Son whom God had sent.

When Jesus asked what the owner of the vineyard would do to the vinedressers when he came, the religious leaders answered that he would destroy the wicked vinedressers and entrust the vineyard to other vinedressers who would render the fruit.

Without knowing it, they pronounced the judgment that was against themselves.

7. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone (verses 42–46)

Jesus quoted the word of the Psalm and said, "*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.*" The builders point to the religious leaders, and the stone they rejected points to Jesus. The leaders cast Jesus away like a useless stone and sought to kill Him, but God would set that very Jesus as the chief cornerstone, which becomes the foundation of salvation.

Jesus is not one whose worth is determined according to the estimate of man. Though He was rejected by people and nailed to the cross, God raises Him from the dead and sets Him up as the Lord of salvation. Therefore to reject Jesus is to reject the salvation and the authority of God.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from those who bear no fruit and given to a people who bear the fruits of that kingdom. This does not mean that He rejects all the Jews as a race. It is a word which says that He takes away that privilege and that responsibility from the unbelieving leaders, who regarded what God had entrusted to them as their own possession and refused the Son. Of whatever race, those who believe in Jesus and bear the fruits of the kingdom of God become a people of that kingdom.

The religious leaders perceived that the parable pointed to themselves, but they did not repent. Rather they sought to seize Jesus, and they feared the multitude more than God. If a man hears the word and perceives his own fault and yet does not turn, he can fall into a greater stubbornness, which seeks to remove the person who proclaimed that word.

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8. The overall lesson of Matthew Chapter 21

In Matthew Chapter 21 two responses toward Jesus are continually set over against each other. The multitude and the children praise Jesus as the Son of David, but the religious leaders are angry. The tax collectors and the harlots believe the word of John and turn, but the leaders see it and do not believe. The owner of the vineyard keeps sending his servants and at the last sends even his son, but the vinedressers refuse them and kill them.

Jesus is a lowly King who came riding on a donkey, and at the same time He is the King with authority, who cleanses the temple and judges a faith that has no fruit. The Lord does not look only at the praise of the lips or the outward form of religion; He seeks the fruit of believing that word and turning and obeying.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 21 is the word in which Jesus, who came as a lowly King, judges the corrupted temple and the religion that has no fruit, and requires that we not stop at saying outwardly that we serve God, but believe the Son whom God sent and bear the fruit of repentance and obedience.

2) Matthew Chapter 21 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 21 shows plainly who Jesus is and how we must believe in Him. Jesus is the lowly King who came riding on a donkey, He is God who cleanses the temple, and He is the Lord who judges a faith that has no fruit. In particular, the part where Jesus asked, *"The baptism of John—where was it from?"* and said, *"John came to you in the way of righteousness,"* is the heart of understanding the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

1. Jesus, who came riding on a donkey, is the lowly King who came to save sinners (verses 1–11)

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He rode not on a warhorse but on the colt of a donkey. This shows that Jesus is not a king of the world who rules over people by force, but the King of peace who lowers Himself and saves sinners.

In the Old Testament, in order to save the firstborn of a donkey, which is an unclean animal, it had to be redeemed with a lamb. Therefore, although it is not necessary to fix the donkey of this passage immediately as a symbol down to every detail, from the redemptive-historical perspective of the whole Bible we may think of the figure of a sinner who has come alive by the sacrifice of the Lamb and is used by the Lord. We were originally people who had to be judged because of sin, but we are people who have come alive because Jesus, the Lamb of God, paid the price of salvation in our place.

When Jesus said, *"The Lord has need of them"* the donkey that had been tied was loosed and came to carry the Lord. A person who has received the remission of sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also loosed from the state of being bound to sin and to his own thought and to the world, and comes to be used for the gospel of the Lord. But first he must be loosed from the binding of sin. It is not that a sinner becomes a person useful to the Lord by his own effort alone; rather, after he has received the remission of sin by believing the salvation that Jesus accomplished, he is used by the Lord.

The multitude cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* Hosanna means, *"Save now, I pray."* But many people did not know by what method Jesus would save them. They expected a political liberation, but Jesus came to save them from sin and death by bearing the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by being judged on the cross.

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To receive Jesus truly as King does not stop at welcoming the Lord emotionally. It is to believe with the heart that Jesus is the Son of God, that He bore all our sin by the baptism He received from John, and that He is the Savior who shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again.

2. Jesus, who cleansed the temple, sets right the center of a mistaken faith (verses 12–17)

The temple ought to have been a place where men prayed to God and offered sacrifice, but it had turned into a place that filled the greed and the profit of man. Jesus drove out those who bought and sold, and rebuked them, saying, *"'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

This event is first of all an event in which He judged the actual corruption of the temple of that time. At the same time it gives an important lesson also on the level of faith today. Faith is not a transaction in which a man puts his own righteousness and merit before God and tries to obtain blessing as the payment for it. To believe that God washes away sin because a person has done much fasting and service and offering and prayer of repentance is a mistaken faith that buys and sells salvation with the works of man.

Our sin is not washed away by the religious acts of man. It was washed away because Jesus, who has no sin, received all our sin when He was baptized by John the Baptist, and because He bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the cross. And on the third day He rose again and gave the remission of sin and new life to those who believe. The way of coming to God lies not in the merit of man but in believing the salvation of the water and the blood that Jesus accomplished.

After the temple had been cleansed, the blind and the lame came to Jesus and were healed. The Lord brought the temple

back from being a place for the profit of man to a place where weak souls obtain grace and restoration. Today also the church must not be a place that exalts the position and the profit of man, but a place where a sinner hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sin, and begins a new life within the gospel.

3. The fig tree that had no fruit shows a faith that has only an outward form without the gospel (verses 18–22)

The fig tree, whose leaves were in abundance but which had no fruit, shows a faith whose religious appearance is splendid but which has no fruit of the faith that God seeks. The religious leaders of that time had the temple and the law and their offices, but they had no faith that believed John the Baptist and Jesus, whom God had sent.

Today also there are people who have attended church for a long time, who have much knowledge of the Bible and do much service, and yet who believe that there is still sin in their hearts. This is a state in which the leaves of faith are there but the fruit of the remission of sin is not. What the Lord desires is not a righteousness that a man has fabricated by himself, but believing the righteousness that God has accomplished.

The fruit of the gospel is first of all to receive in the heart the remission of all sin and so to become righteous. After that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin and makes him bear the fruit of thanksgiving and obedience and the preaching of the gospel. It is not that good works become the root of salvation; rather the remission of sin received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes the root, and out of that faith comes the fruit of a righteous life.

The prayer of faith of which Jesus spoke is also not a method

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of accomplishing any human desire whatever. It is a word which says that when we surely believe the salvation that the Lord accomplished and ask for the will of God and for the work of the gospel, God accomplishes even what cannot be done by the strength of man.

4. Why the question, *"The baptism of John—where was it from?"* is important (verses 23–27)

When the chief priests and the elders asked Jesus by what authority He did these things, Jesus asked them in return as follows.

"The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"

This question is not simply asking where the popularity of John the Baptist arose. It asks whether the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism that he administered to Jesus were a work that God had planned, or a work that man had made at his own will.

If the baptism of John came from heaven, then the baptism that Jesus received from John was also a work accomplished by the will and the authority of God. The baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist is not an event in which He simply showed an example of humility or performed a religious ceremony. It is the event in which, through John, who had been set up as the representative of mankind, Jesus received the sin of all the people of the world passed on to Himself, and so all the righteousness of God was fulfilled.

When Jesus was baptized by John, He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* In the word *"us,"* John, who administers the baptism, and Jesus, who receives the baptism, appear together. John took charge of the work of passing the sin of mankind on to Jesus, and Jesus did the work of receiving that

sin and bearing it. This was the righteous method by which God makes a sinner righteous.

The religious leaders knew that if they said that the baptism of John came from heaven, they would receive the rebuke of why they had not believed. Yet if they said that it came from men, they feared the multitude, who believed John to be a prophet. Therefore they answered, *"We do not know."* It was not that they could not answer because they did not know, but that they turned away from the truth in order to protect their own position and their own thought.

In order to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit we must put the word of God ahead of the fixed religious notions of man. A person may think, "Is it not enough to believe only the cross of Jesus? Why do you speak of John the Baptist?" But Jesus Himself spoke of the baptism of John and its authority as important. Therefore a person who believes in Jesus must receive according to the Scriptures not only the work that Jesus did but also the work that John the Baptist took charge of in the process of salvation.

5. What is *"the way of righteousness"* that John brought? (verses 28–32)

After Jesus had spoken the parable of the two sons, He declared as follows.

"John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him."

Here *"the way of righteousness"* is the right way of salvation which makes a sinner sinless and makes him righteous before God. John the Baptist is not merely a prophet who cried out to people to repent morally. He came before Jesus and prepared the way of the Lord, and, representing mankind, he took charge of

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the work of administering baptism to Jesus and passing the sin of the world on to Him.

We must believe according to the word itself the work that Jesus and John the Baptist did for salvation. John the Baptist passed the sin of the world on to Jesus, and Jesus received that sin and bore it all the way to the cross. On the cross the Lord received in our place the punishment for our sin and shed His blood and died, and on the third day He rose again and became our Savior.

This salvation was accomplished by the witness of the water and the blood and the Spirit. The water is the baptism that Jesus received from John, and the blood is the death by which He received in our place the judgment of that sin on the cross. The Spirit bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God and that His baptism and death and resurrection are the true salvation. It is for this reason also that when Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit came upon Him and God bore witness that Jesus was His beloved Son.

To be born again of water and the Spirit is not for a man to become a little better by striving to make his own heart clean. It is to receive the remission of sin by accepting in faith the word that by His baptism Jesus took all my sin onto Himself and that on the cross the judgment of that sin was completely finished. In a heart whose sin has thus been washed away the Holy Spirit dwells and makes the person live as a child of God.

6. The reason the tax collectors and the harlots entered the kingdom of God first (verses 28–32)

The first son at the beginning refused the word of his father, but afterward he regretted it and went to the vineyard. The tax collectors and the harlots also lived in sin at the beginning, but they heard the way of righteousness that John the Baptist

proclaimed, acknowledged that they were sinners, and believed.

That they entered the kingdom of God first was not because they had committed many sins. It was because they did not put forward their own righteousness but received the word of John, whom God had sent. The religious leaders, on the other hand, said outwardly that they obeyed God, but they could not cast away the thought that they themselves were right, and so they received neither the ministry of John nor the salvation of Jesus.

True repentance does not remain in remembering one's sin over and over and continuing to shed tears. It is to acknowledge that one's own thought is different from the word of God, and to turn to the word which says that Jesus has removed all sin by His baptism and His cross. Even though to my feeling it seems that sin remains, if God says that He has passed the sin on to Jesus and judged it, to believe that word is the repentance of faith.

We too are not people more righteous than the tax collectors and the harlots before God. Every man is a weak being who lives while committing countless sins in his heart. If a person holds on to his own righteousness he comes to think that he does not need Jesus, but if he knows his own true form he comes to receive with thanksgiving the grace that has saved him completely by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

7. The parable of the wicked vinedressers shows the sin of rejecting the Son whom God sent (verses 33–41)

The owner of the vineyard entrusted to the vinedressers a vineyard that was furnished with everything, and when the time came he sent his servants in order to receive the fruit. But the vinedressers beat and killed the servants whom the owner had sent. At the last they even cast the son of the owner out of the vineyard and killed him.

This is a parable which shows that God continually sent

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prophets to Israel, but that the people rejected and persecuted that word, and that at the last they would kill even Jesus, the Son of God. John the Baptist also was a servant whom God had sent, but the religious leaders did not receive his testimony. And they rejected Jesus as well, to whom John bore witness.

Yet Jesus did not die because He was seized by people and had no other choice. After the Lord had borne all the sin of mankind by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He went the way of the cross Himself in order to pay the price of that sin. The wicked vinedressers killed the son, but God accomplished even that death as the work of redemption that saves sinners.

Today also, if a person speaks the name of Jesus and yet rejects the fact that He was baptized by John and bore all sin, he does not fully receive the ministry of the Son whom God sent. To believe in Jesus is not to choose only the part that one wants, but to believe the whole salvation that the Lord accomplished by His baptism and His cross and His resurrection.

8. The stone which was rejected has become the chief cornerstone (verses 42–46)

The religious leaders cast Jesus away like a useless stone, but God set that very Jesus as the chief cornerstone of salvation. The chief cornerstone determines the direction and the foundation of the whole building. In the same way true faith must be built upon the foundation of the righteousness that Jesus accomplished.

The foundation of our salvation is not our own prayer of repentance or good deeds or church career. It is that Jesus came clothed in the flesh, the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood and the death of the cross, and the resurrection. If a man casts away this foundation and builds his faith upon human merit, his faith becomes like the fig tree that is splendid

outwardly and yet has no fruit.

The kingdom of God is given to those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and bear the fruits of that kingdom. Here the fruit is not merit piled up in order to obtain salvation. It is the result of faith, in which a person who has first believed the gospel and received the remission of sin and received the Holy Spirit as a gift lives while giving thanks for that grace, preaching the gospel to other souls and serving the Lord.

9. The heart of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 21 proclaims

The religious leaders of Matthew Chapter 21 had the temple, the law, and their offices. But they did not believe the way of righteousness of John the Baptist, whom God had sent, and they did not receive Jesus either, to whom John bore witness. Therefore they became like the fig tree whose leaves were in abundance but which had no fruit.

On the contrary, the tax collectors and the harlots had no righteousness worth boasting of, but they acknowledged their own sin and believed the word that John proclaimed. The person who enters the kingdom of God is not the one who has much religious career, but the one who receives according to the word itself the salvation that God accomplished through Jesus and John the Baptist.

Jesus is the lowly King, the Son of God who came clothed in the flesh. By the baptism He received from John the Lord bore all our sin, past and present and future, and He bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again. The person who believes this fact receives the remission of all sin and becomes righteous, and the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart. And the person who has received the remission of sin lives while bearing the fruit of the gospel in thanksgiving for the grace of

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the Lord.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 21 is a chapter which says that, since Jesus, who came as the lowly King, bore all the sin of mankind by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation by the cross and the resurrection, we must cast away our own righteousness and believe *"the way of righteousness"* of John and the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, so that we may receive the remission of sin and bear the fruit of that faith. ✉

Matthew Chapter 21

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 21 begins with Jesus entering Jerusalem as King, riding on the colt of a donkey. The multitude spread their clothes and branches on the road and cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* The lowliness of Jesus was not because He had no power; it was the lowliness of a King who was going Himself toward the way of the cross in order to save sinners.

Jesus went into the temple and drove out those who bought and sold, and He rebuked them for having made the house of prayer a den of thieves. And in the temple He healed the blind and the lame and received the praise of little children. The Lord is One who cleanses a religion that has only form and who cares for weak people.

The next day Jesus cursed the fig tree, whose leaves alone were in abundance and which had no fruit, and made it wither, and He taught the power of the prayer that moves a mountain if one believes and does not doubt. A faith that has only leaves receives judgment, but the true faith that believes God bears the

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fruit of the gospel.

When the chief priests and the elders asked by what authority He did these things, Jesus asked them in return where the baptism of John had come from. That they could not answer was not because they did not know the truth, but because they turned away from the truth according to their own advantage. The authority of Jesus came from God.

By the parable of the two sons and the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard, Jesus spoke of the judgment of those who reject the Son whom God sent, and of the salvation in which the stone that the builders rejected becomes instead the chief cornerstone. Jesus is the cornerstone who accomplished salvation by His baptism and His cross and His resurrection, and the kingdom of God is built upon those who believe in Him.

Matthew Chapter 21 sets over against each other the person who rejects the King who came lowly and the person who believes that King to be the cornerstone of salvation. Now, as we look at the words of the passage in order, we will come to know the lowly kingship of Jesus, the authority by which He cleansed the temple, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished.

Jesus, who entered Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey, is the lowly King who goes toward the cross in order to save sinners

"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them.' All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'Tell the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."' So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" Hosanna in the highest!' And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee'"(Matthew 21:1–11).

Jesus left Jericho and came near to Jerusalem. Jesus had already told His disciples that in Jerusalem He would suffer mocking and scourging, be nailed to the cross, and rise again on the third day. Therefore His entry into Jerusalem was not a mere festal procession, but a step taken in order to complete the salvation of mankind by bearing the sin of the world, which He had taken upon Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and by going to the cross and dying and rising again.

Jesus sent two disciples into the village opposite them and told them to loose the donkey and the colt that were tied and bring them. He told them to say, *"The Lord has need of them"* if anyone asked the reason, and in fact He knew beforehand everything that was needed. This shows that Jesus is not One who is dragged along by circumstances by chance, but the Lord who knows all things and accomplishes the work of salvation.

The disciples did not follow only as far as they were able to

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understand the word of Jesus; they did *"as Jesus commanded them."* Faith is not obeying only after knowing every result beforehand. It is believing that the word of the Lord is right and faithfully carrying out the work that has been entrusted to oneself. Through that obedience the prophecy of the Old Testament was fulfilled exactly.

Yet the word, *"The Lord has need of them"* must not be used today by anyone as a ground for forcibly demanding the property or the labor of another person in order to accomplish his own greed. Jesus is the true owner of all things, but man is not the Lord. A leader of the church also must not use this word to compel believers to an unjust devotion; all service must be done within the gospel, in faith and with a willing heart.

That Jesus rode on the colt of a donkey is a work in which He fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet. A conqueror of the world displays his strength and enters the city riding on a warhorse, but Jesus entered riding on the foal of a beast that bears a yoke. Jesus is not a king who subdues people by military power, but the King who saves sinners by lowliness and sacrifice.

The lowliness of Jesus is not a weakness that appeared because He had no power. He is the Son of God, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, but He lowered Himself in order to make sinners live. True lowliness is not incapability; it is using one's own ability not for one's own glory but for the life and the benefit of others.

The word, *"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you"* proclaims that Jesus is the true King for whom Israel had been waiting. Jesus is not merely an excellent prophet or a moral teacher. He is the King promised to David, and the Messiah who saves His own people from sin and death and reigns forever.

But the kingdom of Jesus is different from a political

kingdom of the world. Jesus did not come in order to overthrow the Roman Empire and to accomplish the worldly prosperity of Israel. He came in order to remove the sin that is in the heart of a sinner and to reconcile him with God, and to carry the believer over into the kingdom of God.

The multitude spread their own clothes on the road and cut down branches from the trees and laid them on the road. This was an act of welcoming Jesus as King and exalting Him. Those who followed before and behind cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* Hosanna is a cry that entreats God for salvation and praises that salvation.

They called Jesus the *"Son of David."* This is a confession that Jesus is the Messiah whom God had promised to send. The two blind men of Jericho also called Jesus the Son of David and asked for mercy, and now the multitude entering Jerusalem welcomed Jesus by the same name.

However, that the multitude cried Hosanna does not mean that they exactly understood all the work of salvation of Jesus. Many people may have expected that Jesus would save them from political oppression and from the sufferings of their present life. Even while they called Jesus King with their mouths, they did not know why He had to be baptized and go to the cross.

Today also a person may say that he believes in Jesus and yet ask only for health and material things and success. It is not wrong to pray concerning the difficulties of the present life, but the most fundamental purpose for which Jesus came is to save us from sin and from eternal judgment. If a person has only the problems of the world solved and does not receive the remission of sin, he has missed the most important salvation.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus entered Jerusalem means that He went to receive the judgment of the cross in the state of having already

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borne the sin of mankind. As He began His public ministry, Jesus received onto His own body the sin of all the people of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He entered Jerusalem as the Lamb of God who bore that sin.

A few days later Jesus hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so He received the punishment for all the sin that He had borne. And on the third day He rose from death and overcame sin and death and became the King who gives eternal life to those who believe. The *"Hosanna"* that the multitude cried, that is, their entreaty to be saved, was completely fulfilled through the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

The baptism that Jesus received from John, and the cross, and the resurrection are one salvation that cannot be separated from one another. By the baptism He bore our sin, on the cross He received the judgment of that sin, and by the resurrection He gave us righteousness and new life. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the complete salvation that God has accomplished.

Therefore to receive Jesus as King does not mean only to praise Him emotionally. It is to believe with the heart the word that Jesus bore all my sin by His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again. To the person who has received the remission of sin by this faith, Jesus actually becomes the King of salvation and of life.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, all the city was moved and asked, *"Who is this?"* In faith toward Jesus this question is very important. It is because the faith of salvation is determined according to whom one believes Jesus to be. If a person knows Him only as a great teacher or as a prophet who performed miracles, he cannot come to a complete faith.

The multitude answered that Jesus was *"Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."* These words are not entirely wrong,

but they do not sufficiently express the true identity of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God, who is greater than a prophet; He is the Creator, the Savior who bears and removes the sin of the world, and the eternal King.

The figure of the colt of the donkey, which had been tied and was loosed and used by the Lord, also gives us a lesson. A person who had been bound by sin believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and after he has been loosed from sin he lives for the will of the Lord. But just as the colt of the donkey cannot take the place of its master, so also a person who preaches the gospel must not exalt himself. The reason the people shouted was not that the donkey was excellent, but that Jesus was riding upon it.

A person who has been saved must not take the glory for himself on the ground that he is doing the work of the Lord. In all the work of preaching the gospel and serving the church and helping other souls, the One who must be revealed is Jesus. We should be thankful to be used by the Lord, but we must remember that the power and the glory of salvation belong to God alone.

Moreover a person who has received Jesus must follow the lowliness of the Lord. Rather than seeking to occupy a high place and to be served, he must serve in a low place for the sake of the gospel. Even a small work that is not noticed, if it is a work that the Lord has entrusted to him, must be regarded as precious and be done faithfully. In the kingdom of God the person who serves the Lord and souls is truly a great person.

Matthew 21:1–11 shows that Jesus is the Son of David promised in the Old Testament, and the King who went lowly to the cross in order to save sinners. We must not stop at crying Hosanna for a moment like the multitude, but must believe with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by His baptism and His cross and His resurrection.

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And after we have been loosed from sin, we must become people who, like the colt of the donkey, are used in lowliness to exalt the Lord and to preach the gospel.

Jesus cleansed the temple, which had become a den of thieves, healed weak people, and received the perfected praise of little children

"Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves."' Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes. Have you never read, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise"?' Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there" (Matthew 21:12–17).

After Jesus had entered Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey, He went straight to the temple. The multitude cried out toward Jesus, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* but Jesus did not remain in the shouting of the people. He looked at the state in which the house of God was and laid bare the greed and the falsehood that had settled within it.

The temple was a place for worshiping God and for a sinner to ask for the mercy of God. Because animals for the sacrifice and money for use in the temple were needed, a certain amount

of preparation and exchange was necessary. But people had turned the work of helping worship into a business for gaining profit, and they were filling their own greed by using the name of God and the sacrifice.

Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. This was not simply because it was noisy inside the temple. It was because the place where men were to meet God and pray had been perverted into a place where greed and exploitation and religious transactions were carried on.

The dove was something permitted so that people in difficult circumstances also might offer a sacrifice to God. Yet if even the offering that a poor man needed in order to come to God was used as a means of gaining profit, that was a work that blocked the mercy of God. Religion, which ought to have opened the way for a sinner to come to God, had instead become a means of using people and laying burdens upon them.

Jesus said, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer."* Prayer is an act in which a man depends on God, tells Him of his own lack, and asks for grace. The house of God must not be a place that exalts the desire and the honor of man, but a place that exalts God and seeks His will.

But the religious leaders and the merchants of that time made the temple a *"den of thieves."* A thief takes what belongs to another for his own benefit. To obtain money and power by using the name of God, and to exalt one's own position by using the faith of people, is also spiritual robbery.

The church of today also must examine itself before this word. Offerings and service and office must not be taught as though they were a transaction that buys the blessing of God. If people are made to think that they obtain a greater blessing or a higher office by giving much money, or if believers are

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compelled to an unjust sacrifice under the pretext of the gospel, that is to turn the house of God into a place for the profit of man.

This passage does not mean that all financial activity carried on in the church, or the use of necessary expenses, is forbidden. Material things are needed in order to run the church, to preach the gospel, and to help neighbors in difficulty. The problem lies in material things going ahead of the gospel and of souls, and in the name of God becoming a means of justifying greed.

The event in which Jesus overturned the tables is also not a permission for a believer to claim his own anger as the righteousness of God and to use violence. Jesus is the owner of the temple and the Son of God, who knows the heart of every man. We must discern sin by the word and set wrong things right, but we must not wrap our personal feelings and desires in the dress of holy anger.

After Jesus had driven the wrong things out of the temple, the blind and the lame came to Him. When the temple recovered its original purpose, that place again became a place where weak people received the mercy of the Lord. Jesus did not regard them as troublesome or drive them out, but healed them.

The merchants thought about what they would gain from people, but Jesus thought about what He would give to a suffering person. A false religion uses people, but the true gospel makes sinners and weak people live. The church also must not be a place that uses the money and the ability of people, but a place that preaches the gospel and cares for wounded souls.

That Jesus healed the blind and the lame was a sign showing that He is the promised Messiah and the Lord of life. But we must not judge that every disability or disease has arisen because of the individual sin of that person. We must not condemn a person who is sick or disabled as lacking faith, but must care for him with prayer and treatment and practical help.

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone
of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

Moreover, the fact that Jesus healed these people does not allow us to promise that every believer will certainly be healed of bodily disease in his present life. God may heal a disease, and He may also give grace to endure in the midst of illness. The time when the body of a believer is completely set free from all disease and death is accomplished in the resurrection and in the eternal kingdom of God.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the greed that defiled the temple shows the sin that is in the heart of man. Even while saying that it serves God, the heart of man can serve money and honor and its own righteousness. If we worship and pray outwardly and yet in our hearts seek only our own benefit, then within us also there is the sin that makes the temple a marketplace.

A man cannot completely wash away the greed and the hypocrisy of his heart by his own resolve and self-discipline alone. Therefore Jesus bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus took onto Himself all our sin, including religious hypocrisy and greed, falsehood and pride.

Jesus, bearing that sin, hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so He received the punishment for all sin. And on the third day He rose again and gave the remission of sin and new life to those who believe. That Jesus went to the cross after He had cleansed the temple was in order to accomplish the salvation that truly makes the heart of a sinner clean.

A person who believes the baptism that Jesus received from John, and His cross and His resurrection, receives the remission of all sin and becomes the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit is not One whom a man calls into a heart in which sin still remains; He dwells in the heart of a person who has received the remission of sin by believing the

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righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. This is the grace given to a person who has been born again of water and the Spirit.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, the greed and the pride of the flesh can rise again. But a person who has been born again must not justify them; he must discern them before the word of God and cast them away. He must return to the word and to prayer so that his heart may not be filled with money and honor and the desire of the world, and he must give himself to serving the gospel and souls.

The word, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer"* applies also to the life of a person who has received the remission of sin. A person who has been saved does not live trusting his own strength alone, but asks God for help and prays for the salvation of other souls. Prayer is not a transaction that moves God according to one's own desire, but a fellowship of faith in which one lays down his own will and seeks the will of God.

Even though the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did and the praise of the children, they did not rejoice but were angry. They thought it more important that their own authority was being shaken than the fact that the blind and the lame had been healed. When the religious position and the self-righteousness of a man harden, he does not acknowledge the work of God even when he sees it before his eyes.

On the contrary, the little children cried out in the temple, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* The religious leaders, who boasted of their knowledge and position, rejected Jesus, but the little children praised Jesus as the promised King and Savior. The truth of the kingdom of God is received not by the person who exalts his own knowledge, but by the person who lowers his heart before the word.

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone
of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

Jesus did not stop the praise of the little children. Rather, He cited the words, *"Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise."* He made plain that this praise was fulfilling the meaning of the Scriptures. Since Jesus is the Son of God, who saves sinners, He is One who is worthy to receive praise.

Faith like that of a little child is not an attitude of following the words of men without any thought. It is the lowliness of laying down one's own knowledge and merit and receiving according to the word itself the salvation that God has accomplished. It is to believe, as a truth more certain than one's own feeling, the fact that Jesus bore all sin by His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again.

We must examine whether, while praising Jesus with our mouths, we have set up a table of greed in our hearts. If we say that we love God and yet love money and honor and the recognition of people more, we must turn our hearts before the word by which Jesus cleansed the temple. To cast away wrong desire is not an act done in order to obtain the remission of sin again, but the obedience of faith in order to live worthily of the grace of salvation already received.

Matthew 21:12–17 is the word in which Jesus cleansed the temple, which had been defiled by falsehood and greed, healed weak people, and received the praise of little children. We must cast away a faith that seeks its own benefit in the name of God, and must receive the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished by His baptism and His cross and His resurrection. And as befits people who have become temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells, we must pray, and serve the gospel and souls rather than greed, and praise completely Jesus alone, the King of salvation.

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Jesus judged a faith that had only leaves and taught us to bear the fruit of the gospel by a prayer that believes God

"Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, 'How did the fig tree wither away so soon?' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive'" (Matthew 21:18–22).

Early in the morning, as Jesus was entering the city of Jerusalem, He was hungry. That Jesus was hungry shows that the Lord, who is the Son of God, was a true man who came into this world clothed in flesh like ours. Yet the event in which Jesus made the fig tree wither by His word reveals that He is God, who rules over all things and judges them.

The fig tree that Jesus saw had leaves in abundance. Seen from afar it looked as though its fruit would be plentiful, but when He came near and looked, there was nothing but leaves. Its outward form was alive and plentiful, but the fruit that the Lord seeks was not there.

This fig tree shows the faith of the religious leaders of that time, who outwardly appeared to serve God well but who in fact did not receive Jesus Christ. In the temple many sacrifices were offered and people boasted of the law and of tradition, but they rejected Jesus the Savior, whom God had sent. The leaves of religion were in abundance, but there was no fruit of repentance

and faith.

This event is connected also with the work by which Jesus cleansed the temple, spoken of before. Inside the temple the sacrifices and the religious acts continued, but the people had made the house of God a house of merchandise. Many people cried *"Hosanna"* toward Jesus as He entered Jerusalem, but a considerable number among them did not know who Jesus was and what salvation He had come to accomplish. This is exactly a faith that has leaves but no fruit.

Today also, attending church and taking part in worship and doing much religious service do not of themselves make a person one who is saved. Even if one has much knowledge of the Bible and many offices and good deeds, if he does not believe the righteousness that God has accomplished, that is a faith of leaves only. The first fruit that the Lord seeks is not the religious achievement of man but the true faith that believes with the heart the salvation that God has accomplished.

The fruit of faith that God seeks begins in believing how Jesus bore and removed all our sin. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world. And bearing that sin He hung on the cross and shed His blood and was judged, and by rising from the dead He completed our salvation.

Therefore the fruit of salvation is not the result of a man striving to wash away his sin by his own strength. It is the fruit that is borne when we believe the righteousness of God, which Jesus completed by the water and the blood and the Spirit. A person who puts forward his own good deeds and prayers of repentance and religious life is like a person who boasts of leaves. But a person who believes the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of Jesus is a person who has received the salvation that God has accomplished.

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When Jesus said toward the fig tree, *"Let no fruit grow on you ever again,"* the tree withered at once. This is not simply a curse upon one tree; it represents the judgment upon a religious faith that rejects Jesus Christ and puts forward only its own righteousness. If a man rejects the Lord, who is the source of life, then however splendid he may look outwardly, that soul in the end cannot but wither.

This word is not meant to condemn one particular race only. It is a warning given to every person in any age who does not believe the salvation that God has bestowed and holds only to an outward religious life. God does not look at the office or the fame or the outward appearance of a man, but at whether there is in his heart a faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Of course, to bear the fruit of faith does not mean to obtain salvation by piling up good deeds. A tree bears fruit because it is alive; it does not become a living tree by having fruit fastened onto it. In the same way we must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin and new life. After that the Holy Spirit makes the fruit of thanksgiving and obedience and love and the preaching of the gospel grow in the life of that person.

If a person does not believe the fact that Jesus bore our sin by the baptism He received from John, and believes only the blood of the cross, he cannot fully know how Jesus took sin onto Himself. The baptism of Jesus is the event of salvation in which He received our sin passed on to Himself, and the cross is the event in which He received the punishment for that sin. The resurrection bears witness that all that work of salvation was completely accomplished. When we believe this complete gospel, the sin of the heart is washed away and we become true believers in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone
of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

The disciples were astonished to see that the fig tree had withered at once. But Jesus taught faith in God rather than the phenomenon of the tree withering. The word, *"if you have faith and do not doubt"* does not mean that whatever a man strongly convinces himself of will be accomplished. True faith is not believing one's own conviction, but believing the word and the power and the faithfulness of God.

That Jesus said it would be done even if one said to a mountain to be removed and cast into the sea is an expression that emphasizes the power of faith. God has the power to solve even a problem like a mountain, which cannot be moved by the strength of man. But this word must not be used as a formula for accomplishing one's own desire or for displaying miracles. The prayer of faith is not a means of subjecting God to one's own will, but a prayer in which one lays down his own will and depends on the will and the power of God.

The greatest and heaviest mountain that lay before us was sin and judgment. However much a man repented and tried to live well, he could not completely remove his own sin. But God moved this mountain of sin, which man could not move, onto Jesus Christ. Jesus bore sin by His baptism and was judged on the cross, and so He removed the wall of sin and condemnation. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the blessed news that God Himself has accomplished the salvation that was impossible.

The word, *"whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."* This word also does not mean that whatever greed of the flesh a man asks for he will obtain. A person who believes God asks for what is fitting to the will of God. He asks for the salvation of sinners and the spread of the gospel and the benefit of the church, and for the wisdom and the faith and the needed help to overcome difficulties. God hears such prayers and answers them in the best way and at the best time.

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The remission of sin is not obtained by praying much. Neither is sin washed away by the merit of fasting or of praying through the night. The remission of sin is received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. A person who has become righteous by believing that gospel can call God Father and pray in faith. Therefore prayer is not an act that produces salvation, but an expression of faith in which a person who has already been saved trusts God and has fellowship with Him.

Sometimes while praying, fear or weakness may arise in the heart. The word not to doubt does not mean never to be shaken emotionally even once; it means to trust the word of God more than one's own thought. A believer does not trust his own anxious feelings but takes hold of the promise that God has given within the gospel. Even when he is weak, he must honestly tell God of that weakness and again depend on the word.

The Lord tells us not to become people who have only religious leaves in abundance. If a person says with his mouth that he believes in Jesus and yet boasts of his own righteousness, does not serve the gospel, does not love his brothers, and does not obey the word of God, he must look back upon his own faith. For in the life of a person who has been saved there appears, though not perfectly, the fruit that the Holy Spirit brings forth.

That fruit is not the revealing of one's own greatness. It is to give thanks that one's own sin has been completely washed away by the grace of God, to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to other souls as well, to serve God and the church, and to love the brothers and sisters. This fruit also is not borne by the ability of man; the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, makes it grow through the word.

Therefore we must not boast of our own religious appearance, but must examine whether the gospel of the water and the Spirit

is clearly settled in our hearts. We must believe the fact that Jesus bore all sin by His baptism, received the judgment of it on the cross, and rose again. And depending on the word of that gospel we must pray to God, and, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, live while bearing the fruit of the gospel.

The event of the fig tree is the word which says that the judgment of God comes upon a faith that has only leaves, but that to the person who believes the righteousness that God has accomplished are given the remission of sin and new life and the privilege of prayer. A person who truly believes does not depend on his own ability. He believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and depends on the power of God, and even before difficulties like a mountain he prays and lives a life that bears the fruit of the gospel in which God delights.

The authority of Jesus came from God, and true obedience is to acknowledge one's own sin and to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the way of righteousness

"Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men," we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know.'

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And He said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, "Son, go, work today in my vineyard." He answered and said, "I will not," but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him'" (Matthew 21:23–32).

When Jesus had cleansed the temple and was teaching the people within it, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Jesus. They asked, *"By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"* Because Jesus had driven the merchants out of the temple, healed the sick, and taught the word of God, they felt that the religious authority they possessed was being threatened.

The question of the chief priests and the elders was not a question asked because they wanted to know the truth. While not acknowledging the authority of Jesus, they were looking for a ground on which to find fault with Him. They thought that, since they had the right to manage the temple and to teach the people, Jesus also had to receive their permission. But Jesus is not a religious leader who has been entrusted with authority by men; He is the Son of God, who has all authority in heaven and on earth.

The authority of Jesus does not come from the recommendation of man or from the approval of a religious organization. Jesus is the Word, who was with God from the

beginning, and He is God, who created all things. The purpose for which He came to this earth clothed in flesh was to save mankind, which had fallen into sin. Therefore the work by which Jesus cleansed the temple and saved sinners was a work that God Himself was doing.

Jesus did not answer their question at once, but asked them in return, *"The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"* This question was not asked in order to avoid an argument; it means that in order to know the authority of Jesus one must first acknowledge the ministry of John the Baptist. For God sent John the Baptist and had him prepare the way of the salvation that Jesus would accomplish.

John the Baptist is not a man who made a baptism of his own by the thought of man. He was a prophet sent from God, and he received the mission of revealing Jesus Christ to the world. Therefore to acknowledge the fact that the baptism of John came from heaven is to acknowledge the fact that the ministry and the testimony of John the Baptist were the will of God.

The chief priests and the elders did not acknowledge the fact that the baptism of John came from God. Yet if they acknowledged it, they were afraid that Jesus would ask, *"Why then did you not believe him?"* On the contrary, if they said that it came from men, they were afraid of the opposition of the people, who believed John to be a prophet. They regarded their own position and the estimate of people as more important than the will of God.

In the end they answered, *"We do not know."* They spoke so not because they really did not know, but because they did not want to acknowledge the truth. If they acknowledged the ministry of the servant whom God had sent, they had to acknowledge their own fault as well. In order to protect their own authority and appearance they turned away even from the

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truth that they knew.

Such a figure shows how dangerous is a faith that loves the recognition of people and religious position more than God. If a person knows that a word is given by God and yet does not receive it because of the eyes of the people around him and because of the doctrine he has built up, he can fall into the same fault as the chief priests. The standard for judging the truth must not be the number of people or tradition, but the word that God has written.

In the fact that Jesus asked about the baptism of John there is an important meaning related to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. John the Baptist did not stop at being a prophet who simply cried out to people to repent. He was used in the work of the salvation of God, administering baptism to Jesus so as to pass all the sin of mankind on to Him.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore on His own body the sin of all the people of the world. That Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"* means that through that baptism He was fulfilling the righteousness of God, which saves sinners. After John the Baptist had administered baptism to Jesus, he pointed to Him and bore witness, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Therefore, if we accept the fact that the baptism of John came from heaven, we must also believe that the baptism that Jesus received was an event accomplished within the plan of the salvation of God. The baptism of Jesus is not an event in which He simply showed humility or performed a ceremony. It is the event of salvation in which, through John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus received all the sin of the world passed on to Himself.

After Jesus had borne our sin by the baptism, He bore that

sin and went to the cross. The blood that He shed on the cross represents that He received the punishment for the sin that He had borne. And by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death and completed our salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the way of righteousness that God has accomplished.

The chief priests and the elders knew the law of God and did many religious acts, but they did not believe this way of righteousness. Because they depended on their own works and their religious position, they did not acknowledge that they themselves were sinners. In order to receive the righteousness of God a man must first acknowledge the fact that his own righteousness cannot be the ground of salvation, but they did not do so.

Jesus laid bare this figure of theirs by the parable of the two sons. When the father told the second son to go and work in the vineyard, the second son answered, *"I go, sir."* His word sounded courteous and obedient, but in fact he did not go to the vineyard. With his mouth he said that he respected his father, but by his action he disobeyed the will of his father.

This second son points to the chief priests and the elders. They said with their mouths that they served God and boasted that they kept the law, but they did not believe John the Baptist and Jesus, whom God had sent. Outwardly they appeared to obey God, but they did not obey the word of salvation that God had actually commanded.

The first son at first answered, *"I will not."* His answer was clearly wrong. But afterward he regretted his own fault, went to the vineyard, and did the will of his father. More important than how he spoke at first was whether he afterward received the word of his father and actually obeyed.

The first son points to the tax collectors and the harlots. They

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did not live righteously before God, and by people also they were treated as open sinners. But when John the Baptist proclaimed the way of righteousness, they acknowledged that they were sinners and received that word. Because they had no righteousness of their own to put forward, they rather believed the grace of the salvation that God bestows.

The word of Jesus, *"tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you"* does not mean that the more sins a man commits the more easily he is saved. Neither does it mean that He regards sin as good. It means that the person who acknowledges his own sin and believes the way of salvation that God has prepared enters the kingdom of God before the person who puts forward his own righteousness and rejects the gospel.

A man cannot wash away his own sin by good conduct or by religious life. The sin of man was removed because Jesus bore it by the baptism He received from John and was judged on the cross. Therefore the true obedience that a sinner must render is not to strive to wash away his own sin by himself, but to believe the righteousness that God has accomplished in Jesus Christ.

The regret of which this passage speaks is not simply to fall into a sense of guilt and be sorrowful. It is to cast away one's own thought and one's own righteousness and to return to the word of God. The first son, after he had regretted his own fault, actually went to the vineyard. In the same way true repentance does not end in saying, "I have done wrong," but must go on as far as believing the way of righteousness that God has given.

The greater sin of the chief priests and the elders lay in this, that even when they saw the tax collectors and the harlots believing the word and being changed, they did not believe to the end. They saw the ministry of John, and they saw the power of Jesus, and they saw sinners returning to God. Even so they did not lay down their own thought and position. It was not that

they could not believe because the evidence was insufficient; they did not believe because they were unwilling to cast away their own righteousness.

To believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not simply to call upon the name of Jesus. It is to receive with the heart the word that Jesus bore our sin by His baptism, received on the cross the judgment of that sin, and accomplished complete salvation by rising again. When a sinner believes this gospel, he receives the remission of sin by the righteousness of God and becomes a child of God.

This word gives an important lesson also to a person who has already received the remission of sin. If a person says with his mouth, "I will live according to the will of the Lord," and yet in fact follows his own thought and the estimate of people more, he can become like the second son. Even if his works are lacking, to acknowledge his own fault and to turn to the word of God and obey is the attitude of true faith.

To work in the vineyard of God is not to establish one's own righteousness or to gain religious fame. It is to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to preach this gospel to other souls, and to serve the church and the work of the gospel that God has entrusted to us. The Holy Spirit leads the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin, so that he follows the will of God and bears the fruit of the gospel.

Therefore, like the chief priests and the elders, we must not turn away from the truth we know in order to protect our standing in the eyes of others or our own authority. We must believe the word that God sent John the Baptist and that through him He caused Jesus to bear the sin of mankind. We must also believe the fact that the cross and the resurrection of Jesus have completed our remission of sin and our new life.

Matthew 21:23–32 shows what true authority and true

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obedience are. Jesus is the Savior, who received authority from God, and John the Baptist is the servant whom God sent in order to prepare and bear witness to that way of salvation. True obedience does not lie in religious words and outward appearance, but in laying down one's own sin and one's own righteousness and believing Jesus Christ, whom God sent, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He completed.

The wicked vinedressers who rejected the Son whom God sent receive judgment, but the person who believes Jesus to be the cornerstone of salvation comes to bear the fruit of the kingdom of God

"'Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?' They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The

Jesus, the King who came lowly, has become the chief cornerstone of salvation and makes those who believe in Him bear the fruit of the gospel

stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.' Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet" (Matthew 21:33–46).

After Jesus had rebuked the chief priests and the elders for not receiving the ministry of John the Baptist and the way of the righteousness of God, He spoke the parable of the wicked vinedressers. This parable shows what the grace is that God has bestowed upon people, and what judgment comes upon the religious leaders who used that grace as though it were their own possession.

The owner of the vineyard in the parable points to God, and the vineyard points to the church that God has established and the gospel that He has entrusted to that church. After the owner had made the vineyard, he set a hedge around it, dug a winepress, and built even a tower to guard the vineyard. He prepared everything that was needed so that the vinedressers might serve the gospel in the vineyard and bear the fruit of saving souls.

In the same way God created the world and gave man life and conscience and His word. In particular He gave the law and the system of sacrifice to the people of Israel, and sent prophets so that they might know the will of God. He prepared everything so that they might believe the word of God, receive the remission of sin, and bear the fruit of righteousness.

The vineyard was made by the owner, and the vinedressers were no more than people who leased that vineyard and worked

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in it. Therefore the ownership of the vineyard did not belong to the vinedressers but to the owner. The vinedressers had to manage the vineyard well and, when the time came, render to the owner the fruit they had promised.

In this parable the vinedressers point to the religious leaders who had been entrusted with the people of God. God entrusted to them the work of teaching the people by the word and leading them to God. The work they had to do was not to make people their own possession, but to proclaim the word of God so that they might obtain the remission of sin and new life.

But the vinedressers regarded the vineyard as their own. When the owner sent his servants in order to receive the fruit, they beat one servant severely, killed another, and stoned another. Though the owner sent more servants than at the first, they did the same to them also.

These servants represent the prophets of the Old Testament, whom God sent to the people of Israel. Through the prophets God told them to cast away idols and to return to Him. But many kings and religious leaders did not listen to the word of God and persecuted or killed the prophets.

Because God did not desire that man should perish through sin, He sent His servants again and again. That God bore long with them was not because He regarded sin lightly, but because He wished that people would hear the word and turn. But the wicked vinedressers did not receive the longsuffering of God as an opportunity for repentance; they thought that it was permissible to despise the owner.

At last the owner sent his own son, saying, "*They will respect my son.*" Here the son points to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son whom God the Father sent into the world. God did not send prophets only; at the last He Himself sent His Son in the flesh.

Jesus is not one among the many servants. He is the heir of

the vineyard and the Son of God, who created all things. All people ought to have received Jesus and obeyed His word. But the religious leaders did not acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.

When the vinedressers saw the son, they said, *"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance."* This shows that their problem did not lie in a mere mistake or in ignorance. They tried to seize the sovereignty of the vineyard and to become owners themselves. They said that they served God, but in fact they tried to sit in the place of God and to make the people and the temple and religious authority their own possession.

The passage says that the vinedressers cast the son out of the vineyard and killed him. This shows beforehand the work by which the religious leaders would drag Jesus outside Jerusalem and nail Him to the cross. When Jesus spoke this parable, He already knew what kind of death He would suffer.

Yet the death of Jesus is not only an event in which He was helplessly sacrificed by wicked men. Jesus gave His own life willingly in order to save mankind from sin. Only, in order for Jesus to be judged on the cross for the sin of mankind, He first had to bear that sin on His own body.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received onto His own body the sin of all the people of the world. That Jesus said, when He was baptized, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"* means that He was fulfilling God's will by bearing the sin of mankind in a just way and making sinners righteous.

Because Jesus had borne sin by the baptism, He could go to the cross as *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* The blood that He shed on the cross is the evidence that He received in our place the death that is the punishment for sin. And by rising from the dead He overcame sin and death and

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completed our salvation.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a gospel that believes the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of Jesus as one connected whole. If we look only at the cross without the baptism, we cannot clearly know how Jesus took our sin onto Himself. On the contrary, if we speak only of the baptism and leave out the judgment of the cross and the resurrection, that too cannot be the complete gospel. These three events are one perfect salvation that God has accomplished.

Jesus asked what the owner of the vineyard would do to the wicked vinedressers when he returned. The religious leaders answered, *"He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."* Without perceiving the fact that they themselves were those wicked vinedressers, they spoke with their own mouths the judgment that would come upon them.

This word does not mean that He condemns the whole nation of Israel. It means that He judges the unbelieving leaders who regarded the people entrusted to them by God as their own possession, refused the prophets, and at last rejected even the Son of God. At the same time it is a warning given in every age to religious leaders who reject Jesus Christ and make people the instruments of their own desire.

Jesus quoted the word of the Psalm, *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone."* The builders thought that they were the experts who judged which stones were needed for the building and which were not. But they cast away like a useless stone the very Jesus whom God had appointed as the foundation of salvation.

People rejected Jesus and nailed Him to the cross, but God raised Him from the dead. Jesus, who was rejected by men, became the chief cornerstone that accomplishes the work of the

salvation of God. This is not a work accomplished by the wisdom of man or by religious authority, but a marvelous work that God Himself has done.

The chief cornerstone is the important stone that determines the direction and the standard of the whole building. In the same way Jesus is the only foundation on which the kingdom of God and the church and the faith of every believer are built. The philosophy of man, or the tradition of a denomination, or the authority of a leader cannot be the foundation of salvation. Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished can establish a sinner as one of God's people.

The word, *"The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it"* means that the kingdom of God is not given according to human descent or religious position. Whether Jew or Gentile, the people who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit become the people of God. God does not cast away a race itself; He judges the unbelief that rejected Jesus, and He establishes as one people all who believe in Jesus.

The fruit of the kingdom of God spoken of here is first of all that a sinner hears the gospel and obtains the remission of sin and new life. The fruit that God most desires in the vineyard is that a soul that would perish believes the salvation of Jesus Christ and becomes a child of God. Therefore the work of preaching the gospel and saving souls is like the farming of life.

When a person believes Jesus, who bore all our sin by the baptism He received from John, and believes His cross and His resurrection, all the sin of his heart is washed away. A person who has thus received the remission of sin does not establish his own righteousness but gives thanks for the righteousness that God has accomplished. Moreover he comes to serve the gospel so that others also may hear this gospel and obtain new life.

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Therefore the fruit of the kingdom of God is not human merit offered as the price of salvation. It is the result that the Holy Spirit brings forth in the life of a person after he has first believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtained new life. Preaching the gospel, serving God and the church, loving the brothers and sisters, and obeying the word are all the fruit of faith that appears in a person who has been saved.

On the contrary, a person who uses religion to make the material things and the respect of people his own, who blocks the right gospel, and who makes souls subject to himself is like a wicked vinedresser. The life of a man is not the possession of a pastor or of a denomination; it belongs to God. A servant of God must not make people his own disciples, but must lead them to Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, *"whoever falls on this stone will be broken."* This word does not mean that a man's own thought and pride are graciously broken before the word of Jesus so that he comes to salvation. It is a word of judgment which says that the one who opposes and challenges Jesus Christ, the stone, with his own thought is instead broken and perishes. Just as the chief priests and the elders joined together and opposed Jesus, so the person who does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and opposes the Lord to the end receives judgment according to this word.

If a person rejects Jesus to the end, that stone becomes the stone of judgment. The word, *"but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder"* means that final judgment comes upon the one who does not believe in Jesus. To the person who believes, Jesus is the chief cornerstone of salvation, but to the person who rejects Him He becomes the Lord of a judgment that cannot be escaped.

The chief priests and the Pharisees perceived that Jesus had

spoken the parable concerning them. But they did not relent; rather they sought to seize Jesus. That they feared the multitude and could not act at once was not because they feared God, but because they feared the reaction of people. It is exactly the same figure as when they could not answer earlier concerning the authority of John the Baptist.

Before this word we must acknowledge that the vineyard and life and the gospel all belong to God. Our time and talents and material things and offices also are things that God has entrusted to us for a while. A believer who has been saved must not use these for his own desire, but must use them in serving so that souls may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain new life.

Matthew 21:33–46 is the word which says that judgment surely comes upon those who despise the longsuffering of God and reject His Son. But Jesus, whom people cast away, has become the chief cornerstone, who completed our salvation by His baptism and His cross and His resurrection. Whoever casts away his own righteousness and believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes one of God's people, and, being led by the Holy Spirit, comes to bear the fruit of the kingdom of God, which makes other souls live. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 21

[Question] 1. Tell the broad outline of the story that unfolds from Matthew Chapter 21.

From Matthew Chapter 21 the last ministry of Jesus, from His entry into Jerusalem until He hung on the cross, begins in earnest. Jesus publicly revealed that He is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, and He came into direct conflict with the corrupted religious leaders.

The content of this chapter is as follows.

• Verses 1–11: Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

• Verses 12–17: He cleanses the temple and heals the sick.

• Verses 18–22: He curses the fig tree that has no fruit and rebukes a faith that has no fruit.

• Verses 23–27: The chief priests and the elders ask about the authority of Jesus.

• Verses 28–32: Through the parable of the two sons, He teaches the difference between obedience in words only and actual obedience.

• Verses 33–46: Through the parable of the wicked vinedressers He foretells the unbelief of the religious leaders and the judgment they will receive.

Therefore Matthew Chapter 21 is a chapter in which Jesus reveals Himself as the Messiah and the owner of the temple, and at the same time declares judgment upon Israel and upon the religious leaders, who have no fruit of faith. From this point the last events, which lead on to the death of Jesus on the cross and

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His resurrection, unfold rapidly.

[Question] 2. Arrange the events of Passion Week according to the order of the days of the week or of the dates.

Gathering the Gospels together, the chief events of Passion Week as traditionally distinguished are as follows. Because there is a difference among the Gospels in the way the events are arranged, there are various views on the detailed chronology, but generally the order below is followed.

• Sunday (Palm Sunday): Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:1–11).

• Monday: He cleansed the temple and cursed the fig tree that had no fruit (Matthew 21:12–19).

• Tuesday: Through the withered fig tree He taught the prayer of faith, and in the temple He disputed with the religious leaders and rebuked them with several parables. On the Mount of Olives He taught concerning the last days (Matthew 21:20–25:46).

• Wednesday: He stayed in Bethany, and the chief priests and the elders plotted to kill Jesus, and Judas Iscariot promised to hand Jesus over (Matthew 26:1–16).

• Thursday: He shared the Passover supper with the disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper, and after praying in Gethsemane He was seized (Matthew 26:17–56).

• Friday: He was tried before the council and before Pilate, and after being nailed to the cross and dying He was buried (Matthew 26:57–27:61).

• Saturday (the Sabbath): He remained in the tomb, and guards kept watch over the tomb (Matthew 27:62–66).

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• The first day after the Sabbath (Resurrection Sunday): Jesus rose from death (Matthew 28:1–10).

The center of Passion Week is this: Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Messiah, bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, received the punishment for that sin in our place on the cross and died, and rose again on the third day, thereby completing salvation.

[Question] 3. How many times did Jesus visit Jerusalem during His public ministry?

On the basis of the events specifically recorded in the Gospels, the visits of Jesus to Jerusalem can be arranged as seven times throughout His whole life.

• He went up to the temple as an infant in order to perform the rite of purification—Luke 2:22–38

• He went up at the age of twelve in order to keep the Passover—Luke 2:41–50

• He visited at the first Passover of His public ministry and cleansed the temple—John 2:13–25

• He visited at a feast of the Jews and healed the sick man at Bethesda—John 5:1–9

• He visited at the Feast of Tabernacles and taught in the temple—John 7:10–10:21

• He visited the temple at the Feast of Dedication—John 10:22–39

• He entered Jerusalem before the last Passover—Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19

Therefore, adding the two times of His childhood and the five times during His public ministry, it is seven times. However, this is the number of visits recorded together with particular

events in the Gospels, and it does not reveal the whole number of His actual visits. The Synoptic Gospels chiefly record the last entry into Jerusalem, but the Gospel of John records several visits during His public ministry.

[Question] 4. Matthew 21:1. Explain the route by which Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Rather than the straight route that leaves Galilee and passes through Samaria, Jesus chose the road that goes by way of the region of Perea, east of the Jordan River.

That route was generally as follows.

Galilee → the region of Perea east of the Jordan → crossing the Jordan River → Jericho → Bethany and Bethphage → the Mount of Olives → Jerusalem

After healing the two blind men in Jericho, Jesus went up toward Jerusalem. Then He passed through Bethany and came to Bethphage, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and from there He rode on a donkey, crossed the Mount of Olives, and entered Jerusalem.

This road was geographically a steep road going up from low-lying Jericho to high-lying Jerusalem, and by this road Jesus went willingly to Jerusalem, where He would suffer on the cross.

[Question] 5. Matthew 21:1–11. Explain the spiritual meaning of the event of the entry into Jerusalem.

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem has the following spiritual meanings.

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First, it is the event in which Jesus publicly revealed that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. That Jesus entered riding on a donkey was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, that the King of Zion would come in a lowly form.

Second, Jesus is the true King of peace, who is different from the kings of the world. A king of the world rides a warhorse and displays his power, but Jesus came lowly, riding on a donkey. The kingdom of Jesus is not a kingdom established by force, but the kingdom of God, which is established by grace and truth.

Third, Jesus did not avoid the cross but went willingly into the way of suffering. In Jerusalem there were religious leaders who sought to kill Jesus, but the Lord entered that place boldly in order to save sinners.

Fourth, the *"Hosanna"* that the multitude cried out has the meaning, *"Save now, I pray."* Jesus is the Savior who saves people from sin and death.

Fifth, it gives the lesson that we must receive Jesus rightly. The multitude welcomed Jesus, but many people misunderstood Jesus as a worldly king. True faith is not welcoming Him with the lips only, but believing Jesus as one's own Savior and King and obeying His word.

Therefore the entry into Jerusalem is the event that proclaimed that Jesus is the King of lowliness and peace, and the true Messiah who would save sinners by receiving the sin of the world transferred onto Himself through the baptism He received from John, by paying the price of that sin on the cross, and by rising from death.

[Question] 6. Matthew 21:2. What was the reason Jesus told the two disciples to bring the donkey?

The most important purpose for which Jesus sent the disciples to bring the donkey was to fulfill the messianic prophecy of the Old Testament. In Zechariah 9:9 it is prophesied that the King of Zion would come to Jerusalem in humility, riding on a donkey.

Moreover, by riding on the donkey Jesus publicly revealed that He is the promised King. But He did not come like a conqueror riding a warhorse; He came riding on a donkey, as the King of lowliness and peace. The kingdom of Jesus is not a kingdom established by force and by the power of the world, but the kingdom of God, which is established by grace and truth.

Jesus, who knew exactly the colt of the donkey on which no one had yet sat and had it brought, is the Sovereign who knows and governs all things. Therefore His having the donkey brought was not simply to prepare a means of travel, but in order to fulfill the prophecy and to reveal that He is the Messiah who came in lowliness and peace.

[Question] 7. Matthew 21:3. What meaning does the word "*Lord*" have when it is said, "*The Lord has need of them*"?

The Greek for *"Lord"* is kyrios (κύριος), and it means 'owner,' 'ruler,' 'one who has authority.' Here Jesus spoke of Himself as *"Lord"* and He is the Messiah, the One who has authority to govern all things.

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[Question] 8. Matthew 21:4. Which prophecy does *"which was spoken by the prophet"* point to?

"which was spoken by the prophet" points chiefly to the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The prophet Zechariah prophesied that the King of Zion would come to Jerusalem in a lowly form, riding on the colt of a donkey. In the expression *"Tell the daughter of Zion"* the word of Isaiah 62:11 is also reflected.

This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus is the King and the Messiah for whom Israel had been waiting. But Jesus came not as a worldly conqueror riding a warhorse; He came as the King of lowliness and peace, riding on a donkey.

Therefore *"which was spoken by the prophet"* means that the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was not an event that happened by chance, but the ministry of the Messiah, which God had promised beforehand through the prophet and had fulfilled.

[Question] 9. Matthew 21:8. Explain the meaning that spreading their clothes and cutting down branches and laying them on the road had at that time.

That the multitude spread their clothes on the road was an act of receiving Jesus as King and of showing respect and submission. In the Old Testament also, when Jehu was set up as king, the people spread their own clothes under his feet (2 Kings 9:13).

That they cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road was an expression of joy and respect in welcoming a victorious king. Therefore this act means that the multitude

welcomed Jesus, expecting Him to be the Messiah who would succeed to the throne of David.

But many people thought that Jesus would become a worldly king who would set them free from the rule of Rome. Contrary to their expectation, Jesus came as the King of lowliness and peace, who receives the sin of the world transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John, receives in our place on the cross the punishment for that sin and dies, and rises from death, and so saves people from sin and death. Therefore, although this act was a welcoming of Jesus as King, the multitude did not fully understand His true kingship and the meaning of His salvation.

[Question] 10. Matthew 21:9. What words did the multitude who followed before and behind Jesus cry out?

As the multitude followed Jesus, they cried out as follows.

"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9).

"Hosanna" means, *"Save now, I pray."* The multitude welcomed and praised Jesus as the Messiah and the King who had come as the Son of David.

[Question] 11. Matthew 21:10, 11. What response did the people in the city show when Jesus entered Jerusalem?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, all the city was moved and

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asked, *"Who is this?"* The multitude who had followed Jesus answered, *"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."*

This shows that by the entry of Jesus the whole of Jerusalem was greatly stirred, and that many people became interested in who Jesus was. But although the multitude acknowledged Jesus as a prophet, they did not fully perceive the fact that He is the Son of God and the Messiah who came as the Savior.

[Question] 12. Matthew 21:12, 13. How far had the temple been perverted in the time of Jesus?

At that time the temple had lost its original purpose of being a place for worshiping God and praying, and had turned into something like a market where offerings and money were traded.

To pilgrims who had come from far away they sold offerings such as oxen and sheep and doves, and they exchanged foreign currency into the money used in the temple so that the temple tax could be paid. Such work began under the name of providing the convenience needed for the sacrifice, but the merchants and the religious leaders used it to gain unjust profit.

In particular, as this trading was carried on inside the temple, even the place where the Gentiles were to pray became a noisy market. In the temple buying and selling and bargaining were carried on, and money and profit came before the work of worshiping God.

That Jesus rebuked the temple as a den of thieves was not simply because they sold goods. It was because, while deceiving and exploiting people by using religion, they hid behind the place called the temple and justified their own conduct.

Therefore, although in the temple of that time the sacrifices and the worship outwardly continued, inwardly it had fallen

seriously into greed and injustice and hypocrisy. That the place for serving God had turned into a place for pursuing the profit of man was the heart of the corruption of the temple.

[Question] 13. Matthew 21:12–17. What does the event in which Jesus cleansed the temple mean spiritually?

The cleansing of the temple is the event in which Jesus drove out from the temple those who bought and sold and those who changed money, and so made the temple clean. In it there are the following spiritual meanings.

First, Jesus is the owner of the temple and the Messiah. Jesus acted as the Son of God, who has the authority to cleanse the temple.

Second, it means that the worship offered to God must not be perverted into a means for the greed and the profit of man. The religious leaders and the merchants used the system of sacrifice to gain profit and made the temple a place for making money. Jesus rebuked such a false faith and such greed.

Third, it teaches that the temple must be a place for praying to God and asking for His grace. The work of serving God must be done not with form and transaction but with faith and a sincere heart.

Fourth, Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple, and in a cleansed temple the work of the mercy and the salvation of God appears. The true temple is not a place that rejects weak people but a place where they receive the grace of God.

Fifth, the center of the temple is not the offerings or the religious leaders, but Jesus Christ, who received the praise of the children.

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Therefore the cleansing of the temple is a judgment upon corrupted religion and formal worship, and the temple of God and the church must be filled not with greed but with prayer and the word, with mercy and salvation, and with praise toward Jesus.

[Question] 14. Matthew 21:13. What kind of place did Jesus say the temple was?

Jesus defined the temple as *"a house of prayer"*.

The temple is a holy place where people come to God and pray, and ask for the grace and the mercy of God. But the religious leaders and the merchants of that time made the temple a *"den of thieves"* for gaining their own profit.

Therefore Jesus said that the temple must not be a place of buying and selling and of greed, but a place for meeting God and worshiping Him and praying.

[Question] 15. Matthew 21:13–16. Explain the true form of the temple.

God desires that the following things be done in the temple.

First, prayer offered to God must be made. The temple is a house of prayer where people seek God and ask for His grace and His help.

Second, the work in which the sick and the weak receive the mercy of God must be done. Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple. The temple must be a place where suffering people come and are restored and obtain the grace of God.

Third, praise and worship toward Jesus must be offered. The children praised Jesus in the temple as the Son of David. God

gladly receives praise offered with a pure faith like that of a little child.

Therefore God desires that in the temple there be not trade and greed, but prayer and mercy, healing and restoration, praise toward Jesus and true worship.

[Question] 16. Matthew 21:15, 16. What was the answer that Jesus gave to the chief priests and the scribes, who were indignant at the praise of the children?

When the chief priests and the scribes saw the children crying out in the temple toward Jesus, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* they were indignant. And they protested to Jesus, asking whether He heard what the children were saying.

To this Jesus answered, *"Yes."* He thereby acknowledged the praise of the children. Then, quoting Psalm 8:2, He asked them in return whether they had never read the word that God has perfected the praise that comes out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants.

The praise of the children was not wrong; it was a rightful praise according to the prophecy of the Scriptures, and Jesus is the Messiah who receives that praise. At the same time He rebuked the spiritual ignorance and stubbornness of the chief priests and the scribes, who prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures and yet did not recognize the Messiah.

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[Question] 17. Matthew 21:17. Where did Jesus stay after leaving Jerusalem?

Jesus left Jerusalem and went to Bethany, which is outside the city, and lodged there.

Bethany is a village on the east side of the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, where Lazarus and Martha and Mary lived. During Passion Week Jesus taught in Jerusalem by day and returned to Bethany in the evening and stayed there.

[Question] 18. Matthew 21:18, 19. Why did Jesus pronounce such a sentence upon the fig tree that had no fruit?

In the morning, as Jesus was returning from Bethany to Jerusalem, He was hungry. On the fig tree by the road the leaves were in abundance, but there was not a single fruit. Therefore Jesus said that the tree would bear fruit no more.

This event was not simply Jesus becoming angry at a tree because He was hungry; it was a symbolic judgment upon Israel, which had no fruit, and upon a formal faith.

Israel and the religious leaders of that time had the abundant leaves of the temple and the sacrifices, of the law and of religious form. But they did not bear the fruit of the faith and the obedience, the righteousness and the mercy that God desires, and they even rejected Jesus, who came as the Messiah.

Therefore the fig tree, whose leaves alone were in abundance and which had no fruit, represents people who outwardly appear godly but who in fact have no fruit of faith. As the event in which Jesus cursed the fig tree declares, a faith that has no fruit and a corrupted religion in the end receive the judgment of God.

[Question] 19. Matthew 21:18–20. Explain the warning and the lesson that can be obtained from the event of the fig tree.

The event in which the fig tree was cursed warns that a faith that is godly only in outward appearance and has no fruit of faith comes to receive the judgment of God.

The fig tree, whose leaves were in abundance, looked outwardly alive and as though it had fruit, but in fact it had no fruit at all. In the same way, even if a person has temple worship and religious form, if he does not truly believe God and obey Him, it cannot be called a true faith.

This event warns us as follows.

• We must not remain in words and form only, but must bear the fruit of faith.

• We must not say that we believe in Jesus and yet disobey His word.

• The fruit of repentance and obedience, of love and of the preaching of the gospel, must appear.

• If we continue to disregard the grace and the opportunity that God has given, in the end we come to receive judgment.

Therefore the event of the fig tree is a word that warns us to examine whether our own faith is a formal faith whose leaves alone are in abundance, or a faith that actually bears the fruit that God desires.

[Question] 20. Matthew 21:20–22. What did Jesus teach concerning prayer through the event of the fig tree?

To the disciples, who were astonished to see that the fig tree

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had withered at once, Jesus taught the principle that we must believe God and pray without doubting.

The principles of prayer are as follows.

First, we must pray with the faith that God is able to accomplish it. While praying we must not doubt the power of God.

Second, the prayer of faith has power that makes us overcome even a great obstacle that is hard to solve by the strength of man. The word that a mountain is removed means that if God wills it, He can accomplish even what appears impossible.

Third, we must believe that God hears what we have prayed and will answer in the most right way.

But this word does not mean that whatever comes out of human greed can be obtained. The true prayer of faith asks for what is fitting to the will and the word of God, and entrusts the method and the time of the answer to God.

Therefore the principle of prayer that Jesus taught is to ask in faith according to the will of God, without doubting the power and the goodness of God.

[Question] 21. Summarize the events of Tuesday of Passion Week, centering on the Gospel of Matthew.

According to the traditional chronology of Passion Week, Tuesday is the day on which Jesus disputed with the religious leaders in the temple and taught concerning the last days on the Mount of Olives. The order of the events is as follows.

• He saw the withered fig tree: While He was going from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples were astonished to see that

the fig tree had withered. Jesus taught the principle of faith and prayer (Matthew 21:20–22).

• The dispute concerning the authority of Jesus: When He entered the temple and was teaching, the chief priests and the elders asked by what authority He was doing these things. Jesus asked them in return where the authority of John the Baptist had come from (Matthew 21:23–27).

• The parables that rebuke the religious leaders: Jesus spoke the parable of the two sons, the parable of the wicked vinedressers, and the parable of the wedding feast, and warned of the unbelief and the judgment of the religious leaders who rejected Him (Matthew 21:28–22:14).

• The testing questions of the religious leaders: The Pharisees tested Jesus with the question of paying taxes to Caesar, the Sadducees with the question of the resurrection, and a lawyer by asking which is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:15–40).

• The question of Jesus concerning the Christ: Jesus asked how the Christ, being the Son of David, is also the Lord of David. No one was able to answer, and after that no one dared to question Him (Matthew 22:41–46).

• He rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees: Jesus sternly rebuked their hypocrisy and greed and pronounced woe upon them several times. Then He grieved over the stubbornness of Jerusalem (Matthew Chapter 23).

• He watched the offering of the poor widow: In the temple Jesus saw a poor widow who gave two mites, and He said that she had given more than all the others (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4).

• He prophesied the destruction of the temple: As He came out of the temple He said that not one stone would be left upon another, but that all would be thrown down (Matthew 24:1–2).

• The Olivet discourse: On the Mount of Olives He taught

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concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs of the last days, the tribulation, His second coming and the judgment. He also told them to watch and be ready, through the parables of the faithful servant, the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats (Matthew Chapters 24–25).

Therefore Tuesday is the day on which Jesus laid bare the unbelief and the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, foretold the judgment of the temple and His own second coming, and taught the disciples to keep watch.

[Question] 22. Matthew 21:23. What position and role did *"the chief priests and the elders of the people"* have?

"The chief priests" include not only the high priest in office at that time but also the former high priests and the leaders of the influential priestly families. They managed the sacrifices and the finances and the administration of the temple, and they also had great political influence. Most of them were priestly aristocrats of the party of the Sadducees.

"The elders of the people" were lay leaders who represented each region and the influential families. They were not merely men of great age; they were leaders who possessed social position and property and experience, and who dealt with the religious and judicial matters of the people.

Together with the scribes, the chief priests and the elders formed the central power of the Sanhedrin council, the highest deliberative body of the Jews. The Sanhedrin was presided over by the high priest and exercised considerable authority over matters of religion and of the law and of judgment.

In Matthew Chapter 21 these men regarded the cleansing of

the temple by Jesus and His teaching there as a challenge to their own authority. Therefore they demanded of Jesus by what authority He was doing these things. That is, although they were the spiritual leaders of the people, in trying to protect their own position and authority they failed to recognize the Messiah whom God had sent, and opposed Him.

[Question] 23. Matthew 21:23. State the content of the problem that the chief priests and the elders raised with Jesus.

The chief priests and the elders of the people asked Jesus the following two things.

First, they asked, *"By what authority are You doing these things?"* This was to demand what authority Jesus had for driving out those who traded in the temple, healing the sick, and teaching the people.

Second, they asked, *"And who gave You this authority?"* They demanded who it was that had granted Jesus the authority to do such things.

But their question was not in order to learn the truth; it was in order to deny the authority of Jesus and to find fault with Him. Because they thought that they had the authority to manage the temple, they challenged the authority of Jesus, who acted without receiving their permission.

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[Question] 24. Matthew 21:24–27. How did Jesus respond to the question that asked about His authority?

Jesus did not answer the question of the chief priests and the elders directly, but first asked them in return concerning the authority of John the Baptist. That is, He told them to answer whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men.

They reasoned among themselves and thought as follows.

• If they said that it came from heaven, Jesus would ask why they had not believed John.

• If they said that it came from men, they had to fear the people, because the people believed John the Baptist to be a prophet.

In the end they did not speak the truth but answered that they did not know. Then Jesus also said that He would not tell them by what authority He was doing these things.

John the Baptist bore witness that Jesus is the Messiah. Therefore, if they acknowledged that the authority of John came from God, they had to acknowledge that the authority of Jesus also came from God. Through this question Jesus laid bare the fact that they were rejecting the truth not because they did not know it, but because they were calculating their own position and the reaction of the people.

[Question] 25. Matthew 21:28–32. What is Jesus seeking to teach through the parable of the first son and the second son?

In the parable of the two sons the father points to God, and the vineyard points to the kingdom of God and its work.

The first son at the beginning refused the command of his father, but afterward he regretted it and went to the vineyard and worked. This points to the tax collectors and the harlots, who at the beginning lived in sin, but who heard the word of John the Baptist, repented, and believed and followed the will of God.

The second son answered his father that he would go, but in fact he did not go. This points to the chief priests and the elders, who said with their words that they served God and obeyed the law, and yet did not believe John the Baptist and Jesus.

The heart of this parable is that it is more important to regret one's fault and actually follow the will of God than to say with the lips only that one obeys. The tax collectors and the harlots were treated as sinners, but because they believed the word of righteousness that John proclaimed, they came to enter the kingdom of God before the religious leaders.

Therefore the parable of the two sons teaches that what is important is not what kind of life a person lived in the past, but whether he hears the word of God and repents and believes and obeys, and that a formal faith of words only cannot be acknowledged by God.

[Question] 26. Matthew 21:33–41. What is the central lesson that the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard conveys?

The parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard teaches that the religious leaders who rejected the prophets whom God sent, and Jesus, the Son of God, in the end come to receive judgment.

Each element of the parable has the following meaning.

- The owner of the vineyard points to God.
- The vineyard points to Israel, to whom God gave special

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grace and a special mission.

• The vinedressers point to the religious leaders who had been entrusted with Israel and governed it.

• The servants whom the owner sent point to the prophets who were sent in order to proclaim the word of God.

• The son of the owner points to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

God desired that Israel should bear the fruit of faith and obedience, but the religious leaders beat and killed the prophets whom God sent. At last God sent His Son Jesus, but in order to protect their own position and authority they sought to kill even Jesus.

Therefore the central meaning of this parable is that those who regard the grace and the mission entrusted to them by God as though these were their own possession, and who refuse the word of God and His Son, receive judgment, and that the kingdom of God is entrusted to those who obey His will and bear fruit. At the same time this parable shows beforehand that Jesus would be rejected and killed by the religious leaders.

[Question] 27. Matthew 21:33–41. Whom do the persons in the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard—the owner, the vinedressers, the servants, the son—each point to?

The objects symbolized by the persons in the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard are as follows.

• The landowner: He symbolizes God. God established Israel and protected it and bestowed upon it every grace that was needed.

• The vinedressers: They symbolize the religious leaders of Israel, including the chief priests and the elders. They were

entrusted with the people of God, but they did not render the fruit of faith and obedience that ought to have been offered to God.

• The servants whom the owner sent first: They symbolize the prophets whom God sent in the time of the Old Testament. The leaders of Israel beat and killed and rejected them.

• The greater number of servants sent afterward: They symbolize the prophets of God who were sent continually. John the Baptist also is included in this line of prophets.

• The son of the owner: He symbolizes Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. That the vinedressers cast the son out of the vineyard and killed him foretells that the religious leaders would drag Jesus outside Jerusalem and nail Him to the cross.

• The other vinedressers: They symbolize the people who are entrusted with the kingdom of God and bear the fruit of faith and obedience. This points to the new people of God, who believe in Jesus Christ and follow the will of God.

Moreover the vineyard represents Israel and the kingdom of God, to which God entrusted His grace and His mission. This parable teaches that a person who has been entrusted with what belongs to God must not act as though he were the owner, but must offer the fruit of faith and obedience that God desires.

[Question] 28. Matthew 21:42. What meaning is contained in the question?

The word, *"Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes"'?"* does not mean that the chief priests and the elders had in fact not read the Scriptures. They prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures well, but they did not

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recognize the Messiah to whom the Scriptures bear witness. Jesus was rebuking this spiritual ignorance and stubbornness of theirs.

"The stone which the builders rejected" of Psalm 118, which Jesus quoted, points to Jesus, who was to be rejected by the religious leaders. But God set up Jesus, whom people had cast away, as *"the chief cornerstone"* which becomes the foundation of salvation.

Therefore this expression means that it is not enough simply to read and know the Scriptures literally, but that we must perceive and believe Jesus Christ, to whom the Scriptures bear witness. Moreover, even though people reject Jesus, the plan of the salvation of God is surely accomplished.

[Question] 29. Matthew 21:42. In the statement that the stone which the builders rejected has become *"the chief cornerstone,"* whom does that stone refer to?

"The chief cornerstone" symbolizes Jesus Christ.

In building, the chief cornerstone is the important stone that determines the direction and the position of the building and joins the walls to one another. In the same way Jesus is the foundation of the plan of the salvation of God and of the church.

"The builders" point to the religious leaders of that time, including the chief priests and the elders. They rejected Jesus like a useless stone and nailed Him to the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and set Him up as the most important cornerstone of salvation and of the kingdom of God.

Therefore Jesus, who was cast away by men, has become, as the cornerstone of salvation that God has established, the

foundation of the salvation of every believer and of the church. Jesus received all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body by the baptism He received from John, and after receiving in our place on the cross the punishment for that sin and dying, He rose from death and so completed the foundation of salvation. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit belongs to the house of God, which is built upon this cornerstone.

[Question] 30. Matthew 21:42, 43. To what did Jesus apply Psalm 118:22, the word quoted from the Old Testament?

Jesus applied the word of Psalm 118:22 concerning the chief cornerstone to the chief priests and the elders, who had rejected Him.

They were leaders entrusted with the kingdom of God, but they refused the prophets whom God sent and at last rejected even Jesus, the Son of God. Therefore Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to a people who bear the fruits of that kingdom.

Here *"a nation bearing the fruits of it"* does not mean one particular race only; it points to the people who believe in Jesus Christ and obey the will of God, without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

Therefore the religious leaders who reject Jesus and do not bear the fruit of faith lose the privilege of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is entrusted to the people who believe Jesus to be the chief cornerstone and bear the fruit of obedience.

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[Question] 31. Matthew 21:44. What is the judgment foretold for those who rejected the Messiah?

The one who opposes Jesus, the Messiah, in the end receives the judgment of God and perishes.

"Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44).

"This stone" points to Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. That a person falls on the stone and is broken means that the one who does not believe in Jesus but rejects Him stumbles and brings himself to ruin. That the stone falls on a person and grinds him to powder means that at the last judgment the one who opposed the Messiah comes to receive a thorough and irreversible judgment.

Therefore a man must believe the salvation that Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John, by the blood He shed on the cross, and by His resurrection from death, and must make Him the foundation of his own salvation. If a man rejects and opposes Jesus, he does not overthrow Him; rather he himself comes to receive judgment and perish.

[Question] 32. Matthew 21:45, 46. How did the chief priests and the Pharisees respond when they heard the parable of Jesus?

The chief priests and the Pharisees perceived that the parable of Jesus was spoken concerning themselves. But they did not repent of their fault; rather they sought to seize Jesus and kill Him.

Only, because the multitude believed Jesus to be a prophet,

they feared the reaction of the people and could not arrest Him at once.

Therefore the religious leaders, even after hearing the rebuke of Jesus, were angry rather than repentant and sought to remove Jesus. In this they themselves revealed that they were the same kind of men as the wicked vinedressers in the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 1

We are instruments used by God

< Matthew 21:1-11 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, “The Lord has need of them,” and immediately he will send them.’ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”’ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Hosanna in the highest!’ And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitudes said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.’”(Matthew 21:1–11)

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He fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament exactly

The word today is the scene in which Jesus entered Jerusalem and at last gave Himself up to the cross. Our Lord, after receiving the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself and bearing it by the baptism He received from John, sought to accomplish the work of saving His own people from sin by receiving in their place the judgment for that sin on the cross, and dying, and rising again. That Jesus went to Jerusalem was in order to complete that work of salvation.

Now, when He entered Jerusalem, He rode on the colt of a donkey. Jesus said to the disciples, *"Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me" (Matthew 21:2).* The disciples must have wondered, for He was telling them to bring what belonged to another. Therefore He said, *"And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them" (Matthew 21:3).* They went and spoke exactly so, and the owner gave the animals up, and riding on that donkey He entered Jerusalem.

The people cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9).* In the word Hosanna there is the meaning of asking Him to save us, and also the meaning of praising Him. Because the back of a donkey is not clean, the people took off their own outer garments and laid them upon it, and Jesus sat upon them.

The Old Testament prophesied this work in this way: *"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey'" (Matthew 21:5).* Ordinary kings ride on horses. But our Lord rode on a

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donkey. It was fulfilled exactly as the Old Testament prophesied.

The order in which He accomplished the work of salvation

The first thing the Lord did in order to save mankind from sin was to put on the body of man. He was born on this earth by way of the body of a woman. The second was to receive the sin of mankind all at once, transferred onto Himself, and to bear it, by being baptized by John the Baptist. The third is this very work of entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Since He had borne sin, He was now going in order to receive on the cross the judgment for that sin, and to die and to rise again.

In fact, a little while after this work, Jesus was nailed to the cross and died, and three days after His death He rose again. And He bestows the grace of giving salvation to the one who believes with his heart the works that Jesus came to this earth and did. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The colt of the donkey speaks of us ourselves

Now let us focus on the fact that He rode on the colt of a donkey. What does a donkey speak of symbolically? A donkey was ordinarily used for carrying loads. A saddle was put on it and men rode it, and loads were divided on both sides and carried. Yet our Lord used that colt of a donkey in completing the work of salvation.

What does that speak of? It is a word that the Lord speaks concerning you and me. It means that He used such a person as lives only for his own flesh and has nothing to put forward. Just

as He used a donkey in that work of saving mankind from sin, so even now He uses you and me, who are lacking, in the work of making that salvation known.

The Lord came to this earth and completed all the work of salvation, and He urges mankind to believe. He says that if a man believes, he receives the remission of sin, becomes one of God's people, goes to heaven, and escapes from the curse and from the devil. Then, after He rose again and ascended, to whom did He entrust that work? He entrusted it to you and me.

Therefore the servants of God are for the most part like the colt of a donkey. It is not that they have anything to put forward. God uses men in order to save men. In order to save many people of every nation He uses you and me, who are like a donkey. According to that very word, *"The Lord has need of them"* the Lord uses us.

He does not use angels. He used angels only in a very small part, and those who have been used in proclaiming the great salvation of God are men. They are you and me. He causes both the preaching of the gospel and the proclaiming of the word to be done through men, and the cooking of meals, the serving, the designing, the administration, the construction—He does all of it through men. Therefore the work that you and I do is the doing of the work of the Lord.

The Lord could have used a horse instead of a donkey. But He did not do so. Why is that? It is because in saving men God certainly needs men. Only a man can understand a man; one cannot tell a beast to understand a man. That is why He did so.

In the work of God there is no high and low

The Lord said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are*

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heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29). Even though we are lacking, if we set our hearts to do the work of God and obey, the Lord helps us and accomplishes His will. Through whom does He accomplish it? He accomplishes it through us.

Right now you and I are being used. Yet as we work, the thought may arise that this is a work worth my doing and that is a work I ought not to do. But whatever it may be, if it is work that serves the gospel, it is all serving the Lord. In that there is no high and low. It is all alike the serving of God.

It is written, "*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. This is the word that the Lord speaks to you and me. We are instruments used by God. You and I are servants of God and soldiers who do the work of God. On that point we must draw a clear line within our hearts.

The person who thinks, "This is a lowly work; must I do it?" cannot become even the colt of a donkey. He cannot become a servant of God. What is important is not what has been assigned to me, but that the attitude of one who has become a servant of God is to do faithfully the work that has been assigned to him.

Some people think concerning the work they have done, "I am doing such a precious work, so I ought to receive treatment worthy of it." Such a person is not qualified to become a servant of God. Those who believe, whatever work God assigns to them, that this is the work of God and therefore a precious work, and who work in that way, are used by God. If a person makes light of some work, God sets that person aside. Where in the work of God is there high and low, and where is there good and bad? Whatever the work may be, it is all precious work.

Therefore, when we do the work of God, we must not weigh

the heaviness or lightness of the work or measure its highness or lowness, but must do it with thanksgiving, saying, "God desires to use me." Such a person receives the love of God. It is to say, "Before God I am nothing but a donkey; whatever work God assigns to me, if only it is not the work of sin, I will do it all."

I also, since I met the Lord, have done all kinds of work. At one time I did this work and at another time that work. Just as the Lord used the colt of a donkey, so He is using us in that way. As I read the word, I truly come to agree that it is so. I do not weigh work as noble or lowly. If some work is entrusted to me, I do it. Only, concerning work that I cannot do, I say plainly and honestly, "This I do not do well; this must be done by a young person." To pretend to do what I do not even know how to do is not in me. And what I must learn, I learn. Even a work I cannot do, if it must be done in order to do the work of God, I ask the Lord for wisdom and plunge in and do it.

"You shall say, 'The Lord has need of them.'"

It is said, *"And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them" (Matthew 21:3)*. You and I are also used because the Lord says that He will use us. If the Lord says that He has need of something, what is there that cannot be done? Among all those many donkeys He told them to loose that very donkey and colt that were tied in that village, and when the owner asked why they were doing so, they said that the Lord had need of them, and he told them to take the animals.

Does that not mean that something had gone before? Would the Lord have sent someone and given money? Because our Lord is the King of kings and is God, He had already spoken it

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all beforehand in the heart of that man. Jesus Christ is truly God. Only, in order to save man from sin, He became a man for a while.

So He entered riding on the colt of a donkey and for a time was greatly welcomed. And He was seized in Jerusalem and was nailed to the cross and died on the hill of Golgotha, right nearby. And He rose again from that tomb and bore witness for forty days, appearing to many people exactly as it is written, "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6), and He ascended into heaven in the sight of His disciples. And it was said, *"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).*

We are believing in God. We are not believing in some religion of the world. We are believing in God, serving God, and being used by God. If the Lord says that He has need of us, we have only to be used with thanksgiving. If a person says, "Such work I cannot do," the Lord does not use that person. He uses him neither for this work nor for that work, for nothing at all.

The Lord delights to use a person who does whatever he is assigned. What is so lowly about the work that we regard as lowly? What is lowly about picking up a nail that has fallen on the floor, what is lowly about clearing a drain, what is lowly about putting up a plastic greenhouse? All of it is the work of serving God. Therefore it is all precious work.

The Lord, who for you and me was baptized by John and received the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again, is using you and me as instruments in the work of preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit. When the Lord says that He has need of us, you and I must be used with thanksgiving. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 2

The faith that is loosed by the lowly King and used by Him

< Matthew 21:1-22 >

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, “The Lord has need of them,” and immediately he will send them.’ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”’ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Hosanna in the highest!’ And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitudes said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.’ Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold

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doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves."' Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes. Have you never read, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise"?' Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, 'How did the fig tree wither away so soon?' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.'"

Matthew Chapter 21 begins with the scene in which Jesus enters Jerusalem as King. But the Lord did not put warhorses and chariots in the forefront, as the kings of the world do. He lowly rode on the colt of a donkey. This was not a means of travel chosen by chance; it was a work in which He fulfilled the will of God, spoken beforehand through the prophet. Jesus is the King of kings, and yet He did not exalt Himself or oppress

people. He lowered Himself in order to save sinners, and He went on silently toward the cross.

The people spread their clothes and branches on the road and cried out, *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* In *"Hosanna"* there is contained the entreaty to be saved now. But many people did not know what kind of salvation Jesus had come to accomplish. They expected a political king who would set them free from the oppression of Rome, but Jesus came as the eternal King, who delivers men from sin and from judgment. The whole city of Jerusalem was moved, and yet what they asked was, *"Who is this?"* To shout for joy and to know the Lord rightly are not the same. To exalt Jesus with the mouth alone is not enough. We must believe within the word who He is and what work He has accomplished for us.

The Lord, who looses the tied donkey and uses it

The Lord told two disciples to go into the village opposite them and to loose the donkey and the colt that were tied and bring them. He told them, if anyone asked, to say, *"The Lord has need of them."* The Lord, who made heaven and earth and all things, had the authority to use that donkey. A donkey is a worker that bears loads and carries men for its owner, but while it is tied to a stake it can go nowhere. It must first be loosed before it can carry the Lord and go the way that the Lord goes.

We also were originally people bound under sin. A person born as a descendant of Adam lives according to his own thought and greed and stubbornness, and disobeys God. Even if he wishes to live righteously before God, because sin holds his heart he cannot break that binding by himself. However hard he strives to live well, he cannot remove the sin he has already

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committed, nor can he prevent by his own resolve all the sin he will commit in the future. The effort of a man to escape from sin by polishing his own conduct is like circling around a stake driven into the ground.

But Jesus did not abandon us, who were bound to sin. In the Old Testament the firstborn of a donkey, which is unclean, could live only if it was redeemed with a lamb. This shows that we, who are sinners, would come alive by the redemption of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself. And bearing that sin He hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and on the third day He rose again. The person who believes the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of the Lord receives the remission of all sin and is loosed from the bonds of sin. This is the freedom that the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives to us.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, if the heart is firmly held by the cares of the world and by its own calculation, it is hard to be fully used by the Lord. If the care of what we will eat, what we will wear, and how we will appear to people becomes the master of the heart, we come to seek our own safety before the will of the Lord. Family and occupation and material things are precious things that God has given, but if they go before the Lord they become cords that bind us. The Lord is not telling us to live irresponsibly. He is telling us to do faithfully the work entrusted to us, but not to make it the master of our life.

To be loosed from the ground does not mean to cast away the world and do nothing. It is to entrust our life and our future to the Lord, and to believe the fact that the will of the Lord is more right than our own thought. Before, money and honor and recognition dragged us along, but now we let the word of the Lord, who saved us, lead us. The person who, when the Lord

says that He has need of him, does not draw back while considering only his own circumstances, but offers himself, is a person who has been loosed by faith.

Even after being loosed from sin, a man easily remains in his own long-accustomed way. He is at ease only when he judges and settles everything himself, and he may put his experience before the word. Therefore God makes us see by what we are bound, through the word and the guidance of the church. Sometimes He makes us lay down a plan we held precious, and sometimes He gives us work we wanted to avoid. What is important at such a time is not to obey the command of a man unconditionally, but to discern what the word of God teaches and to follow it by faith. The more our own stubbornness is broken within the word, the more freely we are used by the Lord.

In a life that is used by the Lord there is sacrifice. There are times when we must give up time and material things, and times when we must labor without being recognized by people. But the Lord is not One who only takes something away from us. He causes us, who lived holding on to what will perish, to take part in eternal work. If our small labor is used in the work by which one soul receives the remission of sin and returns to God, there is no blessed reward greater than that. When we lived bound to the world we labored only for our own livelihood and desire, but after being loosed by the Lord we live for the eternal life of others.

Moreover, this loosing is not completed in every area by one decision. We believe the truth of salvation once for all, but the various bindings of life are revealed one by one as we learn the word. Today we may lay down our fear concerning material things, and tomorrow our attachment to the estimate of people. The Lord does not drive us on while condemning us; He makes us grow within the grace of the gospel. Therefore we must not

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be discouraged because of our own lack, but must acknowledge before the Lord the bindings that are discovered and loose them by faith.

The Lord used not a warhorse, which looks splendid, but the colt of a donkey. A person who has received the remission of sin and has given his heart to the Lord becomes a precious instrument of the kingdom of God, even though in the eyes of men he looks lacking and insignificant. Not only the work of preaching the gospel, but caring for the church, serving believers, and quietly bearing whatever is needed—all such labor is the carrying of the Lord. More important than the greatness or smallness of the work is for whom that work is done. In the work that the Lord uses there is no high and low.

Just as the donkey did not regard the praise of the people as its own, so we also must not turn the results of being used into our own glory. The reason the people shouted was not that the donkey was splendid, but that Jesus was riding upon it. If the fruit of the gospel appears and people receive the remission of sin, this is not because of our wisdom or ability. It is the result of Jesus Christ working through the word of the gospel. Not forgetting that we are instruments that carry the Lord, we serve in lowliness to the end.

The King who restores the temple

Jesus, having entered Jerusalem, went straight to the temple. There, rather than the sight of men praying to God and asking for grace, the place was full of the sound of buying and selling and of counting money. What had been prepared in order to help the sacrifice had at some point become a means of gaining profit, and the religious leaders had turned the house of God into a place

for filling their own desire. Jesus drove out those who bought and sold and overturned the tables and the seats. The Lord, who is gentle, is not One who leaves sin and falsehood as they are.

The temple ought to have been a house of prayer. It ought to have been a place where a sinner comes before God and asks for mercy, and looks to the grace of the remission of sin through the sacrifice that God has appointed. Yet people kept the outward form of the system while losing the mercy of God, which is its center. Today also, if faith becomes a means of filling the greed of man, the temple of the heart turns into a den of thieves. If we love money more than God, and seek the expansion of an organization and the praise of men more than the salvation of souls, we are no different from those whom Jesus drove out of the temple.

After the Lord had cleansed the temple, the blind and the lame came, and the Lord healed them. The house of God is a place where wounded and weak people receive the grace of the Lord. The church is a place where a person who could not see spiritually comes through the gospel to see the righteousness of God, and where a person who could not walk in the right way comes to walk by faith. The church must not be a marketplace that condemns sinners and drives them out, but a house of life that serves so that sinners may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin.

Our hearts also are temples in which the Lord dwells. Even a believer who has received the remission of sin must examine what he has set in his heart before the Lord. He must look back and see whether he uses his faith for his own benefit, whether he serves in order to be seen by others, and whether he trusts his own judgment more than the word of God. The Lord cleanses us so that prayer and praise and the service of the gospel may flow out. To overturn the tables of the heart is sometimes painful, but

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it is not a judgment meant to cast us away; it is the hand of love that turns us back to the right place.

The cleansing of the temple is also a work of establishing again what the purpose of the gospel and of the church is. At the center of the church there must be, not the success stories of men or the wisdom of the world, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who saved sinners. Preaching and teaching and all service must gather in the direction of helping people to know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If the gospel is pushed to the edge and only human righteousness and blessing are emphasized, then even though many people gather outwardly, it grows far from the form of the temple that the Lord seeks. On the contrary, even if a place is small in scale and lacking in possessions, if the truth of the remission of sin is clearly proclaimed there and the believers serve one another's souls, that place is a house of prayer in which the Lord delights.

That Jesus overturned the tables was not because He hated the people in the temple. It was because He desired that they should turn from a false faith and meet the mercy of God. If, when we hear the rebuke of the Lord, we begin with excuses, we come to follow the way of the chief priests. But if we believe the love contained in the rebuke and turn our hearts, we obtain spiritual restoration, just as the blind and the lame were healed. The word is not a mirror for keeping up our appearance; it is light that shines upon the heart and heals it.

The children cried out in the temple, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!"* Even though the chief priests and the scribes saw the power of Jesus, they did not rejoice, and they were indignant when they heard the praise of the children. It was because they feared that their own authority and position would be shaken. The little children, on the other hand, praised Jesus without pretense. Faith does not lie in boasting of knowing much. It lies

in lowering one's own thought before the word and acknowledging the Savior as Savior. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not put forward his own righteousness; he praises only Jesus, who delivered him from sin.

The Lord, who sought fruit and not leaves

Early in the morning, as Jesus was entering the city, He was hungry, and He looked for fruit on a fig tree whose leaves were in abundance. But there was nothing except leaves. When the Lord spoke to that tree, it withered at once. This event is not merely a story about one tree. It lays bare the spiritual state of the leaders of that time and of Israel, who outwardly had the splendid form of religion but had no fruit of the faith that God seeks.

Leaves draw the eye of man, but they do not satisfy the hunger of the owner. A career of long attendance at church, much service and offering, religious words and knowledge—all these can become leaves. It is not that such things are worthless, but if a person puts them forward alone, without the faith of the remission of sin, they cannot become fruit to offer to God. The fruit that God first seeks is that we believe the righteousness that Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sin. Out of that faith follow the fruits of thanksgiving and obedience and love and the preaching of the gospel.

Our fruit is not a moral ornament fabricated by our own effort. New life begins when we believe with the heart the gospel that Jesus bore all our sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid the price of that sin on the cross. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who believes this truth

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and leads him to live according to the word of God. The fruit borne after being born again in this way, by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is the fruit of life.

To say that a saved person needs fruit does not mean that he must complete his salvation by works. The remission of sin is received once for all by believing the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. Our good deeds can add nothing to that salvation. Only, just as a good tree bears good fruit, so in a heart that has received grace there naturally rises the desire to serve the Lord and to love the souls of neighbors. Salvation is not the wages of fruit, but fruit is the evidence that the saved life is alive.

We must not boast of our own leaves before the Lord. Rather we should ask, "Lord, gather from me the fruit of the gospel. Let me proclaim the word of life to souls who have not yet received the remission of sin, and use my life for the church and for the gospel." To be used by the Lord is not a heavy punishment but a great blessing. For a person who was bound to sin and to the world and sought only vain fruit has come to work for eternal life.

The faith that asks without doubting

The disciples were astonished to see that the fig tree had withered at once. Jesus said that if a man has faith and does not doubt, even the moving of a mountain is possible, and that whatever he asks in prayer, believing, he will receive. This word does not teach a technique for moving God in order to accomplish our own greed. It is a word telling us to believe the will and the power of God and to ask boldly for the work that He has entrusted to us.

As we preach the gospel we meet obstacles like mountains,

which cannot be crossed by the strength of man. Our own lack, difficulty in material things, the opposition of people, and hardened hearts block the way before us. At such a time, if we look only at our circumstances, we can do nothing. But the Lord has already moved the greatest mountain of sin and death. By the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and by the blood of the cross and by the resurrection, He completely removed our sin. The person who believes this word of salvation also asks the Lord in faith for what is needed for the work of the gospel.

The prayer of faith is not being convinced of one's own desire but trusting the goodness of God. While entrusting the time and the method of the answer to the Lord, it does not doubt that preaching the gospel and saving souls is the will of God. The Lord is the One who looses and uses, the One who cleanses the temple, and the One who makes us bear fruit. What we must do is to believe His word and obey and take one step.

Prayer and obedience are not apart from each other. If a person prays that a mountain be moved and yet turns away from the small work that the Lord has given him, that cannot be called a prayer of faith. Just as the disciples actually went into the village and loosed the donkey and brought it, so we also must begin, after praying, the work that we can do. Through small obedience—going to a person to preach the gospel, preparing the word, and looking after the needs of the church—God opens the way. It is not we who move the mountain; God moves the mountain through us as we believe and obey.

The first part of Matthew Chapter 21 asks us what kind of King we are following. Jesus, the lowly King, lowered Himself in order to make sinners live, and gave Himself as the sacrifice of redemption. That King has loosed us from sin and calls us, saying, *"The Lord has need of them."* Therefore we must not

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bind ourselves again to the stake of the world. We must set the Lord in the first place of our hearts, serve the church as a house of prayer, and live a life that bears the fruit of the gospel.

A person used by the Lord is not a perfect person, but a person who believes the salvation of the Lord and has offered himself. He is a person who does not boast of his own strength but goes gladly to the place where the Lord goes. All of us, like a donkey that carried the lowly King upon its back, must live for the remainder of our lives as blessed workers who reveal the righteousness of Jesus Christ. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 3

The person who believes the way of righteousness and renders the fruit of the vineyard

< Matthew 21:23-46 >

"Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men," we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know.' And He said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, "Son, go, work today in my vineyard." He answered and said, "I will not," but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors

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and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him. Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?' They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.' Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet."

The person who believes the way of righteousness
and renders the fruit of the vineyard

When Jesus had cleansed the temple and was teaching the word, the chief priests and the elders of the people came and demanded of Him by what authority He did so. Even though they saw the work that Jesus did, they did not seek to know the will of God revealed in it. It was because they regarded the religious order and authority that they had established as being threatened. Their words took the form of a question, but their heart was not a heart to learn the truth; it was a heart to find fault with Jesus.

Jesus did not answer at once, but asked, *"The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"* This question shows that the authority of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist cannot be separated. God sent John the Baptist, and John the Baptist did the work of revealing that Jesus is the Savior. Therefore, if they believed that the baptism of John came from heaven, they had to acknowledge that the authority of Jesus also came from God.

But the leaders did not judge the fact; they first calculated the reaction of people. If they said that it came from heaven, they would receive the rebuke of why they had not believed; and if they said that it came from men, they had to fear the people, who counted John a prophet. In the end they answered, *"We do not know."* It was not that they could not speak because they did not know, but that they refused to know in order to protect their own position and appearance. When a man holds on to his own thought and his own interest, he comes to act like one who does not know, even before a plain truth.

The baptism of John, which came from heaven

John the Baptist is not a man who merely performed a religious ceremony in which people went down into the water

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and came up. He was a prophet sent from God, who prepared the way of the Lord. Moreover, as the greatest among those born of women, he took charge of the work of administering baptism to Jesus, representing mankind. As He began His public ministry, Jesus went to John the Baptist and was baptized. This was a righteous work that God had appointed in order to remove the sin of mankind.

On the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrifice, representing the people of Israel. When by that laying on of hands the sin of the people was passed on to the sacrifice, the sacrifice bore the price of that sin and died. In the same way, in the New Testament John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, administered baptism to Jesus, and by the baptism He received from John the Baptist Jesus received all the sin of the whole world at once, transferred onto Himself. Baptism represents washing and transfer and burial. Because sin was carried over to Jesus, the sin of the believer was washed away; Jesus died on the cross because of that sin; and by the resurrection He opened the way of new life.

When Jesus was baptized He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* To fulfill all righteousness means to complete the right work of God, who delivers a sinner from sin and makes him righteous. Jesus bore all the sin of mankind by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the cross, and rose from the dead, and so the righteousness of God was completely fulfilled.

In Matthew Chapter 21 Jesus said, *"John came to you in the way of righteousness."* The way of righteousness is not a way in which a man becomes righteous by his own works. It is the right way of salvation that God accomplished through John the Baptist and Jesus. John the Baptist did the work of passing the

sin of the world on to Jesus, and Jesus received that sin and bore the judgment on the cross. Therefore the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not wash away his own sin little by little with a daily prayer of repentance; he receives by faith the remission of sin that the Lord accomplished once for all.

If a person speaks only of the blood of the cross and does not know how sin was carried over to Jesus, the process of salvation is not fully understood. In order to know why Jesus, who had no sin, received judgment on the cross, we must first know the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist. Because by that baptism He bore the sin of the world, the death of the cross became a righteous judgment in the place of sinners. The water bears witness to the transfer of sin, the blood to the punishment of that sin, and the Spirit to the fact that all this is the truth of God. The witness of the water and the blood and the Spirit is not three separate salvations but represents the one salvation that Jesus Christ completed.

The person who believes this gospel does not regard sin lightly. Rather, because he knows that on account of his own sin the Son of God had to be baptized and to die on the cross, he comes to hate sin. At the same time he does not remain in condemnation, looking only at his own weakness. Instead of holding again in his own heart the sin that the Lord has borne, he believes the complete remission of sin and walks the way of righteousness with thanksgiving. The assurance of the remission of sin and a holy life are not opposed to each other. Only when we believe the complete grace do we serve God with thanksgiving rather than by compulsion or fear.

The chief priests and the elders knew much of the Scriptures and possessed religious authority, but they did not believe this way of righteousness. It was because they did not want to give

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up the righteousness and the tradition they had built up. The tax collectors and the harlots, on the other hand, could not deny the fact that they were sinners. Because they had no righteousness of their own to put forward, they received the way of salvation that God had prepared. The condition for entering the kingdom of God is not to have a career that looks clean in the sight of men, but to acknowledge that one is a sinner and to believe the righteousness that God has accomplished.

The son who obeyed not by words but by faith

Jesus spoke the parable of the two sons. The second son answered his father's command that he would go, but he did not go; the first son at the beginning said that he would not, but afterward he regretted it and went. The one who did the will of the father was not the second son, who spoke good words, but the first son, who actually went to the vineyard. This parable shows that the confession of the lips and the faith of the heart can be different.

The religious leaders said that they served God, but they believed neither John the Baptist, whom God had sent, nor Jesus, the Son of God. Their word was, *"I go, sir."* but their actual life was disobedience. The tax collectors and the harlots had formerly lived against the will of God, but when they heard the way of righteousness they turned from their own way. More important than the first answer was whose word they believed and followed at the last.

True repentance does not remain in wringing out one's feelings and regretting each time one sins. It is to turn the heart that regarded its own thought as more right than God, and to believe the word of the salvation that God has accomplished. To

hold on to one's own judgment that one cannot but still be a sinner is not humility. If God has said that Jesus removed all my sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the cross, then to receive that word is true humility.

That the first son went to the vineyard was not because he was a perfect man from the beginning. Before the word of his father he acknowledged that his own answer had been wrong, and he changed direction. We too need such a turning. Even a doctrine long believed must be laid down if it differs from the testimony of the Scriptures, and even a way that many people follow must be turned from if it differs from the righteousness of God. We must know that refusing the word of God is more to be feared than losing face before men.

The obedience of faith does not end in receiving the gospel once. Even after receiving the remission of sin, we must enter the vineyard of the Father and actually work. If a person says with his mouth that the gospel is precious and yet spends all his time and heart for himself alone, the figure of the second son has appeared within us. The person who begins even a small work according to the will of the Lord, and who bears the work entrusted to him to the end, is the person who does the will of the Father.

Some people think, 'I have committed so many sins; how can it be said that I have no sin?' Looking only at human experience, such a word sounds plausible. But salvation is not determined by our feeling or our memory. We must judge by the word of God whether sin was carried over to Jesus and whether Jesus completely paid the price of that sin. If the Lord bore all sin, then sin cannot remain in the heart of the one who believes. When we lay down our own thought and obey this word, we become righteous and children of God.

That a person has received the remission of sin does not

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mean that the weakness of the flesh will never appear again. Even a saved person can be lacking and can make mistakes. But he is not one who repeatedly manufactures atonement in order to pass his sin on to Jesus again. Believing that Jesus has already borne all sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, when he perceives a fault he acknowledges it before the word and turns from that conduct. The foundation of the remission of sin does not change, but the life of a believer must be renewed day by day according to the will of God.

The vinedressers who tried to seize what belonged to the owner

Jesus went on to speak the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard. The landowner made a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a winepress, and built a tower. After preparing everything needed for the growing of grapes he entrusted it to the vinedressers. The vinedressers were neither the owner who had made the vineyard nor the possessors of that land. They were stewards who were to work in a place the owner had prepared and to render the fruit in its season.

But when the time of the fruit came and the owner sent his servants, the vinedressers beat them and killed one and stoned another. Though the owner sent more servants, they treated them the same way. At last the owner sent his own son, thinking that they would respect his son. Rather the vinedressers sought to kill the heir and to take the inheritance. This parable laid bare the fact that God sent the prophets and spoke, but the leaders of Israel refused, and that when at last the Son of God came they would nail Him to the cross.

The fundamental sin of the wicked vinedressers lay in their

regarding the vineyard as their own. Although they were working there, entrusted by the grace of the owner, they acted as owners themselves. Today also the church and the work of the gospel belong to God. Ministers and believers are workers entrusted with the vineyard, not owners. If a man makes the church a means of exalting his own honor, makes believers his own people, and uses the gospel for his own benefit, he stands in the way of the wicked vinedressers.

Our life and talents and time and material things also belong originally to God. When we were born into the world we brought nothing, and when we leave we cannot take anything with us. God gave us life, saved us, who had fallen into sin, by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and gave us a place to serve the gospel within the church. Therefore a saved person does not claim, "All this is mine," but asks the will of the owner. He considers how, with what he has, he may bear the fruit of the gospel and render it to God.

The owner had a rightful claim to demand the fruit. God also seeks from us the fruit of the gospel. The most precious fruit is that one soul hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sin. If one person perceives the meaning of the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and of the blood of the cross, and is released from all the sin that was in his heart, that is the fruit of life in which God delights. For this fruit, all the labor of proclaiming the word, of translating, of making books, of praying, and of cooperating with material things and with time is the work of the vinedressers of the vineyard.

Fruit is not borne by the strength of one person alone. In the vineyard there are many kinds of work, and the portion entrusted to each person is different. One proclaims the word, another takes charge of needed work behind the scenes, and another

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helps with prayer and with material things. When we regard one another's roles as precious and are joined together with the church, the fruit of the gospel is borne. If a man insists that only his own way is right, the work of the vineyard is blocked, but if he puts the will of the owner first, we bear with one another's lack and work for one purpose.

A farmer does not abandon his field because the fruit is not seen at once. He plows the ground, tends the branches, and waits for the season. So it is with the work of the gospel. There are people who do not believe at once even when the word is proclaimed, and there are people who perceive their own sin and the righteousness of God only after a long time. We must not dilute the truth in order to produce results in haste. We must clearly proclaim the gospel of the water and the Spirit and serve with patience, so that the hearer may quietly examine the word. It is God who makes the fruit grow, and we are people who faithfully sow the seed and tend it.

A worker in the vineyard does not make the fruit his own possession. Even if someone has been saved through him, that soul is one of the Lord's people. He must not bind people to himself, but must help them to be led by the word within the church. The moment we try to turn the result of the work into our own name and honor, we become vinedressers who seize the portion of the owner. To give all the glory to the Lord and to stand as a servant who has done the work entrusted to him is the heart that a worker of the gospel needs.

The rejected stone and the chief cornerstone

The religious leaders tried to cast Jesus away like a useless stone. But God set up Jesus Christ, whom men had cast away, as

the chief cornerstone of salvation. Just as the direction and the foundation of a building are determined by the standard of the cornerstone, so all the truth of salvation and all our life of faith must be built by the standard of the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. Our own thought and tradition cannot be the standard.

Blessed is the person whose own thought is broken before the stone that is Jesus. It is painful for one's own righteousness and stubbornness to be shattered, but only then does he build his faith upon the Lord. On the contrary, if a man refuses the Lord to the end, at the last the stone of judgment falls upon him. A man cannot remain neutral before the truth. Either he believes in Jesus and his own thought is broken, or he opposes Jesus and receives judgment; it is one of the two.

The chief priests and the Pharisees knew the fact that the parable pointed to themselves. But they did not repent; they sought to seize Jesus. To understand the word and to believe it are different. Even when a man knows that a rebuke applies to himself, if he seeks to protect his own position he can become more stubborn. On the contrary, if he acknowledges his own fault before the word and returns to the righteousness of God, he enters the kingdom of God first, like the tax collectors and the harlots.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be given to a people who bear fruit. This does not mean that a man obtains heaven by piling up much merit. It means that a person who first believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and became one of God's people bears the fruit of life according to that grace. Salvation is the gift of God, and fruit is the answer of thanksgiving that a saved person offers to the owner. We do not buy salvation with fruit; we bear fruit because we have been saved.

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The vineyard entrusted to us does not continue forever. Each person has a time in which he can work, and the time comes when the owner seeks the fruit. Therefore we must not try to seize the vineyard for our own greed, but must be faithful while the Lord entrusts it to us. We must proclaim the gospel just as it is, without perverting it, and help souls who are still under sin to believe the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the way to respect the son of the owner and to render the fruit to the owner.

The latter part of Matthew Chapter 21 asks us where the baptism of John came from. If we believe that it came from God, we must also believe the way of righteousness, that Jesus bore our sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And if we have believed this gospel, we must not say with the lips only, *"I go, sir."* but must actually enter the vineyard. According to the will of the Lord, who saved us, we must bear the fruit of the gospel.

Not the religious leaders who held on to their own righteousness, but the tax collectors and the harlots who believed the righteousness of God, entered the kingdom of God. Not the vinedressers who tried to seize the vineyard, but the vinedressers who render the fruit in its season, were entrusted with the vineyard. We too must lay down our own thought and greed and make Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. We must build our faith upon Him, be joined together with the church, and become people who richly render to the Lord the fruit of making souls live by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

The person who believes the way of righteousness
and renders the fruit of the vineyard

Paul C. Jong Sermon 4

If you cannot deny your own thought you cannot be born again

< Matthew 21:25-32 >

“The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, “Son, go, work today in my vineyard.” He answered and said, “I will not,” but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, “I go, sir,” but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said to Him, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.’”

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The Lord does not break a bruised reed

I may say that the life of faith can be lived only by denying oneself. Let us think what kind of being man is. Since man is this weak, how can he live the life of faith and how can he follow God? I have thought about man, and I have thought about people who believe in Jesus and yet do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and so have not received the blessing of being born again, and I have reached the conclusion that only by denying oneself can a man believe God and be born again and follow Him.

What kind of being do you think man is? Do you think that man is strong? Do you think that he is complete? Without denying himself, man of himself can neither believe the Lord nor follow Him nor be born again.

If a man truly knows himself, if he knows his own being, he comes to know, "I am a person who cannot follow God; unless there is a special work of God, I am a person who cannot follow God as I now am." God tells us to live well and to believe and follow according to the truth, but we see that we cannot do so. For a human being it is impossible.

Therefore, just as our Lord said that it is as impossible for a rich man to enter heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, so also it is impossible for a man to follow God. It is the same with being born again. Our Lord said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. Can a man be born again by believing in Jesus while keeping the will and the thought and the knowledge that are natural to a human being? I say that in that way also he cannot be born again.

Man is like dust blown by the wind. He is like a bruised reed. Therefore our Lord did not break the bruised reed. Rather He

gave new life and, on His own side, settled the whole problem of sin and so made us born again. The Lord did not desire that a man should settle his own sin by himself and then come before Him. He desired that we should come before God just as we are, in the very weakness of a reed.

Because the Lord lives within me, I can live denying myself

And our Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*. First, a man must deny himself. He said that only then can a man follow the Lord and believe and be born again and become a child of God.

It means that if a man cannot deny himself he cannot be born again. It means that if he cannot deny himself, however much he believes in Jesus, he cannot receive the remission of sin. Even a person already born again, if he would follow the Lord, can follow only by denying himself. However firm the will of a person who has received the remission of sin, and however good his faith, if he cannot deny himself he cannot follow.

Then how does a man deny himself? If I have a strength of fifty, how shall I overcome fifty with that strength of fifty? One must have a strength of sixty in order to overcome fifty. Only when a power greater than I comes to me and makes me deny myself can I deny myself. By myself it is utterly impossible.

Therefore the Lord made us who have been born again deny ourselves. How did He do it? It is written, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)*.

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Because we cannot deny ourselves and cannot tear down our own weakness, He nailed to the cross together with Christ my useless and weak and lacking self. If a nail is driven into a body, it dies. Now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Because the Lord lives within us, and because we believe the Lord, we can deny ourselves.

Can you keep the law? The Lord said to love your neighbor as yourself, to love God, and to live by faith, and He said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. The word is so reasonable and so fitting that we can all acknowledge it to be right. But do we have the ability to do it? Have we the confidence? We have not.

If you once make a deliberate effort to live according to the word of God, you will come to know that you are lacking. But a person who has never tried at all thinks that he can do it. A person who has done nothing and knows only the theory has the confidence that he can do anything. But a person who has actually plunged in and tried says that it is hard, that his strength is not enough, that he is lacking. A person who has put into practice the attempt to live according to the word of the Bible perceives that by his own strength he cannot do it. From that time he does not exert his own strength but takes hold of the word of God and believes.

The parable of the faith of the first son and the second son

Let us look at today's word. *"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but*

afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, 'The first'" (Matthew 21:28–31).

The second son answered that he would go, and did not go. The first son said that he would not, and afterward regretted it and went and worked. When God tells us by the word of the law to live in this way and in that way, what do we do? Like the second son we answer, "Yes, I will do so." When He says to love your neighbor as yourself, not to lie, not to sin, and to live well, we say, "Yes, I will do so." But do we actually live so? We cannot.

The first son said that he would not, that he could not do it. But afterward he turned and received the word of his father and did just as he had been told. The one who knew that he could not do it was in the end the one who did the will of the father.

It is well as far as believing in Jesus. But what is important is whether one has believed and been born again, or has not been born again. Some people think of being born again in this way: if a man lives very well and uprightly, they say that he has been born again. A child who used to lie has stopped lying after believing in Jesus, and a child who used to steal has stopped stealing, so he has changed, and they express that as having been born again. But living uprightly and being born again are separate matters. They are entirely separate matters.

If a person believes in Jesus and yet has not been born again, that person has believed in vain. It is only that he has chosen, according to his own liking, one among the many religions of the world. Such a person also tries to live uprightly and zealously in an attempt to be born again. But because he does not know himself and cannot deny himself, in the end he is not born again and in the end he cannot believe this word.

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If you read the Bible you will come to know how different the word of God is from your own thought. If you read the Bible with the thought of the flesh, it goes along well and then at some passage it is completely overturned. He tells us to keep the law and says that if we keep the Sabbath we will be blessed, and then He says that the law cannot be kept; He says that if we do not keep the law there is judgment, and then suddenly He says that we have no sin at all. Therefore people who read the Bible cannot find their way. Because it differs from their own thought, they interpret it by force and skip over the difficult passages.

One thing is clear: if a man does not deny himself he cannot be born again. However long he believes in Jesus, even if his family has believed for generations, even if he is a doctor of theology, even if he is a minister, he is not born again. He believes in vain. A person who cannot deny his own thought and his own will and his own self is not born again.

Do you know that John and Jesus together removed the sin of mankind?

Let us look at verse 32 of today's word. *"John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32).*

He said that John came in the way of righteousness. He is saying that at that time the Pharisees and the scribes did not believe that John the Baptist had brought that way of righteousness to this earth, but that the tax collectors and the harlots believed. Then what is the way of righteousness that John brought?

Have you ever heard that John and Jesus together removed

the sin of mankind? Although you have heard until your ears are calloused that Jesus removed our sin, you will say that this is the first time you have heard that John and Jesus together accomplished that work.

That John came in the way of righteousness means that he brought the way that removes our sin, the way that makes us receive the remission of sin and be born again, that very road that leads to heaven. The way that can make us righteous—that is the way of righteousness. Here John does not mean John among the twelve disciples; He is speaking of John the Baptist, who gave baptism to Jesus.

John was born on this earth six months before Jesus. It is recorded in Luke Chapter 1 that he was born as the son of Zacharias, of the family of Aaron the high priest. Concerning him the Lord said, *"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" (Matthew 11:11)*, and He said, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*.

And in the year when Jesus was thirty years old, John gave Him baptism in the Jordan River. At that time Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. In Greek it is "houtōs gar prepon estin hēmin plērōsai pasan dikaiosynēn" (οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην). "Houtōs" means most fittingly, most suitably, that it cannot be done except by this method, and "dikaiosynēn" means righteousness, that is, the most right thing.

In the Old Testament Aaron the high priest, *"shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat"*

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(Leviticus 16:21), passed on the sin of one year at once. In the same way Jesus was baptized by John, the representative of mankind, and so received all the sin of this world transferred onto Himself at once. And bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and on the third day He rose again. Thus He accomplished the work of making those who believe it sinless and making them righteous, so that they may enter the kingdom of heaven. That is *"to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).*

It is written, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).* God the Father sent His Son to this earth in order to save all the people of this world, and in order to fulfill the prophecy of the Old Testament He sent John the Baptist six months before.

Our sin has already been ended through Jesus Christ

Yet people do not believe this. It is because they do not deny themselves. Even while they clearly believe that Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again, they say that they did not know that when He was baptized by John all my sin was transferred onto Him. Therefore, even now, one must deny his own thought.

That Jesus could die on the cross in my place was because He was baptized by John and received all sin transferred onto Himself. Most suitably, most fittingly, He accomplished every right thing. Just as, when the high priest of the Old Testament laid his hands on the head of the goat, one year's worth of sin was carried over at once, so the sin of all the mankind of this

world was transferred at once by that baptism which Jesus received from John when He was thirty years old, and at once He received judgment on the cross, and at once He rose again and ascended and became the Savior of those who believe. Only when a man denies what he has known until now and believes, saying, "Ah, so it was; now I come to know rightly," is he born again.

Whether a man has believed in Jesus for fifty years or for a hundred years, he must deny himself. Therefore, in order to be born again, he must deny himself.

The baptism that Jesus received from John was the receiving of sin transferred onto Himself in the form of the laying on of hands, and it was the first step toward bearing that sin and shedding His blood and dying on the cross and rising again. Therefore it is written, *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17).* Concerning Him, who had received all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself and who would be judged for that sin on the cross and die and rise again, He said, "This is My beloved Son." The will of God the Father was to remove all the sin of mankind through His Son.

Therefore, if we are to do the will of the Father, we must believe in Jesus as our Savior—who was baptized by John and had all our sins transferred onto Himself, who died on the cross in our place, who rose again to give us life, and who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Only then is it in accord with the Father's will. God the Father desired people who believe the baptism that His Son received from John and the blood of the cross, and so receive the remission of sin and become sinless

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people and become a people of God. He seals with the Holy Spirit those who so believe.

We had thought that if we only believe the cross we receive the remission of sin, and that after that, by praying a prayer of repentance every day, we gradually become clean and gradually become people who do not sin, and so go to heaven. But the Bible is not so. It is written, *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*, and *"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. The Bible speaks countless times in the past perfect form.

The authors of the Bible say that all our sin has already been ended through Jesus Christ; but how do we believe? We believe that it is not ended, that it applies to someone like the apostle Paul but that I am a sinner because I am still committing sin now. We believe, saying, "Lord, I am a sinner; I am a sinner every day; I am a sinner until I die." That faith is exactly a faith that believes without denying oneself. God says that it has already all been accomplished, but man says that it is still in progress. Then whose thought must be denied? God is the One who is right, and He has completely accomplished our salvation. What must be denied is our own thought.

The person who knows his own form denies himself

But He said, *"but tax collectors and harlots believed him."* A person who knows his own form denies himself. He confesses, "I cannot do it; I cannot follow the Lord." The words of the Lord are all right words. Yet I have no confidence that I can live completely according to that word, nor does it come about that I

so live.

Therefore it is to say, "If You have removed all my sin, then I believe and go to heaven; but if You have not removed it, then I cannot follow You." You are complete and I am incomplete; everything You desire is right, but I cannot follow.

But if the Lord was baptized by John and received all my sin transferred onto Himself, and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again and so fulfilled all righteousness, that I can believe. If most suitably, most fittingly, He saved me by this method and removed all my sin by this gospel of the water and the Spirit, then it is to say, "Lord, I believe." This is to deny oneself and believe.

It is the same as when Peter confessed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68)*. Since the Lord has removed all my sin, how can I depart from You? Even if I were at the ends of the sea I could not escape Your hand, so where would I go?

It is written, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. Since we have already died, what is there to worry about so much? Since we have already died with Christ and have already risen again with Christ, and since the place we shall go is the eternal kingdom of God, what shall we be anxious about? Since the Lord was baptized by John and has already borne all my sin, what shall we fret about as lacking? It is to deny oneself and go by faith. This is the faith by which one is born again.

However hard you try, have you the confidence to live according to the will of God? Therefore we deny ourselves and are born again. Your sin is gone because Jesus was baptized by John and took it all away, and was judged on the cross and died and rose again; can sin be removed and can you become righteous by praying a prayer of repentance and living uprightly?

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It is impossible. Therefore you must deny your own thought.

Therefore our Lord said that only if a man is born again of water and the Spirit can he see the kingdom of God and enter it. What is the water here? It is that very thing—that when Jesus was baptized by John He received all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself. That is why He said, *"John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32).*

A person who cannot deny himself is not born again, and however long he believes in Jesus, he is a sinner when he goes into the grave and a sinner when he goes before God. But the person who denies himself is born again. Because the Lord has already borne all the sin of you and me through His baptism, and has already been judged on the cross, and has already died and risen again on the third day, and bore witness for forty days, and is already seated at the right hand of the throne of God, and is the Lord who will come again to take those who believe in Him, apart from sin—because He has completely accomplished our salvation—we are born again by faith. And we have been born again.

You and I are without sin by faith. By believing what? By believing the baptism that Jesus received from John and the blood of the cross and the resurrection, that is, this gospel of the water and the Spirit. You and I must deny our own thought and believe this gospel and become people who have been born again. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 5

The kingdom of God belongs to the vinedressers who bear fruit

< Matthew 21:33-43 >

“‘Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.” So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?’ They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes”? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.’”

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The landowner who leased the vineyard and went into a far country

The Lord has recorded in this way all the work of accomplishing our salvation, the work that God has done and will do. The vineyard here is a word spoken concerning the church, and it is also a word spoken concerning the gospel. He said, *"There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country" (Matthew 21:33)*. Here the vinedressers appear, and the owner appears, and the vineyard appears. By this parable the Lord spoke of what the church would become in days to come.

The owner planted the vine, set a hedge on the hill, built a tower, and even made a trough for treading and pressing the grapes, and then leased it to the vinedressers and went away. Naturally, then, he would come to collect some part of the harvest. But the owner did not come himself; he sent his own servants. Then the vinedressers took those servants, and beat one severely, and killed one, and stoned another. When he again sent other servants, more than the first, they did the same to them also.

So this time the owner sent his own son, that is, the heir. But when the vinedressers saw the son they said that this is the heir, so let us kill him and seize his inheritance, and they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. When that had happened and the Lord asked what the owner of the vineyard would do to these vinedressers when he came, they answered that he would destroy those wicked men and lease the vineyard to other vinedressers who would render the fruit in its season.

And Jesus said this: *"The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43)*. Who comes to have the kingdom of God? It is that the

people of God who bear fruit come to receive it.

Those who persecute the people of God

We might pass over this word, thinking that it is simply so. But when we look at it in the light of history, this is a tremendous word. The vinedressers here point to religious people who say that they believe God, that is, to the people who are entrusted with the church and run it. And whom did those vinedressers kill? They seized and killed the people of God.

In the Roman era the early church at first grew greatly. But the emperors of Rome called themselves gods and made the people bow to them, and at that time the Christians could not listen to that word. When they said that Jesus alone is the true God, they were called pagans and were seized and killed. They were burned to death with fire and nailed to crosses and killed.

After that the kings of the nations acted as heads of the church and seized and killed all the true people who had heard the gospel from the apostles and believed and formed the church. In the Middle Ages also the leaders of the church in Europe seized and killed people who believed in Jesus rightly. The country established by those who fled to escape that persecution is the America of today. That is why it is said to be a country founded by the Puritans. How severe must the persecution have been for them to flee and do so?

It is the same today. Who persecutes the people of God? Religious leaders who say that they believe God persecute them. They brand the people of God as heretics and slander them. These men have made the whole vineyard their own, and while neither proclaiming the word rightly nor preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are only doing the work of making

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a living for themselves and enjoying power through this vineyard.

You and I must ordinarily hear and know such a word as this. It is because such a time will come again. When the Antichrist appears, whom will he employ to do that work? He will employ the leaders of Christianity, who say that they believe God, to seize and kill those who have been born again. For the past two thousand years history has been so.

But the Lord has spoken. He said that the kingdom of God would be taken from you and given to a people who bear the fruits of it. God gives the true kingdom of God to the people who bear fruit. He gives the kingdom of God to those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are born again, and who, though it is hard and difficult, follow and obey the will of the Lord.

When the time comes we shall live forever in His kingdom

And the Lord spoke thus: *"Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44)*. Whoever opposes Jesus Christ or does not believe in Him, it becomes to him exactly according to this word.

It is written, *"Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet" (Matthew 21:45–46)*. Who is the high priest? He is the representative of the nation of Israel and the man who is said to believe God best. Yet those chief priests and Pharisees did not believe in Jesus but rather challenged Him.

What happens if a man falls from a high place onto a stone? His whole body is broken. And if that stone falls on a man, he becomes powder and is scattered. Everything is finished. When the Lord comes again and strikes those who oppose God, who will survive and who will not go to hell?

We are people who proclaim the works of God recorded in the Bible. God came to this earth and performed the work of saving mankind from sin. In order to fulfill all righteousness our Lord was baptized by John and received all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so delivered us completely from sin. That is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And when the time comes He sends the servants of God to this earth and makes them do the work of God, and when the time comes He comes to take those who have been born again. He takes them and makes them live forever in His kingdom.

The Lord designed all of this

The owner did not merely make a vineyard. He planted the vine and set a fence so that wild boars and roe deer might not come and eat it. And he dug a trough for pressing the juice. Today there are machines for pressing juice, but in olden times they dug a great pit, poured in the clusters of grapes they had gathered, and climbed in with bare feet and trod them. The juice pressed out in that way was strained and stored and used.

Is that the end? He built a tower also. Why is a tower built? It is built in order to guard against thieves. It is because, if one climbs up and sits in a high place, everything around can be seen. In this way the landowner did everything.

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In fact the salvation of you and me also was all done by the Lord. He Himself designed it, made the universe and made man, planned it in His Son, and when the time came sent that Son and saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and gave us eternal life and made us His children. The Lord made everything.

The parable of the two kinds of vinedressers

But on this earth there are many tares. When we say "farmer," a good image comes to mind. We too are now vinedressers of the vineyard and workers who do the work of God. Yet in this world there are two kinds of vinedressers.

One kind is the vinedresser who makes the church entirely his own and makes it an instrument for earning money. People who have not been born again do so. They say that we must evangelize much, but the reason they must do much is to bring much money into their own pockets. Outwardly it looks as though they love the Lord exceedingly, but in reality it is not so.

There is another kind of vinedresser. Those people are you and me. They are people who, as the landowner commanded, are saved within that vineyard and grow grapes within the vineyard. They are people who give fertilizer and water, who spray against disease and insects, who mend what has gone wrong, who share the gospel of the water and the Spirit in books and in electronic books, and who in that way fulfill the will of God and prepare to present the clusters of grapes when the time comes and the owner arrives.

Then why did the Lord speak of such a part? It is because such things will happen in days to come, and because they are already widespread today. When the time draws near for the Antichrist to appear, the religious leaders of Christianity who

have not been born again will take the lead in seizing and killing you and me, who have been born again. This word is proclaimed so that at that time we may not be astonished, wondering whether they could really do such a thing to us, but may know their true state exactly as it is in the word of God.

Then, when that time comes, it will not be a strange thing. Because it is not a strange thing, we endure by faith, and if we come to be martyred we are martyred by faith and meet the Lord and live well in the kingdom of the Lord. Therefore such a word of the Bible is not a word spoken because it was needed only in that time; it is a word that applies exactly to our life of faith today and to what will happen in days to come.

There is only one Savior

The vinedressers of that time were the chief priests and the Pharisees. Who are the vinedressers of today? They are the leaders and the members entrusted with the church. Whom do they oppose? It seems that they do not oppose God, but they oppose those who believe God rightly, calling them heretics. In the end it is to persecute the people of God, and finally it becomes opposition to God.

We do not need to hate them. Only, we must know that what they do is opposing God and opposing the people whom God has sent, and that it is an attempt to make the church that God has given into their own private property, and not truly a work done for God.

If we know that, there is much spiritual benefit to us. We can know what kind of place the church is, who my brothers and sisters are, and the reason we are serving the gospel in this way. There is no need to wonder why the churches of the world do

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not do so. We can understand that they are people who have made the vineyard their own and made it the bread of the flesh, and when there is opportunity we can preach the gospel to them also and let them be saved.

Who on this earth is a Savior besides Jesus? Only Jesus Christ, His own Son whom God sent, is the Savior of mankind. It is written, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)*. Yet today the false vinedressers say that there is salvation in other religions also.

In the world there are many people who say that they are gods. There are people who obtained a Bible and read it and made their own religion out of it as material, and there are crowds who, saying that their own founder will rise again on the third day, light lamps by his grave and wait. Our Lord said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)*. This word is a word that Jesus spoke concerning Himself; it is not a word for a man to attach to himself.

Therefore the Lord said, *"Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?" (Matthew 21:42)*. In olden times there was no cement, so when a house was built the stone laid at the corner was absolutely necessary. Only if that stone did not crack could the walls form an angle and stay joined together. That very stone, which the builders cast away as unnecessary, the Lord has made the most needful chief cornerstone, which joins God and us together.

Let us become vinedressers who bear fruit

Therefore you and I must know that there are such vinedressers, and even when such men are rampant we must know and acknowledge that of course there are such men, and must keep our faith well. We must store in our hearts what God has taught us beforehand, and when that thing comes upon us in reality we must not be shaken, saying, “I already knew it all.”

We are those who believe that the Lord, who was baptized by John and received the sin of the world transferred onto Himself and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again, has saved us, and we are vinedressers who have been entrusted with that gospel of the water and the Spirit and work in this vineyard. You and I must become vinedressers who render the fruit in its season when the owner comes, that is, a people who bear fruit, and so receive the kingdom of God. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 6

We are those who do the work of bearing fruit in the vineyard

< Matthew 21:33-43 >

“‘Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.” So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?’ They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes”? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.’”

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The Lord made a vineyard on this earth

Our Lord speaks. He says that the owner made a vineyard on this earth. He said, *"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country" (Matthew 21:33)*, and He explained by giving one example.

In order to make a vineyard one must first plow up the ground and make the soil good, and give fertilizer, and make the water drain well, and lay the piping for watering. After doing all that, the vine is planted. And a fence is set around it. Moreover, since the point of growing grapes is in the end to press out the juice and drink it, a winepress trough must also be dug. When the fruit is gathered, it is put in and trodden with the feet, and the juice that comes out is caught and kept.

The Lord built a vineyard on this earth. It is a word that the Lord is the owner of that vineyard. This was given as an example, but in fact it is so. When the Lord made this universe, what did He make it centered upon? He made it centered upon man.

The purpose of the creation is eternal life

It is written, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light; and He said that the earth should bring forth the herb that yields seed and the fruit tree, and it was so. Having made things in that way for five days, on the sixth day He made man.

It is written, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,*

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over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26). That is Adam and Eve, and we are their descendants. Then what is the purpose? That we should live well forever together with God within this world that God has made—that is the will and the purpose of the Creator.

Why did God make this universe for us? He made it in order that we might live well forever together with Him. Of course, in order to live together with the One who lives forever we must have a qualification worthy of it, and the process of obtaining that qualification is all contained within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Having established such a great plan, He made the whole world in five days and made man on the sixth day, and gave him the made things to rule and to keep and to enjoy.

What God planned is eternal life. That, just as He lives forever, we also should not die but live forever—this is the will of God. With that purpose He made this whole universe and leased it to men and entrusted it to them and went away.

That He entrusted it as a lease means that He would receive what comes out of it. Speaking in a bodily way, it is that He would receive the profit of the produce; speaking spiritually, it is that God would receive praise for that work by which He loved us and made us live happily forever.

The one who works in the vineyard and bears fruit becomes the owner

But although God made it with such a plan and leased it to men and went into a far country, some people said that this was their own, and they seized the servants whom the owner had sent and beat them and killed them and stoned them. When the owner

sent more servants, they did the same to them also.

So this time, saying, "If I send my son, will they not recognize my son and not do so?" He sent His own Son, but they killed even that Son. Therefore the chief priests and the elders who were listening. He asked what the owner would truly do to those vinedressers when he came to receive the produce. Will he not judge them? He will judge them.

And the Lord speaks. He says, "Shall I not seek faithful workers who will rule and manage well this vineyard that I have made, so that the growing of grapes goes well and much fruit is borne, and who will themselves live by it and also render a part of it to the owner?"

And He said that to those who are faithful to Me and who also believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and know the will of the owner and are faithful, He will give the world that He has made, the vineyard that He has made, all of it. *"The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43)*. The word we have read today is exactly that.

Then what does the Lord say to you and me by this word? It is a word that the workers who work in the vineyard so that its fruit may be borne will as a result become owners in the kingdom of God.

We must be joined together in the process of bearing fruit

Right now we are working within this vineyard. The people of the world also are working within this vineyard. Within the vineyard called the world, the people of the world all think that it is their own. Yet it all belongs to God. It is the same within the

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church. Though there is a difference in doing the work well or poorly, there are people who in the center of their hearts are joined together in the work of God and desire to bear fruit, and there are those who instead try to lord it over the people of God and to oppress and trouble them.

In the sight of the Lord, who receives the kingdom of God and the blessing that God gives? Those who work faithfully within this vineyard and bear fruit receive it. A people who bear fruit receive it.

Then what is it like to bear fruit? Until fruit is borne there is a process. It is not finished by planting the vine. Even before planting, the ground must be made into good soil, and fertilizer must be given, and the temperature and the humidity must be adjusted. After planting also, water must be given in season, and medicine must be sprayed against disease and insects and the worms must be picked off, and structures must be set up so that the branches may spread well.

We must become people who are well joined together in such a process and work. If instead a person thinks only of his own benefit—"How long have I held my office; how long is it since I was saved; how dare a person who has not yet received an office tell me to do this and that?"—such a person is like one who regards the vineyard as his own and treats the servants of God as he pleases.

We are workers who serve the Lord in union

You and I are all workers who work in the vineyard. Speaking more narrowly, we are those who bear the fruit of God within the church of God and serve for the salvation of souls. Here there is no reason at all to ask who is higher or who is better.

That God has permitted positions within this is that we should manage and lead and care for others, not that we should enjoy ourselves here, nor that we should oppress. You and I are alike servants of God before Him. In short, it is not that there is high and low in the work of God, but that each in his own entrusted place helps the others and is joined together so that the work of God may go well—this is exactly what a servant of God is.

The Lord said, *"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—" (Matthew 20:26–27)*. The one who came first serves the one who came later. To help and to serve so that the workers may do their work well—that is what it is to be one who has gone before.

If a person entrusted with some work regards himself as the chief in that part, that is a great mistake. A team leader is one who carefully observes who does the work well, who is willing but a little slow, how that person should be helped, and how he should be led, so that all the team members may do their work well. It is not that the one who has gone before wields authority.

You and I are servants of God. We are servants who must be joined together and serve the Lord. A person who does not do so but claims only his own rights is like the men here who persecuted the servants sent by the owner. In any case, the kingdom of God is received by a people who bear fruit. A person who does not care whether the work of God goes well or not is in great trouble.

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Let us be joined together and bear fruit

Then who receives heaven? The one who cooperates so that the work of God may bear fruit receives it. It is to do it with all one's strength and all one's sincerity and all one's faith, to learn when one does not know, and to accept it when the other person offers a good opinion. No work at all is done alone. A person who works alone becomes isolated and is of no use.

We must consult about everything. Belonging to the same team and working together is called teamwork. It is to consult together about what the purpose of this work is, and, in order to accomplish that purpose, who will take charge of what work and who will help with what, and so to accomplish that work. To say, "I need only do my own work," is foolish, and such a person does not belong to the teamwork.

I also belong to the same team as you, and so, when you do some work, I consult with those who have gone before and do the work of helping you to do that work well. I continue, both spiritually and bodily, the work of supporting in this part and helping in that part, of teaching and leading and bearing and waiting.

When we go to the site, our brothers are the technicians. I am one who designs and one who helps; I am not a technician. I say, "You do this well, so you do it," and I only bring the materials and help with the rest.

Moreover, a person must not keep to himself alone what he does well. He must hand it down and teach it. We teach one another what we have learned, and we ourselves again learn something new. If that is lacking, the body does not grow. I share my thoughts about everything as well.

There is a thing called teaching at the table. What do the Jews regard as the most important education? The story that parents

tell while eating within the home—that they count as first. Its strength is greater than what is learned at school. It does not come about by long study; because they hear every day the story told in the short while of eating, as time passes it soaks into the body and into the soul, and they come to live in that way.

Since we are the church of God, it would be good if the team leaders also did so. Rather than nagging beside a person while working, saying that he must not do it that way, it enters the ear better to speak when eating and resting together. If we teach one another in that way, and if those who came later also tell what they have newly learned, this body is united and knit together and bears much fruit. A people who bear fruit receive that kingdom.

Alone we cannot, but joined together it is accomplished

Is it enough to read much of the word of the Bible and to know much? It is not. It does not end with knowing. What is important is what this word says, and how one must live, and how one believes in his heart.

Therefore, when we look at this word, the result is that those who believe in union and who work together so that fruit may be borne in union receive the kingdom of God, and receive the eternal life that God gives, and live happily forever together with God. This is the word that God speaks to us.

After reading this word today, the thought ought to arise: “So it is; what must I do? Whenever God gives an opportunity I must be joined together with my fellow workers; with the fellow workers of the group to which I belong and with the other departments as well, I must be of help in whatever way I can,

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and when they ask for help I must help, and when I need help I must receive help."

Living in that way, we meet the Lord. The Lord, who for you and me was baptized by John and received the sin of the world transferred onto Himself and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again, has removed all my sin. Believing that gospel of the water and the Spirit, we gather together and send booklets and proclaim the word, and so our fellow workers overseas are gathering people by that word and teaching them. This is the fruit that we are bearing together.

The word I wish to give today is that we should be joined together and cooperate and help well in the work of bearing fruit. Alone we can do nothing, but if we are joined together that work is accomplished. And so let us receive the kingdom that the Lord gives, and also receive the blessing He gives while we live on this earth, and live well.

The life of faith is not so difficult. To live spiritually is not so difficult. Even if we are not spiritual as individuals, if we belong to the body and are joined together and cooperate, we become spiritual people. Asking, "Lord, alone I can do nothing, but by the faith that believes in the Lord let me be joined together and bear well the works entrusted to me," you and I must live well by faith for the remainder of our lives and meet the Lord. ✉

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CHAPTER

22

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Matthew Chapter 22

< Matthew 22:1-46 >

“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.’ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

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And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of

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them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, '"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him "Lord," saying: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'"? If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore."

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 22 begins with the parable of the wedding feast that God prepared for His Son. Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees ask questions about taxes and the resurrection and the law in order to trap Jesus, but Jesus, answering their questions, makes plain the character of the kingdom of God, the truth of the resurrection, the core of the law, and the true identity of the Christ.

1. The king who prepared a wedding feast for his son (verses 1–7)

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. The king sent his servants

and told the people who had already been invited to come to the feast, but they were not willing to come. The king sent his servants again and entreated them to come to the feast, for all the food was ready.

But the people who had been invited made light of the feast. One went to his own farm, and another went to do his business. Others insulted the servants whom the king had sent and even killed them. In the end the king judged those murderers.

In this parable the king points to God, the son points to Jesus Christ, and the servants point to the prophets and the workers of the gospel who proclaimed the word of God. Those who were invited first point to Israel, who had first received the word and the covenant of God, and especially to the religious leaders who rejected Jesus.

Cultivating a farm and doing business are not in themselves sin. The problem lay in counting the affairs of daily life and one's own profit more important than the feast of salvation that God had prepared. It is not only by opposing God outright that a man refuses salvation. To keep putting off the invitation of God because his heart is taken captive by the affairs of the world is also to refuse that invitation.

God prepared everything and called people again and again. Therefore the responsibility for failing to receive salvation cannot be laid on God. It is not that God did not invite them; it is that people counted what was their own more important and were not willing to come.

2. He calls everyone who is met at the crossroads (verses 8–10)

When the people who had been invited first refused the feast, the king told his servants to go out to the crossroads and bring everyone they met. The servants invited whomever they met,

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without distinguishing bad from good, and at last the wedding hall was filled with guests.

This word proclaims that the invitation of the kingdom of God is not limited to a particular nation or religious standing but is open to all people. The door of the gospel opens not only to those who are respected in the world but also to those who were despised as sinners and to the Gentiles.

The people invited at the crossroads were not people who had a career or merit that entitled them to enter the feast. They came in because they accepted the king's invitation. This means that the kingdom of God is not a place one enters by boasting of his origin, his position, and his past deeds. Whoever accepts the invitation of God by faith participates in the feast.

3. The man without a wedding garment, and true faith (verses 11–14)

Among those who had come into the wedding feast there was a man who did not have on a wedding garment. The king asked him how he had come in without a wedding garment, but he could not say a word. In the end he was driven out of the feast and cast into outer darkness.

Since anyone and everyone was invited from the crossroads, the question may arise why the man was rebuked for not wearing a wedding garment. This scene shows that the mere fact of having come into the place of the feast does not make a person fitting to the king's will. One must accept the invitation, and yet participate in the feast in the manner appointed by the master of the feast.

The wedding garment represents the remission of sin and the righteousness of God, which God makes and clothes us with, and this garment can be received and put on only by faith. We must not try to enter the kingdom of God in the way we ourselves

want. It is not enough to attend a church or to bear the name of Christian; we must truly believe in Jesus Christ, the Son whom God sent.

The word *"Many are called, but few are chosen,"* means that God calls many people through the gospel, but there are also those who make light of that invitation or accept it in their own way. To hear the invitation of God and to respond to that invitation with faith are two different things.

4. The question of paying taxes to Caesar (verses 15–22)

The Pharisees sent people to Jesus together with the Herodians in order to entangle Him in a trap of words. They asked whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar.

If Jesus answered that they must pay the tax, He could incur the resentment of the people, who hated the rule of Rome; and if He said that they must not pay it, they could accuse Him of the crime of inciting rebellion against Rome. The Pharisees and the Herodians were people who held political positions different from each other, but they went together because of their purpose of getting rid of Jesus.

Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy, told them to bring the denarius that was used for the tax. On the coin were engraved the image and the inscription of Caesar. Jesus said, *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

This word acknowledges one's rightful responsibility toward the state and the world. Believers also must bear taxes and legal duties within the order of society. But the fact that there are things to be rendered to Caesar does not mean that Caesar can take the place of God. The power of the world is limited, but God holds the sovereign right to receive man's life and heart and worship.

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If the coin bears the image of Caesar, man bears the image of God. Therefore money can be rendered to Caesar, but our whole being belongs to God. This word neither means that we should reject the state unconditionally, nor that we should accept every command of the state as absolute. While fulfilling our responsibilities in the world, we must give our ultimate loyalty and worship to God.

5. The question of the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection (verses 23–33)

The Sadducees believed that there is no resurrection. In order to put Jesus in a difficulty, they used the institution of levirate marriage recorded in the law of Moses and presented an extreme case. Their question was this: if one woman had become the wife of seven brothers in turn, whose wife would she be after the resurrection?

Because they did not believe in the resurrection, they tried to make the faith of the resurrection look contradictory. But Jesus said to them, *"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."*

The Sadducees thought of the life after the resurrection as the present life repeated as it is. But those who have risen again are not bound to the present order, in which people die again and must leave descendants behind. In the resurrection the relationship of marrying and being given in marriage does not continue in its present form, and in that they do not die, they become like the angels in heaven. It does not mean that people turn into angels; it means that the conditions concerning death and the institution of marriage change.

Jesus bore witness to the resurrection by citing the word that God spoke to Moses, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* God did not speak of the

forefathers who had died long before in the past tense. Those who made a covenant with God are alive before God even though they die physically, and on the last day they will experience the resurrection of the body.

God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. Therefore the resurrection is a matter that belongs to the power of God, which cannot be judged by human experience.

6. The greatest and first commandment (verses 34–40)

The Pharisees, who heard the news that the Sadducees had not been able to answer Jesus, gathered together. One of them, a lawyer, tested Jesus and asked which commandment in the law was the greatest.

Jesus answered that to love the Lord God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind is the great and first commandment. He went on to say that to love one's neighbor as one's own body is the second commandment.

Loving God and loving one's neighbor cannot be separated from each other. If a man says that he loves God while hating and oppressing people, that love is not true. Conversely, emphasizing only human love without any relation to God is not the complete form of the love the Bible speaks of either. Love toward one's neighbor must flow out of a heart that loves God.

Jesus said that these two commandments are the sum of the whole Law and the Prophets. This does not mean that the other commandments are unnecessary; it means that the purpose and the direction of all the law lie in loving God and loving one's neighbor. If a man keeps the law in detail and yet does not love God and his neighbor, he has missed the true meaning of the law.

At the same time, this word lays bare the sin of man. No one can be confident that he has loved God perfectly with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, nor can anyone say that he

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has always loved his neighbor as his own body. Therefore the greatest commandment teaches us what kind of life we ought to live, and at the same time makes us realize the fact that we are sinners who need the grace of God.

7. Christ is the Son of David and the Lord of David (verses 41–46)

The religious leaders had kept questioning Jesus, but now Jesus questioned them. Jesus asked whose son the Christ is, and they answered that He is the Son of David.

That the Christ comes as a descendant of David is a fact promised in the Scriptures. But Jesus, quoting Psalm 110, asked what the reason was that David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ his *"Lord."* For if the Christ were merely a human descendant who would be born later than David, it would be hard to explain that David called Him Lord.

Jesus was born in the flesh as the Son of David, but He is originally the Son of God, who exists before David. The Christ is man and at the same time God. Therefore we must not understand Jesus merely as an excellent teacher, a prophet, or a political liberator.

The religious leaders could not say a word at Jesus' question. They knew much of the Scriptures, and yet they did not acknowledge the fact that the Christ to whom the Scriptures bear witness was the very Jesus who stood before them.

8. The overall lesson of Matthew Chapter 22

Matthew Chapter 22 proclaims the fact of salvation: that God has prepared the feast of salvation with His Son as its center and calls all people. But people counted the affairs of the world more important, or tried to participate in the feast in their own way, or raised disputes in order to trap Jesus.

Through the question of taxes, Jesus distinguished between responsibility toward the world and ultimate loyalty to God. In the dispute over the resurrection, He made plain that God is the God of the living and the God of power, who makes dead people live again. Through the greatest commandment He taught that the center of all the law lies in loving God and loving one's neighbor, and at the last He revealed that the Christ is the Son of David and at the same time the Son of God, who is the Lord of David.

In the end, what matters is not testing Jesus with questions but knowing who Jesus is and believing in Him. The central figure of the wedding feast is the king's son, and the center toward which all the disputes of Matthew Chapter 22 move is also Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 22 is the word which says that God has prepared the feast of salvation with His Son Jesus Christ as its center and calls all people, and that we must therefore not refuse the invitation, held captive by the affairs of the world and our own righteousness, but respond to it with true faith, love God, and live in the hope of the resurrection.

2) Matthew Chapter 22 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 22 begins with the word that God has prepared the feast of salvation for His Son Jesus Christ and calls all people. But the mere fact of having been invited, or the outward form of having come into the place of the feast, is not enough. One must put on the garment of salvation that God has prepared. This garment is not clothing that man makes with good deeds and religious efforts, but the robe of righteousness that

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Jesus completed and gave us with His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

1. God prepared the feast of salvation with His Son as its center (verses 1–4)

The king of the parable represents God the Father, and the king's son represents Jesus Christ. God prepared the wedding feast for His Son and invited people. This feast represents the feast of salvation, in which sinners are united with Jesus Christ, obtain the remission of sin and eternal life, and in the days to come rejoice forever in the kingdom of God.

Everything needed for the feast was already prepared by the king. It was not that the invited had to prepare the food or pay the cost of the feast. The king said, *"All things are ready. Come to the wedding."*

According to this word, salvation has been prepared completely on God's side. It is not that man must prepare tears, good deeds, and merits in order to wash away his sin. God sent His only begotten Son Jesus to this earth, and Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The Lord, bearing that sin, shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose again in three days and completed salvation.

What we must do is not to make yet another way of salvation for ourselves, but to accept by faith the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has prepared. The food of the feast was prepared by the king, the garment of salvation was prepared by the king, and the invitation also was given by the king. Salvation is the grace of God from the beginning to the end.

2. The reason people refused the invitation to the wedding feast (verses 3–7)

The people who were invited first were not willing to come

to the feast. Though the king sent his servants again and let them know that everything was ready, one went to his own farm and another went to do his business. Others even treated the servants whom the king had sent spitefully and killed them.

Cultivating a farm and doing business are not in themselves sin. The problem lay in counting one's own living and profit more important than the salvation God had prepared. Today also, people who hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit may say, "I will believe later," "I am too busy now," or "I believe in Jesus, but must I know even about His baptism?"

But the invitation of the gospel is not an incidental religious hobby. It is a matter that concerns the eternal life and the judgment of our souls. However great the things we accomplish in the world and however much we possess, if we fail to solve the problem of sin, we cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Those who persecuted the servants God sent point to the people who rejected the prophets of the Old Testament, spurned John the Baptist, and at the last nailed even Jesus to the cross. God sent the word of salvation many times, but people refused that word in order to keep their own thoughts and their religious positions. To keep refusing the invitation of salvation is to make light of the grace of God and, in the end, results in judgment.

3. He invited both bad and good (verses 8–10)

When those who had been invited first refused, the king told his servants to go out to the crossroads and bring everyone they met. The servants invited people without distinguishing bad from good.

This means that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not for some special class only. Those who are counted good in the world are invited, and those who are despised as sinners are also invited. The same invitation is given to those who have learned

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much and to those who have not, to the rich and to the poor, to those who have long lived a religious life and to those who hear the gospel for the first time.

God did not call us because we are good. All people are sinners who commit countless sins in their hearts and fall short of the glory of God, and therefore they need salvation. Having lived comparatively well in the world cannot become a qualification for salvation before God, nor can having committed great sins in the past become a barrier that keeps anyone from believing the gospel.

Yet the fact that all people are invited does not mean that all people are saved automatically, apart from faith. The one who is invited must enter the feast the king has prepared and must put on the garment the king has appointed. The gospel is preached to all people, but it is those who believe that word with the heart who are clothed in the grace of salvation.

4. The wedding garment is the garment of salvation that God has given (verses 11–13)

When the king came in to see the guests, he found a man who did not have on a wedding garment. The king asked him, *"How did you come in here without a wedding garment?"* but the man could not say a word.

In the gospel meaning of the parable, the wedding garment represents the garment of salvation that God has made for us, that is, the remission of sin and the righteousness of God received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. To put on the wedding garment is to accept by faith the salvation Jesus accomplished and to receive the washing of all sin.

Jesus, while being the Son of God, put on the flesh of man and came to this earth. And at the Jordan River He was baptized by John the Baptist, who had been raised up as the representative

of mankind. The baptism Jesus received from John is not a mere religious ceremony or an example of humility. It is the event in which He received all the sins of our past, our present, and our future onto His own body and fulfilled all the righteousness of God.

Jesus, who took the sin of the world upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried that sin and went up to the cross. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross He paid the wages of sin in our place, and by rising again in three days He saved us from sin and death. The Holy Spirit bears witness that Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection are the truth of true salvation.

The one who believes this fact with the heart is the one who has put on the garment of salvation. It is to believe that by the baptism of Jesus all my sins went over to the Lord, and that because the judgment of that sin was finished on the cross, I have now become a righteous person without sin before God. We did not become righteous because we were originally clean; we became righteous because the Lord washed us clean with the water and the blood.

5. No one can enter the kingdom of God wearing his own clothes

The man without a wedding garment came into the place of the feast, but he did not put on the clothing the king required. This man represents the faith of those who have come inside the church and say that they believe in Jesus, and yet do not accept the righteousness God has given but hold on to their own righteousness.

One's own good deeds, keeping of the law, prayers of repentance, and service and devotion in the church cannot be made into the garment of salvation. These things are precious in

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the life of serving God after one is saved, but they can never become the wedding garment that washes away sin. On the clothing that man has made, the stains of sin still remain.

If a person confesses, "I believe in Jesus, but I still have sin in my heart," he must look again at how Jesus took away all his sins. If a man speaks only of the blood of the cross and does not know by what method the Lord bore the sin of the world, the process of salvation by which sin was dealt with is not established wholly in his heart.

We must believe the fact that Jesus received our sins onto Himself by being baptized by John, and that He was judged for those sins on the cross and removed them completely. This garment of salvation that God has prepared is put on only by faith. We do not put it on because we are good, nor because we have had some fervent emotional experience. We put it on by believing as fact the word that the Lord has fulfilled.

6. *"Many are called, but few are chosen"* (verse 14)

We must not take this word to mean only that God saves some people and casts away others without any reason. In the parable the king kept inviting people, and at last he called both bad and good. The range of the invitation was wide.

But those who were invited first were not willing to come, and one man who came into the feast did not put on a wedding garment. The chosen are those who count the king's invitation precious and receive and put on the garment the king has prepared.

Today there are many who hear the word of the gospel, but there are not many who lay down their own thoughts and their own righteousness and accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart. We must not merely bear the name of believing in Jesus; we must believe the fact that Jesus has

removed our sins completely by His baptism and the cross. The one who has thus put on God's garment of salvation is the one who is fitting for the wedding feast.

7. The things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's (verses 15–22)

Jesus said, *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* On the denarius the image of Caesar was engraved, but man was made after the image of God. Therefore, while we live in the world we must bear taxes and social responsibilities, but our life, our heart, and our soul must be given to God.

A person fallen in sin lives as a slave of the devil and of sin, but Jesus bought us by paying the price with the water and the blood. Now the person who has received the remission of sin is not his own but the Lord's. Because the Lord bore our sin and gave up His life, our body, our time, and our heart also must be used for the kingdom of God and for the gospel.

This does not mean that we must abandon our occupation in the world and our family life. Believers must faithfully bear the responsibilities entrusted to them in the world, and yet must not forget the fact that the Master of their life is God. On money there is the image of Caesar, but in our soul there is the image of God. We must not forsake God because of money, but must rightly use everything God has given us for the gospel and for our neighbors.

8. The resurrection is the eternal hope given to those who have put on the garment of salvation (verses 23–33)

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, applied the marriage relationship of this present world to the world of the resurrection as it is and tested Jesus. Jesus said that

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they were mistaken because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not end with washing away the sin of the heart on this earth. Just as Jesus rose again from the dead, so also the person who has received the remission of sin by believing in Jesus rises again with a glorious body on the last day. The present flesh grows old, falls sick, and dies, but God makes the person who believes live again.

When Jesus said, *"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,"* He meant that the relationship between God and the person who believes does not end with the death of the body. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died on this earth, but they are alive before God. To the person born again of water and the Spirit, eternal life has already been given, and in the days to come that life will appear completely through the resurrection of the body.

The wedding feast shows this very joy of eternal life. The person who has put on the garment of salvation will in the days to come participate with the Lord in the feast of the eternal kingdom of God.

9. Loving God and loving one's neighbor are not the condition of salvation but the fruit of the faith that has received salvation (verses 34–40)

Jesus said that to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind, and to love one's neighbor as one's own body, is the sum of the whole Law and the Prophets.

But a sinner cannot keep this commandment perfectly by his own strength alone. We have not loved God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind, nor have we loved our neighbor as our own body. When we stand before this commandment, we come to discover our lack and our sin. Therefore the law makes us realize the fact that we are sinners who need a Savior.

Jesus first loved us, such as we were. When we were sinners, He was baptized by John and took all our sins upon Himself, and He gave up His own life and saved us. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the person who has accepted this love into his heart.

It is not that we are saved because we love God; we love God because we have believed the love with which God first saved us completely. In the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin the Holy Spirit dwells, and the Holy Spirit leads him to live loving God and his neighbor.

To love one's neighbor is not to bless him with words only. A life is needed that actually cares for people in hardship, shares what is needed, and forgives those who have done wrong. Above all, to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to a soul that has not yet received the remission of sin, and to help him also put on the garment of salvation, is the most precious love of neighbor.

10. Christ is the Son of David and the Lord of David (verses 41–46)

The Pharisees knew the fact that the Christ is the Son of David, but they could not explain the reason that David called the Christ his Lord. Jesus was born in the flesh as a descendant of David, but He is the Son of God, who exists from the beginning.

This fact is very important in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If Jesus were no more than one man, He could not take upon Himself the sins of every person in the world, be judged for them, and save them. But Jesus is the Christ, who came as true God and at the same time true man.

God, the Lord of David, put on the body of man and came to this earth, and was baptized by John the Baptist. Because the

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sinless Son of God received our sins onto Himself, His death on the cross became the perfect redemption for all mankind. And by rising again He testified that He is God, who rules over life and death.

Therefore the garment of salvation is not clothing that an ordinary human being has made for us. It is the perfect robe of righteousness that Jesus, the Creator, has made for us with His own baptism, His blood, and His life.

11. The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 22 conveys

God has prepared the wedding feast of salvation with His Son Jesus Christ as its center. What the invited must do is not to make a garment with their own righteousness and merits, but to receive by faith and put on the garment God has prepared.

That garment of salvation was completed as Jesus took all our sins upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, shed His blood and received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and rose again. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sin, becomes a righteous person before God, receives the Holy Spirit in his heart, and hopes for the resurrection and the eternal kingdom of God in the days to come.

The person who has received the remission of sin faithfully bears his responsibilities toward the world while remembering that he himself is God's. He also gives thanks for the grace of the Lord, who first loved him and saved him, loves God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, and lives preaching this precious gospel of salvation to his neighbors also.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 22 is the word in which God sent Jesus Christ, who is the Son of David and the Lord of David, and He prepared the perfect garment of salvation

with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection, and so God invites everyone to cast away his own righteousness, believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, put on the robe of righteousness, and participate in the resurrection and the eternal wedding feast. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 22

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 22 explains the kingdom of heaven with the parable of a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. When those who were invited did not come, and instead treated his servants spitefully and killed them, the king went out to the crossroads and brought in whomever was met, both bad and good, and filled the seats of the feast.

But one man who had not put on a wedding garment was driven out into the outer darkness. The invitation of the kingdom of heaven is open to everyone, but only the person who has put on the robe of God's righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit can participate in that place. Many are called, but few are chosen.

When the Pharisees laid a snare, asking whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus told them to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

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The money engraved with Caesar's image is to be rendered to Caesar, but our soul and our life, made in the image of God, must be given wholly to God.

When the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, tested Jesus with the story of seven brothers and one woman, Jesus said that they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is alive forever in the resurrection.

When a lawyer asked which commandment is the greatest, Jesus said that the two commandments—to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as your own body—are the sum of the whole Law and the Prophets. Then Jesus, by asking how the Christ is the Son of David and at the same time the Lord of David, revealed that He Himself is in the flesh a descendant of David but is originally God, who is the Lord of David.

Matthew Chapter 22 shows that the qualification to participate in the feast of heaven lies not in a person's status or knowledge but in the robe of righteousness that God gives. Now, examining the words of the text in order, we will look into the truth of salvation revealed through the teachings on the wedding feast, the taxes, the resurrection, and the great commandment, and into the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which clothes us with that robe.

Everyone is invited to the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven, but only those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have put on the robe of the righteousness of God can enter it

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables

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and said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen'" (Matthew 22:1–14).

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The king points to God the Father, and the son of the wedding feast points to Jesus Christ. The wedding feast shows the grace of the kingdom of heaven, in which God saves sinners in Jesus Christ and has them enjoy eternal life and joy together.

The wedding feast was not something the guests prepared. The king killed his oxen and fatted cattle and furnished everything that was needed. Those who were invited had only to

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

come to the feast the king had prepared and participate in it with joy. This means that the salvation of sinners also is not something prepared by human labor but was prepared completely by God through His Son.

Man cannot prepare the feast of heaven by gathering up good deeds, prayers, and devotion. God sent Jesus Christ, and He took the sin of mankind upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed the salvation of sinners with the cross and the resurrection. A sinner has only to believe and accept with thanksgiving the salvation God has prepared.

The king sent his servants and told those who had already been invited to come to the feast. Those who were invited first point to the people of Israel, who had received the law of God and the prophets, and especially to the religious leaders. God sent many prophets, and at the last sent Jesus Christ, and so invited them to the kingdom of God.

But they were not willing to come. It was not because the feast had not been prepared, nor because they did not know the content of the invitation. It was because they counted their own thoughts and their own affairs more important than the king's invitation. They thought that they had no need to accept the salvation God had prepared.

Even after being refused once, the king again sent other servants. He invited them again, saying, *"I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."* This shows the longsuffering and the love of God, who desires that sinners not perish but receive salvation.

But the people did not even pay attention to the king's invitation. One went to his own farm, and another went to do his own business. It does not mean that working in a field or doing business is itself sin. The problem lay in counting the affairs and

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the profit of the world more precious than the invitation of God, who gives eternal life.

Today also, people put off the matter of hearing the gospel on the ground that the affairs of the world keep them busy. They spend much time earning money, caring for their families, and accomplishing their own plans, but they pay no attention to the problem of their sin, the eternal judgment, and salvation. Yet what one has gained in the world must all be left behind when the life of the flesh ends.

Some people did not stop at ignoring the invitation, but treated the servants the king had sent spitefully and killed them. This represents the persecuting of the prophets and the preachers of the gospel whom God sent, and the opposing of the word of salvation that they proclaimed. To hate the gospel is not simply to reject one man's opinion; it is to rebel against God, who sent that gospel.

At last the king sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. This is the word that judgment comes upon those who refuse God's gracious invitation to the end and stand against His servants and His Son. The love of God is great and longsuffering, but He does not forever pass over the unbelief that refuses that love to the end.

God did not cancel the wedding feast because the people who were invited first refused it. The king told his servants to go to the crossroads and invite to the feast whomever they met. This shows that the gospel does not stay with a particular nation or religious class but will be preached to all the people of the world.

The servants went out into the roads and brought in all whom they met, both bad and good. The invitation of God is not given only to those who are counted good in the world. Open sinners like tax collectors and harlots, ordinary people, and people who are respected by others all alike receive the invitation of the gospel.

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

The word that *"both bad and good"* were all invited reveals the fact that man's deeds are not the condition of salvation. It is not that one enters heaven automatically because he has lived comparatively well in the world, nor that the opportunity of salvation disappears because he has committed many sins. All people are sinners, and therefore everyone must be saved by the grace of God.

But being invited to the feast and having come into that place was not the end of the whole matter. When the king came in to see the guests, he found one man who had not put on a wedding garment. He had come into the place of the feast, but he was not wearing clothing fitting for the wedding feast of the king's son.

This man represents the person who has come inside Christianity in outward form and yet has not received the true remission of sin in his heart. Attending a church, being present at worship, and calling on the name of Jesus do not automatically make a person one of the people of heaven. One must put on the garment of salvation that God acknowledges.

This garment is not a garment of righteousness that man makes with his own deeds. Nor is it a religious righteousness made by gathering up the merits of praying much, giving offerings, and living virtuously. However hard a man may try, he can never remove his sin completely and become a faultless righteous person before God.

The wedding garment God requires is the garment of the righteous person, who has received the remission of sin by believing the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. This is not clothing man has made; it is the righteousness of God, with which God graciously clothes the sinner. To put on this robe of righteousness, one must first acknowledge that he is a sinner before God and cannot save himself.

Jesus, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist,

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took upon His own body all the sins that mankind commits from Adam until the end of the world. That Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* as He was baptized means that He was fulfilling God's way of salvation, which makes sinners righteous.

Jesus carried to the cross the sin of the world that He had received through His baptism. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross He received the punishment of sin in our place, and by rising again from the dead in three days He testified that our salvation had been completed. To believe in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection is to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

When a man believes this gospel with his heart, he receives the washing of all sin and becomes a righteous person before God. Though there is still lack in his deeds, because Jesus bore all sin and was judged for it, no sin remains in the heart of the person who believes. This is the clean garment of salvation with which God has clothed us and the wedding garment fitting for the feast.

The man without a wedding garment is like a man who tried to come into the feast wearing his own clothes as they were. He represents the person who says that he believes in Jesus and yet relies on his own good deeds and religious zeal, or does not believe the fact that Jesus has removed sin completely. No one can wear his own righteousness and the righteousness of God together.

The king asked him, *"Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?"* But he could not say a word. Before God, the word that one has long attended church or done much service cannot become evidence that his sin has been solved. When God asks, "How has the sin of your heart been removed?" we can answer only with the faith that believes in the

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who believes the fact that Jesus bore all his sins with the baptism He received from John, was judged in his place on the cross, and rose again and became his perfect Savior, is the person who has put on the righteousness of God. He stands as a righteous person before God, relying not on his own merit but on the merit of Jesus Christ.

The word that the man without a wedding garment was cast into the outer darkness is a solemn warning that no one can be saved by the outward form of having come inside the church. Even if a man has heard the invitation of the gospel, if he persists in his own thoughts and does not put on the robe of righteousness God gives, he receives judgment at the last. Heaven is not a place where a person whose sin remains as it is enters and lives; it is a place that the person enters who has received the remission of sin and become holy.

The word *"Many are called, but few are chosen,"* does not mean that God saves some people and casts away others without any reason. God invites all people with the gospel. But among those who are invited, the person who casts away his own righteousness and believes the salvation God has prepared in Jesus Christ appears as the chosen.

Being chosen is not grounded in human lineage, ability, or good deeds. The person who acknowledges that he is a sinner, seeks the mercy of God, and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes one of the people of God in Christ. Conversely, however high one's religious position may be and however excellent his deeds may look, if he refuses the righteousness of God and holds on to his own righteousness, he becomes the man without the wedding garment.

True repentance is not diligently begging over the sins committed each day and so making oneself clean. It is to

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acknowledge that one is a sinner who cannot but commit sin all his life, and to return to the salvation of Jesus Christ, who has washed sin away completely. The remission of sin is not obtained by the amount of one's prayers of repentance; it is received by believing the gospel Jesus completed.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, a believer can do wrong. At such a time he must acknowledge his fault before God and turn back through the word. But it is not that he is saved anew in order to produce a new remission of sin. He confirms the truth of the gospel, that Jesus has already borne all sin and been judged for it, and returns to the right way following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The believer who has participated in the wedding feast does not remain merely a person who has escaped judgment. He is a person who is united with Jesus Christ and enjoys the love of God and eternal life. He also serves by preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the people who have not yet heard the invitation, so that they too may put on the robe of God's righteousness and participate in the feast.

Matthew 22:1–14 is the word that God has prepared through His Son everything necessary for salvation and has invited every sinner to the feast of heaven. But merely coming inside the church is not enough. One must take off his own righteousness, believe in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, and receive the remission of sin. Only the person who has thus put on the robe of God's righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit can enjoy the eternal joy of heaven together with Jesus Christ.

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

The money engraved with Caesar's image is to be rendered to Caesar, but our soul and our life, made in the image of God, must be given to God

"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way" (Matthew 22:15–22).

The Pharisees, having heard the parables Jesus spoke before this, knew the fact that they themselves were being rebuked. But they did not repent of their fault and try to believe in Jesus. Rather, they discussed how they might entangle Jesus in a snare of words.

They sent their own disciples to Jesus together with the Herodians. The Pharisees and the Herodians ordinarily differed from each other in their political positions. The Pharisees bore ill will toward the rule of Rome, but the Herodians were people who supported the governing system of Herod and were close to the power of Rome. Yet in the work of opposing Jesus they joined hands with each other.

These men said to Jesus, *"Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about*

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anyone, for You do not regard the person of men." The content of these words was in itself a right estimate of Jesus. Jesus is true, He does not regard the person of men, and He teaches the way of God according to the truth.

But the purpose for which they spoke these words was not to believe in Jesus and exalt Him. They meant to loosen Jesus' guard with praise and then to make Him fall into the trap they had prepared. Outwardly they spoke as though they respected Jesus, but in their hearts there were the intent to kill and falsehood. This is exactly what hypocrisy is.

The question they threw out was this: *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"* At that time Israel was under the rule of Rome, and the people had to pay taxes to the Roman emperor. Many Jews bore ill will toward this tax, thinking of it as a mark of submitting to Gentile rule.

If Jesus answered that it was right to pay the tax, the Pharisees meant to paint Him as a man who supported the rule of Rome and so turn the hearts of the people away. If, on the contrary, He answered that they should not pay it, the Herodians could accuse Him as a man who incited rebellion against Rome. It was a question shrewdly framed so that they could attack Him whichever way He answered.

But Jesus knew all their hearts and their plans. Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?"* Man can only hear the words spoken with the mouth, but Jesus, who is God, knows even the motive of the heart from which those words come out.

This word makes us also examine today whether the words of our faith and our actual hearts agree with each other. If with the mouth we exalt the Lord while with the heart we try to carry through our own thoughts, and if we use the word of Scripture as a tool for our own profit, we can fall into the same hypocrisy

as the Pharisees. God looks not at beautifully adorned words but at the honest heart that believes the truth.

Jesus told them to bring the money that was used in paying the tax. When they brought a denarius, Jesus asked, *"Whose image and inscription is this?"* They answered that they were Caesar's. On that coin were engraved the image of the Roman emperor and an inscription that displayed his authority.

Jesus said, *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."* This means that even a person who believes in God must not ignore the just order and responsibilities of society while he lives in this world. Believers also must pay taxes, keep the law, and respect the order of the community.

If we live within the order and the protection and the various public institutions that the state provides, we must also bear the responsibilities that follow them. We must not evade just duties on the excuse of faith or cause harm to other people. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must live honestly and responsibly in the world as well.

But Jesus' word did not end with paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus went on to say that we must render *"to God the things that are God's."* While acknowledging our duty toward the powers of the world, He made plain that the highest and ultimate Master of man is God.

On the coin the image of Caesar was engraved, but on man the image of God is engraved. God made man after His own image. Therefore money is to be used according to the order established in the world, but our soul, our heart, our faith, and our life must be given to God the Creator.

Caesar also is not an independent sovereign standing outside the rule of God. While the powers of the world maintain a just order, believers must respect their authority; but if the powers of the world deny the truth of God and command sin, believers

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must obey God rather than men. What is to be rendered to Caesar and what is to be given to God do not stand on the same level. Above all powers is God.

Man was originally made after the image of God, but because of sin he departed from God. He came to give his body, his heart, and his time not to God but to the desires of the flesh, to material things, and to the honor of the world. That a person who belongs to God came to serve the creature instead of God is the fundamental sin of man.

Therefore the first step of rendering to God the things that are God's is not simply offering money or material things. It is to acknowledge that one is a sinner before God who cannot solve his sin by himself, and to believe in Jesus Christ, whom God sent, as one's Savior. God desires, before the material things of a sinner, that his soul first return to Him through the gospel.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we were people who had become slaves of Satan through sin and could not return wholly to God. So God sent His own Son Jesus Christ, had Him bear in our place the wages of our sins, and restored us to be God's possession again.

Jesus, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took the sins of every person in the world upon His own body. That Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* as He received His baptism means that He was accomplishing God's work of salvation, which bears the sin of mankind and makes sinners righteous.

Jesus, carrying our sins that He had taken on with His baptism, went to the cross, shed His blood, and died. He received death and judgment, the wages of sin, in our place, and by rising again from the dead in three days He overcame sin and death. Thus Jesus accomplished the perfect redemption that buys us out of sin and returns us to God.

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

Therefore it is not because we paid some price to God, as one pays a tax, that we have become God's. Nor did we save ourselves by praying, giving offerings, and living well. Because Jesus paid the whole price of salvation with His baptism, His blood, and His resurrection, we become the people of God by believing that fact.

The person who has not yet received the remission of sin has sin in his heart, and so he cannot offer himself to God as something holy. However much religious zeal he offers, if the problem of sin is not solved, he has not returned wholly to God. He must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the washing of all the sins of his heart.

When we believe that Jesus bore all the sins of our whole life with the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the cross, and rose again and became our Savior, we receive the remission of sin. The person who has received the remission of sin in this way receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and comes to know that he himself is God's.

The word to render *"to God the things that are God's,"* does not mean that we must sacrifice our own bodies as the price for receiving salvation. It means that after we first believe the salvation Jesus accomplished and become children of God, we should give our lives to God out of thanksgiving for the grace we have received. Salvation is not the reward of devotion; devotion is the fruit of the grace of having been saved.

The saved believer acknowledges that his time, his talents, and his material things are all things God has entrusted to him. While honestly bearing the necessary taxes and the expenses of living, he does not use all the rest only for the desires of the flesh. He gladly uses them for the work of preaching the gospel, saving souls, and serving the church and his neighbors.

This does not mean that it is wrong for a believer to own

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property or to have an occupation and do business. The problem is material things taking a place higher than God. Money is a tool needed for living, but it cannot become our master. We must use material things according to the will of God, and must not cast away the truth and conscience because of material things.

The Pharisees said that they served God, but in reality they counted the popularity of people, their own position, and their political advantage more important. So they joined hands even with the Herodians, with whom they had been hostile, and attacked Jesus. This shows that if a man loves his own ends more than God, he can do evil even in the name of faith.

On the other hand, the person who has become a child of God by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not judge the truth according to the outward appearance of people or political prejudice. Just as Jesus did not regard the person of men but taught the way of God in truth, so the believer also must count the word of God more precious than the popularity of people.

The people who heard Jesus' answer marveled and went away. They could not refute Jesus' words, but neither did they believe in Him. To marvel at the word and to believe the word and be saved are two different things. If we have heard the word of God, we must not merely admire it and depart, but must accept it into our own hearts.

Matthew 22:15–22 is the word that a believer must hold rightly both his responsibility toward the world and his faith toward God. With the money on which the image of Caesar is engraved we are to bear the just duties of the world, but our soul and our life, which were made after the image of God and redeemed by Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, must be given to God. Not making material things our master, but serving most highly God, who has saved us from sin—this

is the way of obeying the word to render *"to God the things that are God's."*

Jesus taught that the resurrection is not the repetition of man's fleshly life as it is, but the power of God, by which the person saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes alive to eternal life

"The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching" (Matthew 22:23–33).

The Sadducees were people who asserted that there is no resurrection. They said that they believed in God and they knew the law of Moses, but they did not believe in the resurrection, in which a dead person comes alive again, or in the eternal world.

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They judged the word of God only by their own reason and experience, and did not accept the parts that they could not understand.

They did not come to Jesus with a heart that really wanted to learn about the resurrection. In order to make the teaching of the resurrection look contradictory and to put Jesus in a difficulty, they made up an extreme case and asked their question. Just as the Pharisees had tested Jesus with the question of taxes before this, so the Sadducees also tested Jesus with the question of the resurrection.

The Sadducees brought forward the regulation concerning levirate marriage recorded in the law of Moses. It was the regulation that if a man died without a child, his brother should marry the dead man's wife and raise up an heir for that family. This was an institution given in the Israelite society of that time to preserve the family and the inheritance of a dead brother.

They supposed a case in which seven brothers in turn took one woman as wife, but all died without a child, and at the last the woman also died. And they asked whose wife among the seven she would become at the resurrection. With this question they meant to assert that if one believes in the resurrection, a contradiction arises that cannot be solved.

But the fundamental error of these people lay in thinking of the world of the resurrection as the present fleshly life repeated as it is. They understood the resurrection as continuing again the work they had done in this world, and keeping the present relationship of marriage and the institution of procreation just as they are. They shut the eternal world up inside the experience of the finite flesh.

But Jesus said, "*You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.*" The Sadducees were reading the Scriptures, but they did not know the God whom the

Scriptures testify of. Nor did they believe the power of God, who created the heavens and the earth and makes the dead live.

Reading the Scriptures much and knowing the Scriptures rightly are two different things. If a man reads the Scriptures with his own doctrines and thoughts already fixed as the truth, he comes to fit the word to his own assertions. To know the Scriptures rightly, one must lay down his own thoughts and accept with faith the meaning that God has spoken.

The Sadducees saw the reality that man dies, but they did not see the power of God, who makes dead people live. God, who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing and formed man from the dust, will certainly make dead people live again. The resurrection is impossible with the ability of man, but with the power of God it is a thing that will certainly be accomplished.

Jesus said that at the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. In this world marriage is a precious institution that God has given so that people may be fruitful and multiply and form families and live. But the person who has risen again does not die again, and therefore the institution of marriage and procreation for carrying on descendants is not needed.

That the person who has risen again is like the angels does not mean that a person changes into an angel. It means that he is like the angels in the point that he does not die, does not decay, and is not bound by the present conditions of the flesh. The saved person does not lose his own personhood; he comes alive again with a glorious and incorruptible body.

Therefore the resurrection is not simply returning to the weak, sick, and aging body one had before death. It is the event in which God changes the corruptible body into an incorruptible body, and the dishonorable body into a glorious body. There, death and parting and disease and pain are no more.

To testify of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus cited the word,

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"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At the time God spoke this word to Moses, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had already died in the flesh. Yet God did not say in the past tense that He had been their God; He said that He is their God.

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob died in the flesh, but the covenant they made with God was not severed. They are alive before God, and God certainly fulfills the salvation and the eternal life that He promised them. Even the death of the body cannot sever the relationship between God and His people.

The word *"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,"* means that God is the source of life. To the person who believes in God, the death of the body is not the end of existence. It is taking off the tent of the flesh for a little while, and waiting for God to make him live again on the last day.

But the sinner is spiritually dead in his relationship with God. Even though he is alive and moving in the flesh, if sin remains as it is in his heart and he does not know God, his soul is under sin and death. The resurrection that man needs first of all is to receive the remission of sin and be moved from the state of spiritual death into life.

The root cause of man's having become dead before God is sin. The wages of sin is death, and therefore, unless sin is solved, no one can obtain eternal life. Man's good deeds, religious discipline, and prayers of repentance cannot completely remove all the sins written on his heart.

So Jesus, the Son of God, put on flesh and came to this world. Jesus, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took upon His own body all the sins that mankind commits from Adam until the end of the world. The baptism of Jesus is God's righteous work of salvation, in which the sins of sinners went over to the Savior.

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

Jesus, bearing the sin of the world that He had taken on with His baptism, went to the cross. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross He received all the punishment of sin in our place and said, *"It is finished!"* Jesus completed both the work of bearing our sin and the work of paying the price of that sin.

But the salvation of Jesus did not end with the death of the cross. Jesus rose again from the dead in three days. The resurrection of Jesus testifies that He completely overcame the power of sin and death, and that the remission of sin He accomplished is perfect.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is believing Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection as one complete salvation. When a man believes the fact that Jesus bore our sins with His baptism, was judged for those sins on the cross, and rose again and justified us, he obtains the remission of sin and new life.

The resurrection of Jesus does not end as a miracle that happened to Jesus alone. Jesus became the firstfruits, who guarantees the resurrection of all who believe in Him. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and is united with Jesus, as He rose again, also comes alive again with an incorruptible body on the last day.

When we believe the fact that Jesus bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John and paid the wages of our sins on the cross, the sins of our hearts are washed away. And when we believe in the risen Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes upon that heart. The person who has received the Holy Spirit in this way is not spiritually dead but has become a righteous person who is alive before God.

The Holy Spirit gives the heart of the saved person the assurance of believing in Jesus' resurrection and the hope of eternal life. The believer believes not his own feelings or the

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condition of his flesh but the promise of God. Even though his body grows old and weak and at last dies, he does not despair, because he believes that God will make him live again.

On the contrary, if a man does not believe in the resurrection, his faith ends up becoming a religion that seeks only the present blessings of the flesh. He comes to regard living healthy and rich in this world as the whole of faith. But the true hope of the gospel does not lie only in living well in this world; it lies in receiving the remission of sin and living in the eternal kingdom of God.

That we have the hope of the resurrection does not mean that we may take the present life lightly. Rather, because we believe the fact that we will come alive again and stand before God, we must live today's life by faith. The saved believer must use his body, his time, and his material things not for sin but for the gospel and the righteousness of God.

There is a resurrection for all people, but its outcome is not the same. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit participates in the resurrection of eternal life, but the person in whom sin remains because he refused the gospel to the end rises again in order to be judged. Therefore what matters is not stopping at acknowledging that the resurrection exists, but believing the true gospel, by which one can participate in the resurrection of life.

In Jesus' day the Sadducees were religious leaders, and yet they denied the resurrection. Today also, if a man says that he believes in Jesus while excluding His baptism from salvation or thinking of the resurrection as no more than a symbol and a lesson, he is not believing the Scriptures and the power of God wholly. We must believe Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the actual resurrection all together.

Just as Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived believing God, so also the believer who has received the remission of sin must live

the present life by faith. He must not live on with only the memory of once having believed the gospel; today also he must believe and follow the risen Jesus as his own living God.

Matthew 22:23–33 teaches us not to judge the resurrection with the limited thoughts of man. God is the Almighty, who makes dead people live, and the God of the living, who justifies sinners through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and gives them eternal life. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection has already obtained life spiritually, and though his body dies, on the last day he will come alive again with a glorious body and live with God forever.

Loving God and loving one's neighbor are the core of the law, and the fruit of faith that the person who has first received the love of God through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must live out in the Holy Spirit

"But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, '"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'" (Matthew 22:34–40).

When the Pharisees heard the news that Jesus had made the Sadducees unable to answer with His word concerning the resurrection, they gathered together. They did not hear Jesus'

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word and try to learn the truth; they again looked for a way to test Jesus. Among them one lawyer, thoroughly versed in the law, questioned Jesus.

The lawyer asked, *"Which is the great commandment in the law?"* He asked which was the most important among the many commandments God had given. He meant to find in Jesus' answer some part that ignored the law or taught it wrongly, and to attack Him.

Jesus answered, *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* Loving God is the great and first commandment. This is because God is the Creator and the source of life and of every blessing.

The word to love with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind does not mean giving only a part of yourself to God. It means loving God with the whole of your emotion, your thought, your will, and your life. It is not loving God only in the hour of worshiping Him, but serving God most highly in the whole of the purpose, the decisions, and the actions of life.

The commandments from the first to the fourth deal with the relationship with God. They are the words that we should not have other gods besides God, should not make idols, should not take the name of God in vain, and should keep the Sabbath rest that God has appointed. The center of all these commandments is loving God with all one's heart.

Jesus went on to say, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* The commandment to honor one's father and mother, and the commandments that forbid murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, and covetousness, all deal with the relationship with one's neighbor. If a man loves his neighbor as his own body, he cannot do evil to his neighbor or seize what belongs to him.

Loving God and loving one's neighbor cannot be separated from each other. The person who truly loves God counts

precious also the people whom God made and loves. Conversely, if a man says that he loves God and yet hates and harms his neighbor, that love is a faith of words only.

Nevertheless, loving God comes first. Only when a man first knows God and receives His love can he love his neighbor rightly also. Human love apart from God changes easily according to one's own feelings and interests, but the love received from God enables us to have compassion even on enemies and on weak people.

Jesus said that on these two commandments *"hang all the Law and the Prophets."* This does not mean that the other commandments are unnecessary. It means that the spirit and the purpose of all the words recorded in the Law and the Prophets hang on loving God and loving one's neighbor.

But there is a fact that we must first realize before this word. It is the fact that man does not love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, and does not love his neighbor perfectly as his own body either. No one can keep these two commandments completely, without missing a single moment, all his life.

Man often loves himself, material things, and the honor of the world more than God. He thinks of his own profit before the good of his neighbor, and with his heart he hates and judges and envies. Even if he has not committed a great crime outwardly, before the standard of the law, which says to love with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, everyone becomes a sinner.

That the lawyer knew the law well did not mean that he could keep that commandment completely. If a man has much knowledge of the law and yet does not acknowledge his own sin, with that knowledge he comes to judge other people and to establish his own righteousness. The figure of the lawyer who

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tested Jesus was exactly this.

God did not give the law in order that man might be saved by the merit of having kept it. The law, like a mirror, reveals man's sin and makes him realize that he is a sinner who has not loved God wholly and has not loved his neighbor rightly either. By the law one comes to realize sin, but the law cannot wash sin away.

If God decided salvation by the standard of how well one has kept these two commandments, no one could be saved. The law judges even the sins of the heart, and if a man breaks even one commandment, it condemns him as a sinner. Therefore man must not rely on his own effort and good deeds, but must seek the salvation that God has prepared.

God first loved us, who did not love Him and who sinned against our neighbors. It is not that we went to find God and made the way of salvation; God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this world. Jesus is the One who fulfilled perfectly both the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Jesus obeyed the will of the Father to the end, and gave up His own life in order to make sinners live. He did not merely condemn sinners like us, who had failed to love; He Himself bore all those sins. The sacrifice of the cross is perfect obedience toward God and the greatest love toward sinners.

Jesus, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took upon His own body all the sins of the world, including our sin of not having loved God and our sin of not having loved our neighbor. The baptism of Jesus is the work of salvation in which the sin of sinners went over to the Savior and God makes sinners righteous.

Jesus, bearing the sin of the world that He had taken on with His baptism, was nailed to the cross. By shedding His blood and dying He received in our place the judgment of sin that we ought

to have received. And by rising again from the dead in three days He testified that our sin had been dealt with completely and that the way of eternal life had been opened.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Man does not receive the remission of sin by keeping the commandment of love and piling up his own righteousness. He receives the remission of sin and becomes a righteous person by believing the righteousness of God, which Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

Therefore the first obedience of loving God is believing in Jesus Christ, whom God sent. No one can refuse the salvation God prepared through His Son and still say that he loves God. To believe the love of God is to accept the word that Jesus has saved us with the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

When we believe the fact that Jesus bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose again and became our Savior, the sins of our hearts are washed away. The Holy Spirit comes upon the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin in this way, and he becomes a child of God who has received His love.

Salvation is not the result of our having loved God sufficiently. It is the result of the grace of God, who first loved us and delivered us from sin. Only after being saved by believing this love can we love God with the faith that says, *"We love Him because He first loved us."*

Even after we are saved, there are times when we fail to love God and our neighbor perfectly because of the weakness of the flesh. But we must not look at our lacking deeds and think that we have become sinners again. Our righteousness lies not in the deeds by which we practiced love perfectly, but in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus fulfilled.

Yet this does not mean that, because we have received the

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remission of sin, we may ignore the commandment of love. Rather, the person who has received such great love without cost must live loving God and his neighbor, following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The law is not the condition of salvation; it becomes the good standard by which the saved person discerns the will of God and lives.

To love God with all one's heart, all one's soul, and all one's mind is not merely saying that one likes God emotionally. It is to set the word of God higher than one's own thoughts, to make His will the purpose of one's life, and to carry out honestly and faithfully the work of the gospel entrusted to him.

To count worship and prayer and the word precious, and to use one's own time and talents and material things for the gospel, is also a life of loving God. With the faith that we do it not to be seen by the people before our eyes but before God, we must give our heart and strength even to small work.

But we must not be irresponsible toward our family and our neighbors under the pretext of loving God. To care for the family God has entrusted to us, to help people in hardship, to comfort the wounded, and to acknowledge our own faults and forgive—these also are the concrete forms of loving one's neighbor.

The most precious work of loving one's neighbor is to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the souls that are perishing because of sin. Helping with the difficulties of the flesh is also needed, but preaching the gospel so that a soul may receive the remission of sin and obtain eternal life is the love that seeks that person's eternal good.

At the same time, we must not turn away from the present sufferings of our neighbors on the ground that we preach the gospel. The love that shares what is needed with the hungry, cares for the sick, listens to the words of those who suffer unjustly, and does faithfully the work given to us is also needed.

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

True love appears not in words only but in practical serving.

The word *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* does not mean that we should exalt ourselves and make ourselves an idol. It means that, while counting precious also our own life, which God made and Jesus redeemed with His blood, we should count the life and the soul of other people just as precious.

The saved believer does not strive to accomplish the commandment of love with his own strength alone. He must first keep believing the love of God that appears in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and seek the help of the Holy Spirit within the word and the church. The Holy Spirit breaks our selfish hearts and gives us the strength to serve God and our neighbors.

Matthew 22:34–40 shows that the core of the law is loving God and loving one's neighbor. At the same time, before this standard of perfect love every person is revealed as a sinner. Therefore we must not rely on our own deeds of love, but must believe the love of God that appeared in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. The person who has received the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, out of thanksgiving for that grace, serves God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, and lives loving his neighbors with the gospel and with practical serving.

Jesus Christ is in the flesh the Son of David, but He is God, who is originally the Lord of David, and the King of kings, who has saved us with His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them,

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'How then does David in the Spirit call Him "Lord," saying: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'"? If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore" (Matthew 22:41–46).

The Pharisees and the Sadducees and the lawyers tested Jesus with many questions. They threw out questions concerning taxes and the resurrection and the law to put Jesus in a difficulty, but Jesus answered all their questions with the wisdom of God. Now Jesus instead asked the Pharisees a question.

Jesus asked, *"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"* This was not a question that merely asked about the genealogy of the Christ. He was asking who the Christ they said they were waiting for really is, and how wholly they knew and believed concerning the Christ.

They answered at once, *"The Son of David."* The Old Testament promised that God would send the eternal King from among the descendants of David. Therefore their answer that the Christ comes as the Son of David was not wrong.

Jesus actually came to this world in the flesh following the lineage of David. According to the promise God gave to Abraham and to David, He was born as true man through the body of the virgin Mary. The fact that Jesus is the Son of David testifies that He is the Christ whom God promised.

But the answer of the Pharisees was not complete. They thought of the Christ only as a human king who would be born of the lineage of David. They expected that the Christ would become a political king who would set Israel free from the rule of Rome and establish a strong nation in the world.

They knew the Christ as the Son of David, but they did not know His divinity. They did not know the fact that the Christ,

who comes as the Son of David, is true man and at the same time God, who exists before David. It was exactly because of this incomplete view of the Christ that they failed to recognize Jesus, who stood before their eyes.

Jesus pointed out the fact that David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ *"Lord."* David did not speak merely with his own thought; he received the moving of the Holy Spirit and prophesied concerning the Christ who was to come. Therefore the confession of David is the word of God, which shows the true identity of the Christ.

In the word *"The LORD said to my Lord,"* the former Lord points to God the Father, and the One whom David called *"my Lord"* points to the Christ. It is the scene in which God the Father speaks to the Son, Jesus Christ. This shows that the Christ is the Son of God, who was together with the Father even before He was born into the world.

David was the king of Israel, and yet he called the Christ, who would come as his own descendant, his Lord. Ordinarily an ancestor comes before his descendant and stands in the higher place, but David knew by the Holy Spirit the fact that the One who would come as his own descendant is his God and his Lord.

Jesus is in the flesh the Son of David, but in His divinity He is the Creator of David. He is not One who began to exist for the first time at Bethlehem. The Word, who was with God from the beginning and created all things, put on flesh and came to this world.

Therefore Jesus is true God and at the same time true man. It is not that He lost His divinity because He became a man, nor that He did not put on an actual body because He is God. To save sinners, God put on the body of man and came among us.

Jesus had to come as true man because He had to represent mankind, bear our sins, and die in our place. But if Jesus had been no more than one man, He could not have borne the sins of

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every person in the world or overcome the power of death. Because Jesus is God, He bore all sin wholly and accomplished eternal salvation.

In the word *"Christ"* is contained the meaning of the One who receives the anointing of God and fulfills the offices of King and Priest and Prophet. Jesus is the King who rules us, the Prophet who teaches us the truth of God, and the High Priest of heaven, who offered Himself as the sacrifice in order to remove our sin.

As the Prophet, Jesus taught us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which a sinner is born again. He revealed in person the way of the remission of sin that God prepared, not the tradition or the philosophy of man. Apart from the word Jesus taught, no one can rightly know God and the way of salvation.

As the High Priest, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of every person in the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. That Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* as He was baptized means that He was fulfilling the will of God, which bears the sin of mankind and makes sinners righteous.

Just as the high priest of the Old Testament laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed the sins of the people of Israel onto it, so John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus. Through this baptism Jesus received all our sins onto Himself and became the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus, bearing the sin of the world that He had taken on with His baptism, went to the cross. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross He received in our place the judgment of sin that we ought to have received. Because the price of sin had all been paid, Jesus could say, *"It is finished!"*

Jesus rose again from the dead in three days. The resurrection

of Jesus reveals that He is not a mere descendant of David or a martyred prophet, but the Son of God, who overcame sin and death. Through the resurrection Jesus testified that the salvation He accomplished is perfect.

God the Father said to Jesus, who had risen again and ascended, *"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."* To sit at the right hand of God means that Jesus holds all the authority of heaven and earth together with the Father.

Jesus is alive even now and reigns as King. At the last time He will completely subdue all His enemies, including sin and death and Satan. Even the powers of the world that rejected Jesus will in the end stand before His judgment seat.

Therefore we must not believe in Jesus merely as a great teacher or a prophet or a moral example. The Pharisees also had the biblical knowledge that the Christ is the Son of David, but they did not believe that Jesus is God and the Savior. Partially right knowledge can never take the place of whole faith.

The true confession of faith is believing, "Jesus is my God and my Savior." We must acknowledge with the heart that Jesus is the Creator, and the Savior who has delivered me from sin, and the true Prophet who teaches the truth, and the King who rules over me.

To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to believe the fact that Jesus, who is God, came in the body of a man and actually bore our sins and removed them. We must not refuse the meaning of the baptism He fulfilled while acknowledging His divinity, nor deny that He is God while speaking of His baptism and the cross.

When we believe the fact that Jesus bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John, paid the wages of our sins on the cross, and rose again and became our eternal Savior, all the sins of our hearts are washed away. The person who has received

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the remission of sin by this faith receives the Holy Spirit and confesses Jesus as his own Lord and God.

That Jesus is our Lord means that even after we are saved we must not live with our own thoughts as our master. We must receive what the Lord has spoken as the truth and follow His rule. The attitude that needs Jesus as Savior and yet will not receive Him as King is not whole faith.

The person who believes in Jesus as the Lord of David counts the word of the Lord higher than the powers of the world or his own flesh. He also does not treat lightly the gospel God has fulfilled, and he lives preaching this gospel to the souls that have not yet received the remission of sin. The best work of serving God, who has saved us, is testifying of His salvation.

The Pharisees could not answer Jesus' question even a word. But that they could not answer did not mean that they believed in Jesus. Being defeated in a dispute and having one's mouth stopped is entirely different from casting away one's own thoughts and believing the gospel. In the end they sought to nail Jesus to the cross.

Today also there are people who cannot refute the logic of the Scriptures and yet do not accept Jesus with the heart. True faith does not stop at being intellectually astonished at Jesus' word; it is to acknowledge that one is a sinner and to accept into one's heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which He fulfilled.

Matthew 22:41–46 testifies that the Christ is not a mere descendant of David but God, who is the Lord of David. Jesus, who is God, came as true man, bore our sins with His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again and overcame every enemy. The person who believes in this Jesus as his own God and Savior and King receives the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit, follows His rule, and hopes for the eternal kingdom of God. ✉

Only those who have put on the robe of righteousness through the gospel of the water and the Spirit enter the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 22

[Question] 1. Summarize the events and the teachings recorded in Matthew Chapter 22.

Matthew Chapter 22 is composed of the words concerning the invitation of the kingdom of heaven and the qualification for salvation, the disputes concerning taxes and the resurrection, the greatest commandment, and the identity of the Christ.

First, in verses 1–14, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast that a king prepared for his son. The people who were invited first refused the feast and persecuted his servants, and so they received judgment. Afterward, both the bad and the good who were met in the roads were all invited. God had the gospel of salvation preached to all people.

But the fact of having come into the wedding feast was not by itself enough. The man who had not put on a wedding garment was driven out into the outer darkness. This wedding garment is not clothing prepared by man's good deeds or religious zeal; it is the robe of righteousness put on by the one who has received the remission of sin by believing the salvation that Jesus accomplished by receiving the sin of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John, being judged on the cross, and rising again from death.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

In verses 15–22, the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to entangle Jesus in a snare with the question of taxes. Jesus said to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the

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things that are God's, and so He taught together our responsibility toward the state of this world and our duty toward God.

In verses 23–33, the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, asked their question. Jesus rebuked them, saying that they were mistaken because they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God, and He said that the life after the resurrection is different from the marriage relationship of this world. He also taught that the resurrection certainly exists, because God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living.

In verses 34–40, He spoke concerning the greatest commandment in the law. The first is to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind, and the second is to love one's neighbor as one's own body. These two commandments are the center that fulfills all the words of the Law and the Prophets.

In verses 41–46, Jesus asked the Pharisees whose son the Christ is. The Christ is in the flesh the Son of David, but since David called Him *"Lord,"* Jesus revealed that He is not a mere man but the Son of God and the Lord of all.

Therefore the central content of Matthew Chapter 22 is that God has invited all people to the feast of heaven, but only the person who has put on the robe of righteousness by believing the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished can enter heaven, and that the saved person must live loving God and his neighbor in the hope of the resurrection.

[Question] 2. Matthew 22:1–14. What is the core of what the parable of the wedding feast means to say about the kingdom of heaven?

The core of the parable of the wedding feast is that God has prepared the salvation of heaven and invited all people through His Son Jesus Christ, but only the person who responds to that invitation and puts on the fitting wedding garment can enter the kingdom of heaven.

In the parable, the king represents God the Father, the king's son represents Jesus Christ, and the wedding feast represents the salvation of being united with Jesus Christ and enjoying the eternal life of heaven. The people who were invited first counted their own farms and businesses more important or persecuted the king's servants. This means that those who refuse the salvation of God and oppose the servants who preach the gospel receive judgment.

After that, the king had both bad and good brought in, whomever his servants met.

"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Matthew 22:10).

The invitation of salvation is open to every sinner, regardless of a person's deeds or qualifications. But coming into the wedding hall was not by itself enough. The man who had not put on a wedding garment was driven out into the outer darkness.

The wedding garment here is not clothing one prepares with his own good deeds or religious zeal. It is the robe of God's righteousness put on by the person who acknowledges that he is a sinner before God and receives the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus received his sins transferred onto Himself through the baptism

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He received from John, was judged for those sins on the cross, and rose again.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Therefore no one can enter heaven by the mere fact of attending a church or having heard the invitation of the gospel; one must cast away his own righteousness and believe the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection, and so put on the robe of righteousness.

[Question] 3. Matthew 22:1–14. How does this parable of the wedding feast differ from the parable of the great supper in Luke 14:16–24 in its setting, its characters, and its ending?

The two parables hold in common the lesson that the people who first received God's invitation refuse it, and other people come into the feast instead. But there are clear differences in the setting in which Jesus spoke them and in the characters and the endings of the parables.

First, the settings in which the parables were spoken differ. Jesus spoke the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew while He was rebuking the unbelief of the chief priests and the Pharisees in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus spoke the parable of the great supper in Luke when He was eating food in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath. When one of those who ate with Him said that blessed is the one who eats bread in the kingdom of God, Jesus answered with this parable.

Second, the person who gives the feast and the character of the feast differ. In Matthew, a king gives a wedding feast for his own son. The king represents God the Father, and the king's son

represents Jesus Christ. In Luke, a certain man gives a great supper and invites many people. The setting of a king or of a son's wedding does not appear.

Third, the ways in which the people who were invited first refused differ. In Matthew, the people paid no attention to the invitation and went to their own farm and their own business, and the rest seized the servants the king had sent, treated them spitefully, and killed them. In Luke, the people all alike begged off from attending the supper, giving as their reasons that one had bought a field, another had bought five yoke of oxen, and another had married a wife. The people in Luke did not harm the servant, but they put the possessions and the livelihood and the fleshly affairs of the world before the invitation to the supper.

Fourth, the range of the people who were invited afterward differs. In Matthew, the servants went out to the crossroads and brought in both bad and good, whomever they met. In Luke, they first brought in the poor and the maimed and the blind and the lame from the streets and lanes of the city. When there was still room, the master had them go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, and so filled his house. This shows the invitation of the gospel being delivered to the people who have nothing to put forward humanly, and who are poor in spirit and seek the grace of God.

Fifth, the endings and the pictures of judgment differ. In Matthew, the king sends his armies, destroys those who killed his servants, and burns up their city. Moreover, even a man who has come into the feast, if he has not put on a wedding garment, is bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness. The parable ends with the word that many are called but few are chosen. In Luke there is no scene of armies judging a city or of a man without a wedding garment being driven out. It ends only with the declaration that none of the people who were first

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invited and refused shall taste the master's supper.

Therefore the parable in Matthew warns not only against the sin of refusing God's invitation but also against the unbelief that comes into the feast and yet does not put on the garment of salvation God has prepared. This garment is the robe of God's righteousness, which is put on by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The parable in Luke emphasizes the foolishness of refusing God's invitation with one's heart taken captive by the affairs of the world, and the fact that the invitation of the gospel is widened to the people who are poor in spirit and need the grace of God.

[Question] 4. Matthew 22:2. What does the wedding feast that the king gave for his son represent spiritually?

The wedding feast spiritually symbolizes the feast of the salvation and eternal life of heaven, which God has prepared through His Son Jesus Christ.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son" (Matthew 22:2).

The king represents God the Father, and the king's son represents Jesus Christ. To participate in the feast means that a sinner receives the remission of sin by believing the salvation that Jesus accomplished by receiving sin transferred onto Himself through the baptism He received from John, being judged on the cross, and rising again, and that he enters heaven united with Jesus Christ.

Therefore the wedding feast does not mean simply attending a church or leading a religious life. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the

Spirit and has put on the robe of God's righteousness enjoys eternal life and blessing together with Jesus Christ.

[Question] 5. Matthew 22:3, 5. What do the actions of the people who were invited and yet did not come represent?

The actions of the people who refused the invitation symbolize the unbelief of man, who does not believe but refuses the invitation of salvation that God has given through Jesus Christ.

"And sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come" (Matthew 22:3).

That the people who were invited were not willing to come shows the attitude of counting one's own thoughts and one's own life more important than the salvation of God and not accepting the gospel.

"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business" (Matthew 22:5).

That they left for their farm and their business symbolizes ignoring the salvation of the soul and the invitation of heaven with one's heart taken captive by the affairs and the riches of the world.

"And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them" (Matthew 22:6).

That they treated the servants spitefully and killed them represents persecuting the prophets and the preachers of the gospel who delivered the word of God, and opposing the word of salvation that they preached.

Therefore the actions of these people symbolize the unbelief that treats the gospel of the water and the Spirit with indifference

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or turns away from it because of the affairs of the world, and that goes further and opposes those who preach the gospel. Though God has prepared all of salvation, to refuse that invitation is the sin of rejecting God and His Son.

[Question] 6. Matthew 22:4. What kind of meal does "*dinner*" refer to?

"*dinner*" means the meal eaten in the daytime, that is, the midday meal. In this text it means the feast table that the king prepared abundantly for the wedding feast of his son.

"*Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding"'" (Matthew 22:4).*

That the king killed his oxen and fatted cattle and prepared everything shows that what was needed for the feast was completely furnished. Therefore the people who were invited had nothing to prepare separately; they had only to come to the feast and participate in it.

[Question] 7. Matthew 22:6, 7. What judgment came upon the people who refused the king's invitation and harmed his servants?

Against the people who refused the invitation and killed his servants, the king sent his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

"*But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up*

their city" (Matthew 22:7).

God righteously judges those who do not stop at refusing the invitation of salvation but go on to persecute and kill the servants who deliver His word. The person who refuses and opposes to the end the salvation God has prepared through Jesus Christ receives at last the judgment of destruction.

[Question] 8. Matthew 22:8–10. Who were the people the king newly invited to come to the wedding feast?

The king judged that the people who had been invited first were not worthy, and commanded his servants to go out to the crossroads and invite to the wedding feast everyone they met. The servants brought in all, without distinguishing bad from good.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Matthew 22:8–10).

The invitation of God's salvation has been given to all people, regardless of man's good deeds or social position. Whoever acknowledges that he is a sinner and believes the gospel of the salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ can participate in the feast of heaven.

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[Question] 9. Matthew 22:11. Whom does the man who came into the wedding feast without a wedding garment symbolize?

"A man there who did not have on a wedding garment" symbolizes the person who has outwardly responded to God's invitation and come inside the church, but in whose heart sin remains as it is because he does not believe the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment" (Matthew 22:11).

This man was in the wedding hall, but he had not put on the garment the king required. This means that no one can enter heaven merely by saying that he believes in Jesus or by leading a religious life.

The wedding garment is not clothing prepared with one's own good deeds or one's own righteousness; it is the robe of God's righteousness put on by the person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus received all sins transferred onto Himself through the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the cross, and then rose again.

Therefore the man without a wedding garment is the person who has his own righteousness and religious deeds but has not received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, a person who has not been born again.

[Question] 10. Matthew 22:14. What does the word *"Many are called, but few are chosen"* mean?

The invitation to God's salvation is given to many people,

but the people who accept that invitation truly, receive the remission of sin, and put on the robe of righteousness are few.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Those who are *"called"* are all the people who have heard the gospel and received the invitation to believe in Jesus. But merely attending a church or saying that one believes in Jesus does not make one a chosen person.

Those who are *"chosen"* are the people who do not put forward their own good deeds and their own righteousness, but acknowledge that they are people who cannot but be judged because of sin. And they are the people who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus received all their sins transferred onto Himself through the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the cross, and then rose again from death. These are the people who have put on the robe of God's righteousness.

Therefore this word does not mean that God saves some people and casts away others without any reason. The invitation of salvation has been given to all, but only the person who casts away his own righteousness and accepts by faith the salvation God has prepared, and so puts on the robe of righteousness, participates in the feast of heaven.

[Question] 11. Matthew 22:15–22. Explain the political and religious background of the dispute over the payment of taxes.

The question about the payment of taxes was a political and religious trap that the Pharisees made in order to find a pretext for accusing Jesus in His words.

"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might

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entangle Him in His talk" (Matthew 22:15).

At that time the Jews were under the rule of Rome, and the tax paid to Caesar was a tax in the nature of a poll tax, which showed that they were subject to Rome. For the tax the denarius, engraved with the image of the Roman emperor, was used.

The Pharisees sent their own disciples together with the Herodians. The Pharisees were conscious of the position of the Jews, who bore ill will toward the rule and the taxes of Rome, and the Herodians were people who supported Rome and the regime of Herod.

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17).

If Jesus said to pay the tax, He could be blamed by the Jewish people as a man who acknowledged the rule of Rome; and if He said not to pay it, He could be accused on the charge of inciting rebellion against the Roman government. It was therefore a question meant to bring Him into a difficulty whichever way He answered.

But Jesus had them confirm the image and the inscription engraved on the denarius, and then spoke as follows.

"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

In this way He taught the principle that while fulfilling one's just responsibility toward the state of this world, man's life and heart and worship must be given to God, and so He escaped their trap.

[Question] 12. Matthew 22:15–17. With what purpose did the Pharisees and the Herodians ask Jesus about the payment of taxes?

The Pharisees and the Herodians spoke politely to Jesus not

because they respected Him sincerely, but with the intent of loosening His guard with flattery, drawing out an answer on the question of taxes, and gaining a ground for accusing Him.

"Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men" (Matthew 22:16).

After praising Jesus as One who speaks truly without fearing men, they immediately asked as follows.

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17).

If Jesus said to pay the tax, they meant to make Him incur the ill will of the Jewish people; and if He said not to pay it, they meant to accuse Him as a man who rebelled against Rome. Therefore their polite words were not an expression of respect but a hypocritical flattery meant to entangle Jesus in a snare of words.

[Question] 13. Matthew 22:17. Whom does *"Caesar"* refer to?

"Caesar" is a word that originally came from the name of Julius Caesar, and afterward it became the official title that refers to the Roman emperor.

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17).

The Caesar at the time of this event was Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire. Therefore "paying taxes to Caesar" meant paying taxes to the Roman emperor and the government that ruled over the Jews.

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[Question] 14. Matthew 22:18–22. In what way did Jesus answer the question about the payment of taxes?

Jesus first knew the evil intent hidden in their question and rebuked them as hypocrites. Then He had them bring a denarius, the coin used for the tax, and asked whose image and inscription were engraved on that coin.

"But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?'" (Matthew 22:18–20).

Jesus did not simply answer, "Pay the tax," or "Do not pay it." He had them present as evidence the Roman money they were actually using, and made them acknowledge for themselves that the image and the inscription of Caesar were engraved on the coin. Through this He exposed their trap and prepared to teach the right principle of the payment of taxes.

[Question] 15. Matthew 22:19, 20. What did the money used in paying taxes at that time look like?

The money used in paying the tax at that time was the denarius, a silver coin of Rome.

"'Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius" (Matthew 22:19).

The most important feature in the text is that the image and the inscription of Caesar were engraved on the coin.

"And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?'" (Matthew 22:20).

The text does not record exactly which coin it was, but it is

generally taken to be the silver coin of Tiberius, who was the emperor at that time. On the front were engraved the profile of the emperor Tiberius wearing a laurel wreath and the emperor's title in Latin, and on the back was the figure of a woman seated on a chair.

It was, therefore, in the shape of a round silver coin engraved with the face of the Roman emperor and an inscription that displayed his authority.

[Question] 16. Matthew 22:21. *"to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"*—what is the meaning of Jesus' answer?

Jesus said to give back to Caesar the money on which Caesar's image was engraved, and to give to God what belongs to God.

"They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'" (Matthew 22:21).

The word *"to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"* means that a person who lives under the rule of a state must fulfill his social responsibilities, such as paying just taxes.

The word *"to God the things that are God's"* means that man's life and heart and worship belong to God, and that we must therefore believe in God, serve Him, and obey His will. On the coin there is the image of Caesar, but man was made after the image of God, and therefore man must give his life to God.

Therefore this word teaches that we must fulfill both our responsibility toward the state and our duty toward God, but that God is the ultimate sovereign and the ultimate object of obedience. When the demand of the state collides with the will

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of God, obedience to God comes first.

[Question] 17. Matthew 22:22. How did the people react when they heard Jesus' answer concerning the payment of taxes?

The people who heard Jesus' wise answer marveled, and, unable to find any further word to refute or accuse Him, they left Jesus and went away.

"When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way" (Matthew 22:22).

They had tried to entangle Jesus in a snare of words, but when Jesus made plain together the responsibility toward the state and the duty toward God, they could not accomplish their plan.

[Question] 18. Matthew 22:23. From what background were the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection?

The Sadducees were a sect of Judaism in Jesus' day, made up chiefly of the priestly class and wealthy aristocrats. They exercised great influence in the office of the high priest and in the Sanhedrin council, and they had much interest not only in religious matters but also in political power.

Their most outstanding characteristic was that they did not acknowledge the resurrection of the dead.

"The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him" (Matthew 22:23).

The Acts of the Apostles explains their belief as follows.

"For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8).

The Sadducees valued the written law and did not acknowledge the oral tradition of the Pharisees, and they denied the resurrection and the existence of angels and spirits. Because they did not believe in the resurrection, they used the story of the marriage of seven brothers and one woman and questioned Jesus in order to make the faith of the resurrection look contradictory.

[Question] 19. Matthew 22:24–28. What was the core of what the Sadducees asked concerning the resurrection?

The point of the Sadducees' question was this: if one woman had married seven brothers in turn, who all died without a child, whose wife would that woman become when people rise again?

They asked on the basis of the regulation of levirate marriage given through Moses.

"If a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother" (Matthew 22:24).

Since all seven brothers died without an heir and at the last the woman also died, they asked as follows.

"Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her" (Matthew 22:28).

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, presupposed through this question that the marriage relationship of this world continues as it is even after the resurrection, and they tried to make the faith of the resurrection into something contradictory and ridiculous.

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[Question] 20. Matthew 22:29–32. What did Jesus answer to the Sadducees' question about the resurrection?

Jesus rebuked the Sadducees, saying that they misunderstood the resurrection because they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God'" (Matthew 22:29).

First, He said that the life after the resurrection is not the same as the life of this world. In the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage but live in a state like the angels of heaven, and therefore the very question of whose wife she would become among the seven brothers came out of a wrong premise.

"In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

Second, Jesus proved the resurrection by bringing forward the fact that God had said that He Himself is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

"Have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:31–32).

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob died in the flesh, but before God they are alive, and God is the Almighty, who can make them live again. Therefore the life after the resurrection is not a life that repeats the present marriage relationship as it is, and since God is the God of the living, who makes the dead live, the resurrection certainly exists.

[Question] 21. Matthew 22:30. How does the word describe the state of people when they rise again?

"In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

After people rise again, they do not marry or get married as they do in this world. In the world of the resurrection the marriage relationship for bearing descendants is not needed, because people come into the state of living forever without dying again.

That they are "like the angels" does not mean that a person becomes an angel; it means that they are like the angels in the point that they do not marry and are not under the dominion of death. In particular, the person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit will rise again with a glorious body on the last day and live forever with God. Therefore the resurrection is not repeating the present life of the flesh as it is, but entering a new and eternal state of life by the power of God.

[Question] 22. Matthew 22:31–33. How did Jesus speak of Exodus 3:6 in relation to the resurrection?

Jesus proved the resurrection of the dead by bringing forward the fact that in Exodus 3:6 God spoke in the present tense, saying that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

"I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6).

When God spoke this word to Moses, Abraham and Isaac

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and Jacob had already died in the flesh. Nevertheless God did not say, "I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; even now He said, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*

Jesus interpreted this as follows.

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32).

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob died in the flesh, but their relationship with God did not end; they are alive before God and will in the days to come put on the resurrection of the body. Therefore God is not the God of those who have vanished by death, but the God of the living, who makes the people who believe live again.

[Question] 23. Matthew 22:34, 35. Explain what kind of person the lawyer was who asked a question in order to test Jesus.

"A lawyer" means an expert in the law, who professionally studied and interpreted the law of Moses and taught it to the people. He played a role similar to that of a scribe, and he can be seen as a man who belonged to the company of the Pharisees.

"But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying" (Matthew 22:34–35).

This lawyer did not ask in order to learn the word of God sincerely; he asked in order to test Jesus and to find a problem in Jesus' answer. He asked which commandment among the many commandments was the greatest, meaning to draw Jesus into a dispute.

[Question] 24. Matthew 22:36. What did the question of which commandment in the law is the greatest mean in Jewish society?

In Jewish society the dispute over the "great commandment" was a dispute that asked which commandment is the most important among the many laws, and what the central principle is that leads all the other commandments. The scholars of the law of that time even discussed the importance of the commandments, dividing them into the heavy and the light.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36).

The lawyer asked with the intent of making Jesus choose one commandment, so as to blame Him for making light of the other commandments or to make Him support a particular interpretation of the law. This question was therefore meant to test Jesus' knowledge of the law and His authority of interpretation.

Jesus did not pick out one regulation only and lower the other commandments. He answered that loving God and loving one's neighbor are the center that fulfills all the words of the Law and the Prophets. That is, the core of the law is not a ranking of formal regulations but love.

[Question] 25. Matthew 22:37, 38. Explain the first commandment that Jesus spoke of.

The greatest and first commandment that Jesus spoke of is to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind.

"Jesus said to him, '"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

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This is the first and great commandment'" (Matthew 22:37–38).

This means counting God most precious and serving Him not with a part of one's heart only, but with the whole of one's thought and will and life.

[Question] 26. Matthew 22:39. What is the content of the second commandment that Jesus went on to speak?

The second commandment is to love one's neighbor as one's own body.

"And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:39).

This means looking after the circumstances of other people and treating them with love, just as one cares for and cherishes one's own self. Loving one's neighbor is an important practice in which the faith of loving God appears in one's life.

[Question] 27. Matthew 22:40. What does the word *"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets"* mean?

The two commandments Jesus spoke of are not new commandments that abolish the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament; they are a summary of the content and the spirit of the Ten Commandments in two.

"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

The first part of the Ten Commandments is the words that we should have no other gods besides God, should not make

idols, should not take the name of God in vain, and should keep the Sabbath day holy. This is summed up in the first commandment, to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind.

The rest of the Ten Commandments are the words to honor one's father and mother and the words that forbid murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, and covetousness. This is summed up in the second commandment, to love one's neighbor as one's own body.

Therefore loving God is the central principle that forms the first part of the Ten Commandments, and loving one's neighbor is the central principle that forms the latter part. True love does not abolish the commandments but makes their meaning rightly fulfilled.

[Question] 28. Matthew 22:41–46. What was the purpose for which Jesus asked about the relationship between the Christ and David?

Jesus' intent in raising the question of the Son of David was to make the Pharisees realize their error, in that they were thinking of the Christ merely as a human king who would be born of the lineage of David.

"'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David'" (Matthew 22:42).

The answer that the Christ comes in the flesh as the Son of David was not wrong. But that alone could not wholly explain the identity of the Christ. Jesus brought forward the word in which David, receiving the moving of the Holy Spirit, called the Christ his own *"Lord."*

"How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:

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‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’?” (Matthew 22:43–44).

If He were only a descendant of David, David could not have called Him his own Lord. The Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David, but He is originally the Son of God, who is higher than David, and He is God.

Therefore the Christ is not a merely human king but God, who put on the body of man and came into the world, and the Savior of mankind, and Jesus’ question lays bare the incomplete view of the Messiah held by the Pharisees. At the same time He silenced with His word those who were testing Him, and showed the fact that the authority of Jesus is higher than theirs.

[Question] 29. Matthew 22:45. What did Jesus ask the Pharisees concerning the Christ?

The Pharisees answered that the Christ is the Son of David. Then Jesus asked how the Christ could be merely the Son of David, if David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called Him his own Lord.

“If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” (Matthew 22:45).

Jesus’ question was meant to make plain that although the Christ came in the flesh through the lineage of David, He is not a mere man or no more than a descendant of David. Jesus Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David, and at the same time He is the God whom David confessed as Lord.

Therefore, through this question Jesus laid bare the fact that the Pharisees knew only the fleshly genealogy of the Christ and did not realize the fact that the Christ is God, who came in the body of a man.

[Question] 30. Matthew 22:44. What does Psalm 110:1, quoted here, mean?

Psalm 110:1 is the word that prophesies that God the Father will give the highest authority and glory to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and will completely subdue all His enemies.

"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1).

Here *"The LORD"* points to God the Father, and the One whom David called *"my Lord"* points to the Christ who was to come. David knew that the Christ would be born as his own descendant, but, receiving the moving of the Holy Spirit, he confessed Him as his own Lord. The Christ is in the flesh the Son of David, but He is originally the Son of God, who is higher than David, and He is God.

According to the word *"Sit at My right hand"* Jesus, having accomplished the work of salvation, sits in the seat of the authority and the glory of God and rules over all things.

According to the word that He will make His enemies His footstool, all the forces that oppose the Christ, including sin and death and Satan, will at last be completely subdued.

Therefore Psalm 110:1 is the word that testifies that Jesus Christ, who was to come as the Son of David, is not a mere man but the Lord of David, and the Messiah, who overcomes all His enemies by the authority of God and rules forever.

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[Question] 31. Matthew 22:42, 46. What was the answer of the Pharisees to Jesus' question, and what was the final result?

When Jesus asked whose son the Christ is, the Pharisees answered, *"The Son of David"*.

"'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David'" (Matthew 22:42).

Their answer was right in the point that the Christ comes in the flesh through the lineage of David. But they thought of the Christ only as a descendant of David, and they did not know the reason that David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ his own Lord. Jesus Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David, but He is originally God, who exists before David, and He is the Lord of David.

When Jesus asked again, *"If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"* the Pharisees could not answer a word. They prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures, but they did not wholly realize the divinity and the incarnation of the Christ, to which the Scriptures bear witness.

"And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore" (Matthew 22:46).

In the end the Pharisees, unable to find a word with which to refute Jesus' question, kept silent, and from that day on no one dared to question Jesus in order to test Him. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 1

Put on by faith the robe of salvation that the Lord has given

< Matthew 22:1-14 >

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was

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speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who arranged a wedding feast

The word today explains to us with a very easy parable what the kingdom of God is and what kind of people enter that kingdom. He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son" (Matthew 22:2).*

A certain king gives his son in marriage. What is the most important thing in a marriage? It is that a man and a woman who lived apart from each other become one household by being married. It is becoming one family on the side of the bridegroom. The man leaves his parents and the woman also leaves her own family and comes and becomes one household with him—this is marriage.

So when a king gives his son in marriage and seeks to make his daughter-in-law a member of his own household, how could that be a simple matter? Would there not be courtesy and rules and regulations? There has to be some standard that my daughter-in-law must at least meet.

Here the king is God the Father, His son is Jesus, and those who are married to that son are you and I. He is explaining it in this way with a parable.

So he said to bring the people in, that he might give his son in marriage. But one went to his own farm and another went to his own business, and they all did not come. He sent his servants again, and this time they seized those servants and treated them

spitefully and killed them. So the king was furious and sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.

And He said again, *"Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding" (Matthew 22:9).* It means that whoever wants to take part in the wedding feast of the king's son may come. So the servants went out into the roads and brought in all whom they met, both bad and good, and the wedding hall was full of guests.

Put on the wedding garment that the king has prepared

But when the king came in to see the guests, something happened. *"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 22:11–13).* Though he had a mouth, he could not speak, and while he hesitated he was driven out in that way.

We must learn something very important from this parable. It is that we are married to the king's son. Our believing in the Lord is being married to the king's son. He said to invite to that wedding both bad and good. But since He said, *"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)* the one who has not put on the wedding garment is driven out, and the one who has put it on goes in.

Then who makes that wedding garment? Does the one who is invited prepare it and go, or does the king prepare wedding

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garments inside the palace and put them on those who come in? At a wedding ceremony that has proper form, the side that gives the feast prepares the garments. They give them out to those who come in, so that they change into the wedding garment and enter and take part in that wedding.

The God in whom we believe is that king, and He has invited everyone, both bad and good, to the place where they are married to His Son, and He has given out the wedding garment. So we have only to receive that garment and put it on and go in and be married to the King's Son. It is a very simple thing.

Even though we all alike say that we believe in Jesus, what matters is whether or not we put on the garment that the king has prepared. This wedding garment is the very salvation with which He saved us. It is the salvation He has given us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must give thanks and by faith receive and put on the garment He has made for us, and be married to the King's Son.

If we make one ourselves and put it on and go, we are all turned away. It is because the very standard of living is different beyond comparison. If we try to buy one suit of clothes in our own way and go in, we cannot enter. If it is so even at a ceremony of this earth, how much more the kingdom of God?

The wedding garment can be put on only by faith

God sent His Son in order to have us married to His Son. And He had Him baptized by John, and so passed our sin onto that Son, and had Him bear that sin of the world and be nailed to the cross and shed His blood and die, and rise again from death. In this way He made us altogether clean, and made us perfectly the bride of the Son of God, lacking nothing at all even to live

together with the King of the kingdom of God, and He has let us come in by faith and live.

This wedding garment can be put on only by faith. Only by faith. It cannot be done with anything else. The Bible says that it cannot be done with being strong-willed, or being good, or doing something well.

The prophet Isaiah sang in this way: *"For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).* The garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness are not something we have made; they are what He has put on us.

So the Lord said that many are called but few are chosen. Whom does He choose? It is the one who purely believes and purely receives the wedding garment that God has made, and puts on that garment. It is believing this: I cannot take part in this precious wedding ceremony in such a shabby state as this; when I go in wearing this garment, which can cover all my lack and make me new, I can be wholly covered; and so I can become a new man. Only those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and go in like this enter the kingdom of heaven and become the bride of Jesus Christ.

We must go in by faith. What my circumstances are, what my sin is, whether I am wicked or whether I am good—all this is of no use. All such things belong to the earth. To live together with Him who is in heaven, we must be without sin. We must put on the robe of salvation that He has given.

In the Book of Revelation also it is written in this way: *"The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright" (Revelation 19:7–8).* That fine linen also is not something we made and put on; it was granted to us to put it on.

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It says, *"Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9).*

Becoming the bride of Jesus Christ

In the kingdom of God we must keep the law of God, we must believe according to the law of salvation that God has appointed, and we can enter only when we put on by faith that robe of salvation that God has appointed. Nothing else works. Being handsome on this earth, doing work well, having a good background—none of it is of any use.

The power of this earth also does not last forever. Even those who are said to be in high places shine for a moment and pass away. Though a man has position and power, he does not enter the kingdom of God with them. We put on by faith that robe of salvation that the King has prepared in order to bless us, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and so we enter the kingdom of God. And we become the bride of Jesus Christ.

When we become the bride of Jesus Christ, we enjoy together all the glory that our Bridegroom enjoys. This is the truth of which the Bible speaks. Nothing else is needed. He said to bring in both bad and good, and the one who has not put on the wedding garment is driven out, while the one who has put it on sits there. Even a wicked man, if he has put on the wedding garment, lives there.

So there is no need to argue over whether I am wicked or good. Not acknowledging God—that is wickedness. God has prepared for us the robe of salvation, and the one who does not receive it by faith is the wicked man. To argue over that garment, whether it pleases us or not, is wickedness. It is thanks enough that He saves us from sin, and yet He makes us the bride of Jesus

Christ and lets us enjoy that glory together with Him—how overwhelming a thing that is! It is truly a matter for boundless gratitude.

The bride upholds the will of the bridegroom

Again, if He suffered many things in order to save us, should we not also, believing in Him, suffer together with Him in order that other people may be saved? Is everything finished once we have only believed the gospel and gone to heaven? That is not upholding the will of our own Bridegroom. It is not upholding the will of the King. We must go on doing the work that pleases Him until we depart.

If someone says that serving God on this earth is the thing he hates most, that is a wicked heart and it is standing against God. That is a different matter from struggling because of one's own lack. If there is such a heart, one must turn from it.

Though we have much wickedness and much lack, God is not like us. We must acknowledge Him and acknowledge our lack, and receive by faith that robe of salvation that God has prepared for us, and also receive by faith the will of God, and while we live for a little while, live according to His will and live receiving His help and His blessing, and also suffer for Him, and so meet the Lord. And we will enjoy glory together with the Lord. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 2

Can you prepare the wedding garment with which you may be married to Jesus Christ?

< Matthew 22:1-14 >

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on

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a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

The wedding garment that the King requires

He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son" (Matthew 22:2)*. It is the word that the one who enters the kingdom of heaven can enter only by being married to Jesus Christ.

At the first the king announced the marriage of his son and invited the people. He killed oxen and killed fatted cattle and set out food abundantly and then invited them. But those who were invited did not respond, saying that they had to go and work in the field, or that they had to go and do business. When the king invited them again, this time they seized the servants the king had sent and treated them spitefully and killed them. So the king was furious and sent out his armies and destroyed them.

And He said again, *"The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Matthew 22:8–10)*.

The king was going about to see the guests seated at the wedding feast, and a certain man was sitting there without a wedding garment. *"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So*

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he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:11–14).

The point here is that He counted the wedding garment important. However much a man had been invited and had taken part in the wedding feast, if he had not put on the garment fitting for the place where the king's son was married, he was driven out. It means that if you have been invited to the marriage of the king's son, you are to attend wearing the garment fitting for that place. Only then, it says, can you attend that ceremony.

In conclusion, it means that if we would be married to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we must properly prepare the wedding garment and be qualified. Then how can we prepare the wedding garment with which we may be married to Jesus Christ, the Son of the King?

There is a wedding garment that the King requires. It is the robe of righteousness that God has made for us. It means that we must take part wearing the garment that is put on the one who has received the remission of sin, the garment fitting for the one who has received the blessing of becoming a child of God, that is, the garment of the saved. It is the word that we can enter the kingdom of heaven only when we put on, not a wedding garment made on this earth, but the wedding garment that God has made, the garment of a saved heart.

"For I did not come to call the righteous"

Then how can we meet the Lord and receive salvation?

Countless people on this earth receive the invitation to believe in Jesus. But how can we receive that salvation by which we are married to Jesus Christ and enter the kingdom of heaven? For that, we must know the salvation that the Son of the King came to this earth and brought to us.

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). God the Father sent His Son in order to save sinners, and what God wants from us sinners is not sacrifice.

It means that He does not want us to say, 'God, receive my material things, receive my praise, receive my devotion.' It is not offering my body to serve, nor is it offering worship and sacrifice. God wants the one who seeks mercy.

It means that the Lord came to this earth for those who ask Him to have pity on them—those who say that they were born as descendants of a sinner and commit sin day by day and so cannot but go to hell, and ask Him to have pity on them; those who say that by the law of God they have neither served God nor been kind to people but have done evil, and that by the sin they have committed they deserve to go to hell and more, and who ask Him to have pity on such as they are and save them.

Many people were invited to the wedding feast, but the one who boasts that he is fine is not taken to heaven by the Lord. Just as all people became sinners through the one man Adam's sinning, all the descendants of Adam are sinners. They are those who are born sinners and commit sin and grow old and die and go to hell.

But the Lord came for those who, as they live, know their own condition and acknowledge that they are ones who will go to hell, and who, when Jesus Christ came, said, "That One has come to save me; have pity on me and save me," and set their

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hearts on how the Lord has saved them.

Ordinary people, when they are invited and come to church, say that they believe in Jesus as Savior, and from then on they put forward their own rightness. They put forward their own things, saying that they can give much in offerings and can serve. But the Bible says that the man who had not prepared the wedding garment was driven out. The one who was not qualified was driven out.

He chooses the one who seeks mercy

Then who is the person God chooses? It is the person who seeks the mercy of God. It means that He wants the one who asks for help, saying, "I am a person who can never go to heaven; I want to believe in You, who receive such a one as I am and remove my sin; I want to be clothed with the salvation God has given."

Let us look at Romans chapter 9. *"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'" (Romans 9:10–13).*

If there were ten people and He chose some and did not choose others, how wronged would those who were not chosen feel? They would say, "Why did You choose that one and not choose me?" But here comes out the ground on which God chooses someone. It is *"not of works but of Him who calls" (Romans 9:11).*

There were Esau and Jacob, and Esau was strong while Jacob

was weak and inferior in many respects humanly speaking. Esau was the elder brother and Jacob the younger. And yet God appointed it while they were in their mother's womb. Why did He call Jacob? It is because God calls the one on whom He will have pity and to whom He will give salvation.

He does not call the person who is fine and strong and able and clever in the world. He calls the person who is lacking and weak and distressed because of the sin of his own heart, the person who says that because of his sin he deserves to go to hell ten times over. He said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. God calls such people and gives them salvation and takes them to heaven and has them married to His Son and live forever.

He said, *"When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'" (Matthew 9:12)*. A physician is needed by the sick. He did not come to call the person who boasts that he lives righteously without committing sin, like a saint, and to give him a reward; He came to call sinners and make them righteous, to call the sick and heal them, to call those who cannot but go to hell and give them the remission of sin.

Even now countless people receive the invitation of God and attend church, but there are those who go on believing only doctrines and putting forward their offices. Yet among them there are people who are distressed because of their own sin. Those who say, "It seems I have not been chosen; I am not qualified to go to heaven"; those who are poor in spirit and whose hearts are not filled with the things of the world; those who say that neither material things nor the opposite sex nor honor nor power can be their all; those who say that they truly want to go to the kingdom of God and to receive salvation from God—such people receive salvation from God.

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God calls such people and lets them hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe it, and so He saves them. Because they had not put on the wedding garment, so many people were invited and yet were cast away; and the one who had put on the wedding garment was married to the son.

What is the wedding garment of faith?

Then what is that wedding garment? It is the baptism Jesus received from John when He came to this earth, and His death on the cross. It is believing the fact that in order to save such a one as I am, He came to this earth and was baptized by John the Baptist and so received my sin transferred onto Himself and bore it, and on the cross received in my place the judgment for my sin and was nailed there and died and rose again. God has chosen such a person.

Many are the people who have been invited, but among them there are those whom God has chosen. It is the person who says, "I am a sinner; I am one who has not lived by the law of God, but have pity on me and send me to heaven." On such a person the Lord has pity, and when He says, "I came to this earth for you, and for you I was baptized by John and received your sin transferred onto Me, and for you I was nailed to the cross and died in your place and rose again and became your Savior—do you believe it?" he is the one who received it, saying, "Yes, I believe. You are truly my Savior and my God." He chose that person and had him married to His Son and made him attend the wedding feast of heaven and enjoy eternal blessedness.

It is the same with you and me. On this earth we try to do something well and so gain recognition from God, but by that we are not recognized. God does recognize our living faithfully

before Him after we are saved, but there are many people in the church today who, before they are saved, come into the church and serve and give offerings in order to display their own excellence.

Without having received the remission of sin in the heart, knowing only the cross and not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they believe that if they repent their sin disappears and that they will be sanctified when they die, and so they still have sin at the moment of death and go to hell.

God did not call such a person. He calls those whose hearts are distressed and pained because they truly cannot live according to the word of God, those who want to live according to the will of God, those who may be upright before people but who, when they come before God, do not know where to put themselves and are full of a sorry heart, and who only ask Him to have pity on them; and He leads them to His Son, and lets them know the baptism His Son received from John and the blood of the cross and His death and resurrection, and so washes all their sins clean and gives them faith and makes them a people of God. It was the will of God to have them thus put on the wedding garment of faith, put on the garment of holiness in which there is not one sin, and be married to Jesus Christ and enter the kingdom of heaven.

Someone may say, “If we were invited and went, would not any clothes do? Why does He treat us so because we did not put on a wedding garment?” But the one who has been invited to the marriage of the king’s son is now being married to the king’s son. That son is the Creator and the holy God without one sin and the Almighty—can a person who has sin be married to the Son of God who has not one sin? At the very least he must receive the remission of sin. Though his deeds are lacking, only the one who has received the remission of sin by faith is

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qualified. The kingdom of heaven is a place where only those without sin can enter.

The day I met the Lord through the Word

The person in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells can interpret this Bible. For the person in whose heart the Holy Spirit is not, it does not work however hard he tries. Before I was born again I had many commentaries. I was willing to go without food in order to have good books, and that greed of mine was great. But once I met the Lord through the Word, those books became useless things.

I always wondered about the word of Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, and one day, as I was reading, I realized it. It was then that He made me realize that the Lord was baptized by John and so received the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bore that sin and shed His blood on the cross and died and rose again. *"'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:15–17).*

I looked up the Greek text. "Houtōs dikaiosynēn" (οὕτως δικαιοσύνην)—it meant that it could not be done except in this way, that only by this method could all sin be removed, and that therefore Jesus was baptized by John and received the sin of the world transferred onto Himself and shed His blood on the cross and died and rose again. Then who is John the Baptist? He is the Elijah whom God said He would send in the Old Testament.

Jesus said, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14).*

When I read that word I could say nothing and sat just as I was for about thirty minutes. And a stillness came upon me, as though there were a great lake in my heart and one small pebble had fallen into it and gentle ripples were spreading out in circles.

Before I received the remission of sin my heart was always in a whirl. It was nothing but worry and anxiety and prayers of repentance—this is like this and that is like that, shall I do it this way or that way. After I believed in Jesus, when I could not live according to that word, my heart was too distressed. So I even prayed with fasting. Thinking that if I did it at home my wife would be anxious, I skipped three days of seminary and went up to a certain prayer house and fasted. For three days I wept and prayed, saying, "Lord, my heart is too distressed; Your word is such and such, but I have not lived accordingly; my sins are too many."

When I prayed aloud for three days without eating food and drinking only water, my whole body was exhausted. Even so, I could not feel that the sin was disappearing from my heart. Yet I was coming down thinking that, since I had done this much, the living God would surely understand.

On the way down there was a church, and I stopped in. I met the pastor and asked him, saying that I was a seminary student, and that because I could not live according to the word of God there was sin in my heart and I was distressed, and that I was coming down from praying with fasting, and yet it seemed the sin of my heart had not been washed away, and how, in a case like mine, the sin of the heart could be washed away.

That pastor said, "You are a seminary student and you do not even know that?" and told me to read 1 John chapter 1, verse 9. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our*

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sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He said, "Does it not say that if we confess our sins the Lord washes us clean? You went up and prayed, so have you not been washed clean?"

So I asked him, "Pastor, is this not different in word and different in meaning from praying a prayer of repentance? Are not the word 'repentance' and the word 'confession' different? Is not repentance knowing that the way one has been going is wrong and turning and coming back?" At that the pastor was greatly displeased. I said I was sorry, made my greeting, and came down.

Confession and repentance are different

Having been born again, I see that there is no one, even among those who have been born again, who does not commit sin. When we have committed sin, it is necessary to acknowledge it. Acknowledging that I have committed sin is confession. It says that if we confess, He is faithful; and the word "faithful" means true and trustworthy.

Our faithful Lord was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and so received our sin transferred onto Himself and bore it, and on the cross shed His blood in order to pay the wages of sin in our place, and with the price of that blood received the judgment for our sin, and died and rose again and saved us.

Since He has already removed all sin, He is saying that even the sins committed after we received the remission of sin have all been removed by Him, as we acknowledge them by confession, and that we should therefore not repeat the same sin but serve Him and live well. It is the word that through this He

has us confirm our hearts and so makes our hearts clean.

We must know the word of the Bible exactly. It is not right to say that we receive the remission of sin by praying a prayer of repentance with this word. This word is for those who have received the remission of sin; it is not that sin disappears because a person who has not received the remission of sin confesses.

Who is the one called before the King?

The God who cast a man out for the one thing that he had not put on a wedding garment is not a hard-hearted God. That is what happens if we have not received salvation; but through the Son whom God gave, through that righteous salvation by which He became our Savior by the baptism He received from John and the blood of the cross and His rising again from death, we have by faith become people without sin.

Because the Lord has removed our sin so that it is like white snow, we have by faith in that merit become people without sin. Such a person receives salvation from the Lord. But until we become so, are we not all people like Jacob? We are always lacking. Every man may think himself clever, but where is there a perfect man? He is only pretending to be perfect.

That is why the Lord said that those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. The person who has sin and will go to hell needs Jesus. He needs the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the cross.

Therefore the one who is called by God receives love and receives salvation. Who is called? A person like Jacob is called. Jacob even deceived his father. His mother Rebecca put goatskins on him, and he went before his father, whose eyes had grown dim, and pretended to be his brother Esau. And yet his

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father blessed him, saying, *"Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine" (Genesis 27:27–28),* and Jacob received all that blessing.

God blesses in that way. He blesses a person like Jacob, a person who longs for the blessing of God, a person who yearns for the salvation God gives.

Jesus came to this earth and was baptized by John and so received our sin transferred onto Himself and removed it all, and was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and paid the whole wages of our sin, and died and rose again and became our Savior. So we receive the remission of sin by faith. It is written of Jesus, *"who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (Romans 4:25)*. He died and came alive again in order to make us righteous.

Some theologian says that God chose some and did not choose others. That is a great contradiction. God, through Him who calls, looks at a sinner and looks at a lacking person and says, "I have pity on a person like you; by the baptism I received from John I received your sin transferred onto Me and bore it, and I was nailed to the cross and shed My blood and died and rose again and became your Savior," and so He calls that person in order to clothe him with the remission of sin. And He makes those who believe a people of God and has them married to His Son, so that they enter the kingdom of heaven and receive the blessing that the bride enjoys. This is the word of Matthew chapter 22.

Many Christians have been called but have not been chosen. God calls through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but there are many who do not respond to it and insist that it is enough to believe only the blood of the cross. Such a person does not

receive the remission of sin even though he believes in Jesus.

So how fortunate are we! There was a man who was driven out because he had not put on the wedding garment, but we have put on that garment. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is not something that is settled by knowing it only; we must believe it until it is planted in our hearts. If you believe this gospel that I preach in your heart and acknowledge it, that is the evidence that you have met the Lord. It is truly a wonderful thing. You and I have put on that wedding garment with which we may be married to Jesus Christ, and we enter the kingdom of heaven. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 3

Put on the robe of salvation that the King has prepared

< Matthew 22:1-14 >

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer

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darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.’”

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The king prepared good food for his son’s marriage and sent his servants to invite the people. Everything needed for the feast was already furnished. Those who were invited did not need to pay a price or add food in order to prepare the feast. They had only to accept the king’s invitation, enter the place he had prepared, and share in the joy.

This king represents God the Father, and his son represents Jesus Christ. God prepared the feast of salvation in order to make sinners the bride of His Son and have them live together in the eternal kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom that man has built by his labor but a kingdom that God has prepared by His grace. The remission of sin and eternal life and all the blessings of becoming children of God were also prepared completely on God’s side.

But those who were invited first were not willing to come. Though the king sent his servants again and let them know that everything was ready, they did not even pay attention. One went to his own farm and another left for his own business, and some treated the servants who had come to invite them spitefully and killed them. They did not refuse because the feast was lacking. They refused because they counted their own affairs and their own possessions more precious than the king’s invitation.

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The invitation of God, who has prepared everything

Tending a field and engaging in business are not wrong. A man ought to do faithfully the work entrusted to him. But if the affairs of the world come before the salvation of the soul, even a good thing becomes an idol. People put off hearing the gospel on the ground that they are busy, and they say that they will believe when their circumstances improve. But there is no end to the affairs of the world. Work in the field keeps coming, and the cares of business do not cease. If we keep putting off the invitation of the kingdom of God, before we know it our heart is wholly held captive by the world.

The gospel is not a hobby that a man chooses when he is at leisure. It is the invitation of God, by which a person under sin escapes eternal judgment and obtains life. A man does not know the day of his death, nor can he himself appoint the time when the Lord will come again. Therefore, when we hear the word of the gospel, we must open our hearts and receive it. We must not put off until tomorrow the invitation that sounds today.

Those who refused the invitation probably thought that their own fields and business were more real than the king's feast. They may have considered that grain comes out of the field they can see and money can be earned in business, while the king's promise is not something they can grasp in their hands at once. People today are similar. They think that money and a job are reality, and that heaven and judgment are a distant story. But the field and the business are entrusted to us for a little while, and when life ends we must leave them all behind. Rather, the eternal kingdom of God is the most certain reality.

When a man's heart is held captive by the world, he feels the invitation of the gospel as a burden. When he hears the word, he

is uncomfortable because he must look back on the faith and the life he has thought right until now. So he says that he has no time, or he makes the people inside the church his excuse. But the fundamental reason he refuses the invitation is not that there is a problem with the feast; it lies in the heart that wants to be the master of his own life. To come before God, we must acknowledge that even our time and our plans and our thoughts are what God has given.

That the king sent his servants again and again shows the longsuffering of God. God does not cast a man away at once because he refused once; He gives him opportunity to hear the word many times. Through family and neighbors, through books and sermons, through the hardships of the heart and the limits of life, He makes us think about the gospel. But His longsuffering does not mean that there is no judgment. If a man despises the invitation of grace to the end, in the end he meets the result of his own unbelief. Therefore now, while we can hear the gospel, is the time to receive grace.

Those who were first invited point to the people of Israel, who first received the word of God and the prophets. For a long time God sent His servants and made known to them the coming of the Messiah. But many of the religious leaders did not receive Jesus when He came, and rather persecuted the servants of God. Because they held on to their own tradition and their own righteousness, they refused the salvation God had prepared.

After judging those who refused the invitation, the king told his servants to go out to the crossroads and bring everyone they met. The servants invited all, without distinguishing bad from good. The gospel of God is not given only to a particular nation or social standing. It is preached to all people, without distinguishing between those who have learned much and those who have not, between those who are praised as moral and those

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who have committed great sins.

Before God, a man's good and evil cannot become the qualification for salvation. Though he receives praise as a good man in the world, if there is sin in his heart he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; and even a man who was pointed at as wicked in the world becomes righteous if he believes the remission of sin that God has given. All people are alike in this, that they were born under sin and cannot remove sin by themselves. Therefore all people need the same gospel and the same wedding garment.

The wedding garment that man cannot make

When many guests had come into the wedding hall, the king looked at them. Among them was a man who had not put on a wedding garment. When the king asked why he had not put on a wedding garment, he could say nothing. The king commanded that he be cast into the outer darkness. The mere fact of having come into the feast was not enough. He had to put on the garment the king had appointed.

This wedding garment is not the good deeds and religious merits that a man prepares by his own effort. The garment fitting for the king's feast is the garment that the king prepares and puts on his guests. The robe of salvation that covers the soul clean, so that a sinner may enter the kingdom of heaven, was also prepared by God. Man cannot weave this garment by his own deeds or buy it by paying a price. We must receive and put on by faith the salvation God has accomplished through His Son.

The garment of righteousness that man has made may look plausible before other people. A life in which one does not drink or smoke, does not do great harm to others, and serves diligently

is worthy of respect even in the world. But before the light of God, even the greed and hatred and lewdness and pride within the heart are all laid bare. That a man has restrained sin outwardly does not mean that the very source of his heart has become clean. God looks not at the outward appearance of a man but at the heart, and therefore no one can stand before Him with human righteousness.

Again, some people think that since they have not committed great sins, they need only make up the little that is lacking with prayers of repentance. This is like sewing up a small hole in an old garment. But what God requires is not a garment that is partly improved but a perfect wedding garment in which there is no sin at all. However much a man corrects the deeds that come out of human sinfulness, they do not become perfect righteousness. Therefore God Himself has clothed us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The fact that the king came in to check the wedding garments is also important. The guests of the feast did not decide who passed and who failed by looking at one another's clothes. The final judgment belonged to the king. People exalt as righteous the one who is outwardly devout, and they conclude that the one whose great fault has been exposed is a sinner without hope. But God looks at whether a man has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart and so put on the robe of righteousness. Our salvation must be confirmed not by the estimate of people but by the word of God.

Some people think of their long career of attending church as a wedding garment. Some make much service and offering, fasting and prayers of repentance, their robe of righteousness. But in the deeds of man there is always lack. Though he lived well yesterday, today he sins again, and even after repenting with his mouth he repeats the same sin. With imperfect deeds we

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cannot make the perfect wedding garment of heaven.

The man who had not put on a wedding garment had indeed come into the place of the feast. This shows the person who says that he believes in Jesus and stays inside the church and yet does not believe the remission of sin that God has given. If with his mouth he calls on the Lord but there is still sin in his heart, and he is afraid of being judged after death, he has not yet put on the robe of salvation. The wedding garment of heaven is the robe of righteousness in which all the sins of the heart have been washed away and made cleaner than white snow.

God invited both the good and the wicked, but He did not do away with the standard of the wedding garment. That He invited them by grace does not mean that He receives any kind of faith. We must believe the way of salvation that God has appointed. A man cannot go in wearing a garment made by his own thought and claim that it is the same as the king's wedding garment. The kingdom of God is a place one enters by the righteousness of God.

The robe of righteousness prepared with water and the Spirit

Then what is the robe of salvation that God has prepared? It is the perfect remission of sin that Jesus Christ accomplished with water and the Spirit. The Son of God put on the body of a man and came to this earth, and when He was thirty years old He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received onto His own body all the sins of mankind, from Adam to the last man of the world.

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands

on the head of the sacrificial offering and so passed his sin onto it. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, representing the people, laid his hands on the head of the live goat, and by that laying on of hands all the sins of the people of Israel were transferred onto the offering. In the same way, in the New Testament John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was the righteous work in which the sin of mankind went over to the Lamb of God.

Jesus went to the cross bearing the sin of the world. The blood of the cross is the evidence that Jesus, who had received sin transferred onto Himself, paid the wages of that sin in our place. The Lord died in our place and rose again in three days. The baptism of Jesus and the blood of the cross and the resurrection are not separate events. They are one salvation, in which He bore sin by the baptism, received the judgment of that sin by the blood, and gave new life to those who believe by the resurrection.

The water represents the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood represents His death on the cross, and the Spirit bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God and that this salvation is the truth. When a man believes with his heart this witness of the water and the blood and the Spirit, he receives the remission of all sin. This is the robe of salvation that the King has given freely to sinners.

We must not add our own labor to this wedding garment. If we attach our own patch of cloth to the King's garment, which is already complete, we rather damage that garment. If a man believes that, though Jesus has removed all sin, he must still wash away sin with the prayers of repentance he offers each day, it is the same as saying that the salvation of the Lord is not perfect. Prayers of repentance are needed for looking back on

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our conduct and turning from our faults, but they can never become a way of passing sin again and atoning for the sin the Lord has already borne.

True repentance begins with casting away one's own religious merits and believing the salvation God has accomplished. It is laying down the thought that I would go to heaven by living righteously, and receiving the word that Jesus has made me completely clean with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the cross. Though God has said that we have no sin, to insist according to one's own feeling that one is still a sinner is not humility but unbelief toward the witness of God.

If the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is left out, the meaning of the cross also cannot be wholly explained. It is because we cannot know for what sin the sinless Jesus was judged. Jesus did not die because of His own sin but because of the sin of the world, which He received transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John. Therefore the person who believes the baptism and the cross together knows clearly where our sin was moved and where the wages of that sin were paid.

The gospel of the water and the blood and the Spirit is not a teaching that makes a man comfortable in sin. Rather, it shows how fearful sin is. In order to remove our sin, the Son of God had to be baptized and to shed His blood and die. At the same time, this gospel gives the sinner a perfect freedom that he cannot obtain by his own effort. Because the judgment of sin ended upon Jesus, the one who believes pursues a righteous life not with fear but with thanksgiving.

The wedding garment that is put on by faith

It is of no use only to look at the wedding garment. Just as one must actually put on the garment set before him, the one who hears the gospel must believe with his heart. To know as knowledge that Jesus has removed the sin of the world, and to believe that one's own lifelong sin also is included in that sin, are two different things. When a man believes, "By the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist He bore even all my sins, past and present and future," he puts on the robe of salvation.

The robe of salvation is not a garment that fits only good people, nor a garment that cannot be put on the wicked. God said to bring in both bad and good. Even a man with many sins becomes completely clean if he believes the gospel, and even a man respected by others remains a sinner if he does not believe the gospel. The standard acknowledged in heaven is not a man's reputation but whether he has put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The person who has put on this wedding garment does not doubt his salvation even while he sees his own lack. When his flesh is weak and he makes mistakes, he acknowledges the fault and turns from it, but he does not think that the robe of salvation has been taken off because of it. It is because the robe of salvation was made not with our deeds but with the unchanging righteousness of Jesus. Upon the assurance of the remission of sin he receives the leading of the Word, is joined together with the church, and corrects his lacking conduct.

Therefore the believer must neither boast of the wedding garment because his deeds have improved, nor doubt the wedding garment because his deeds are lacking. Our boast is only the salvation that Jesus accomplished. The more deeply we know that grace, the more we are longsuffering toward the lack of others, and the more we ourselves seek to be corrected before

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the Word. It is not neglecting the flesh on the excuse of grace, but serving the Lord with greater thanksgiving because of grace.

On the other hand, the man who had not put on the wedding garment was speechless before the king. On the day of judgment no one can excuse his own circumstances and merits. God sent His Son, preached the gospel through His servants, and prepared even a wedding garment that can be put on freely. If a man nevertheless held on to his own righteousness and refused that garment, he has nothing else to say. The reason a man is not saved is not that God did not prepare, but that the man did not believe.

From being called to being chosen

Jesus said that many are called but few are chosen. God calls all people with the gospel. But the fact of having heard the call does not automatically guarantee salvation. The one who has believed and put on the robe of salvation according to the will that God prepared in Christ is the one who is chosen.

Being chosen does not mean that God sends some people to heaven without cause and casts others away without giving them any opportunity. God set His will to save sinners in Jesus Christ, and He revealed that will through the gospel. The one who believes this gospel becomes a child of God in Christ, and the one who does not believe remains a man who was invited and yet refused the feast.

The choosing of God cannot be thought of apart from Christ. God did not have man choose one among many ways of establishing his own righteousness; He made us holy and blameless only in Jesus Christ. Therefore the way to be chosen is to believe what Christ has done. The one who receives the

incarnation and the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of Jesus as his own salvation is the one who has come into the will of God.

Faith does not stop at vaguely acknowledging that God exists. We must believe according to the Word how God has saved us. If a man acknowledges the existence of the king and yet refuses the wedding garment the king gives, he cannot remain at the feast. In the same way, if a man calls Jesus the Son of God and yet does not believe the fact that by the baptism He received from John the Baptist He bore all my sins, he has not wholly put on the righteousness of salvation.

The saved person may boast of the wedding garment, but he cannot boast of himself. The One who prepared the garment is God, the One who invited us to put it on is God, and the One who gave the joy of the feast is God. We have only put on the garment received by grace. Therefore we must not despise other people, but must preach this gospel to the souls who have not yet put on the wedding garment.

The wedding feast is already prepared. Jesus completed our salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross and the resurrection. What remains now is to receive this gospel by faith. We must not turn away from the invitation with our hearts taken captive by our own fields and business, and we must not hold on to the garment made by our own deeds. We must put on with thanksgiving the clean wedding garment that the King gives.

All of us must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts and put on the robe of the remission of sin, and as the bride of Jesus Christ take part in the eternal wedding feast. We must also deliver the King's invitation to the countless souls still standing by the roadside, and live as blessed people who enjoy the joy of the kingdom of God together. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 4

Give your heart and your life to the God of the living

< Matthew 22:15-46 >

"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing

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the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, '"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him "Lord," saying: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'"? If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore."

In the latter part of Matthew chapter 22 appears the scene in which several groups come to Jesus in turn and ask questions. The Pharisees and the Herodians tried to entangle Jesus in a snare with the question of taxes, and the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, tried to mock the resurrection by

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bringing up a case that seemed impossible in reality. One lawyer asked what the greatest commandment is, and at the last Jesus asked them who the Christ is.

Outwardly they look like different disputes concerning politics and marriage and the law and the interpretation of Scripture. But at the center of them is one problem. It is the problem of whether a man truly believes God, or is testing God with his own thoughts. They had much knowledge and religious standing, but they would not believe in Jesus as Savior and God.

Jesus knew all their traps, and yet He made the truth plain. He had them rightly discern the power of the world and the authority of God, He testified that after death there is a resurrection, and He taught that the center of all the law is loving God and one's neighbor. He also revealed that the Christ is not merely a fleshly descendant of David but the Son of God, whom David called Lord.

Man, who bears the image of God

The Pharisees and the Herodians were people whose positions differed from each other. The Pharisees were not pleased with the rule of Rome, and the Herodians were close to the power of Rome. But for the purpose of seizing Jesus they went together. They asked whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. If He said to pay, He would incur the ill will of the people, who hated Rome; and if He said not to pay, they could accuse Him as a man who rebelled against the power of Rome.

Jesus knew their hypocrisy and had them bring the tax money. On the denarius were engraved the image and the inscription of Caesar. The Lord said to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Since the state

has been given the work of maintaining the order of society and protecting the people, within that order we have duties that we ought properly to bear. We must not ignore taxes and legal responsibilities on the ground that we believe in God.

But the word of the Lord does not end with the matter of taxes. If the image of Caesar was engraved on the coin, the image of God is engraved on man. Money can be rendered to Caesar, but our heart and our life and our being must be given back to God. While fulfilling the responsibilities of a citizen in the world, we must not forget that our ultimate Master is God.

A Christian is not a person who lives apart from the world. In the workplace and the home and society he must work honestly, keep his promises, and do no harm to others. As long as the law of the world does not plainly go against the will of God, he must respect its order. If a man evades responsibility on the excuse of faith, he can bring shame on the name of God.

The attitude of fulfilling our responsibility in the world is connected also with preaching the gospel. If a man cheats on taxes and does not pay his debts while preaching the gospel with words only, people can misunderstand the Word because of our life. Salvation is not received by good deeds, but the saved person must learn honesty as a child of God and respect the rights of others. It is not trying to look like a perfect person in the world, but living responsibly according to the will of the Lord who is within us.

Even so, the estimate of society cannot come before the gospel. We must not hide the truth or change the gospel in order to be acknowledged as a good person by everyone. Jesus did not regard the person of men, but truly taught the way of God. We also must keep a good conscience in the world and honestly preach the truth of sin and the remission of sin, even though people dislike it.

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At the same time, the power of the world cannot become the master of our conscience and our faith. We must not confuse what belongs to Caesar with what belongs to God. The state and money and an occupation are necessary things, but they cannot save our souls. When the power of the world demands that we deny the gospel, we must obey God rather than men. Our body lives in the world, but our heart must belong to the kingdom of God.

To give to God what belongs to God does not mean giving only a part of the time of the Lord's Day or a part of our income. It is acknowledging that our whole life belongs to God. It is using our thoughts and plans and talents and material things according to the will of the Lord. Since the One who created us is God and the One who saved us from sin is also God, the saved person cannot live for himself alone.

Believe the Scriptures and the power of God

After the dispute over taxes was finished, the Sadducees came forward. They believed that there is no resurrection. Using the institution of levirate marriage in the law of Moses, they asked whose wife a woman would be at the resurrection if she had married seven brothers in turn. Their purpose was not to obtain an answer but to make the faith of the resurrection look unreasonable.

Jesus said that they were mistaken because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Man tries to apply the order of the world he has experienced to the eternal kingdom as it is. On this earth people marry and bear children and carry on through death, but life after the resurrection is not the same as now. Believers who have risen again do not die anymore but live

as eternal beings like the angels of heaven.

The resurrection is not something that the reason and the science of man produce; it is accomplished by the power of God the Creator. If God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing and formed man from the dust, He is surely able to make dead people live again. If a man limits the power of God by his own experience, he comes to misunderstand the Scriptures.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and yet they brought one regulation of the Scriptures to support their own assertion. If a man uses a part of the Scriptures to fit his own thought, he misses the meaning of the whole. When we read the Word, we must not try to prove a conclusion we have already fixed, but must learn what God is saying. The person who believes the record of the Scriptures and the power of God together receives the truth of the resurrection, which goes beyond human calculation.

The faith of the resurrection does not speak only of what comes after death. It changes the choices of today. If there were no resurrection, a man might make possessing and enjoying more in this world his highest purpose. But if there is eternal life and judgment, he cannot cast away faith and conscience for a moment's profit. Because he believes in the eternal kingdom that is not seen, he chooses the way of the gospel even while bearing present loss.

Jesus testified of the resurrection by bringing forward the fact that God had said He is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob died in the flesh, but before God they are alive, and on the last day they will rise again with glorious bodies. The relationship of life made with God is not severed by the death of the flesh.

A man under sin is spiritually dead even though his flesh is

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alive. The wages of sin is death, and a sinner cannot have fellowship with God. But the person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes one who is alive before God. God becomes the God of the person who has received the remission of sin and obtained new life, and He leads him all his life and makes him live again on the last day.

The person who has come alive through the gospel

That we have become the living is not because of our own righteous deeds. It is because we believed what Jesus did for us. Jesus received all our sins transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore the wages of that sin by shedding His blood on the cross, and rose again from the dead. The person who believes the baptism and the death and the resurrection of the Lord is delivered from sin and judgment and obtains eternal life.

The resurrection of Jesus is the evidence that the death of the cross was not a failure and that the wages of our sin were completely paid. If Jesus had not borne sin, there would have been no reason for Him to die; and if He had not overcome death, our salvation would not have been completed. But the Lord bore the sin of the world and died, and rose again by the power of God. Therefore, for the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the resurrection is not a vague hope but a settled promise.

The faith of the living is not needed only at the moment of salvation. Even after receiving the remission of sin, we must live by faith day by day. When our circumstances are hard and our own lack is exposed, we must not condemn ourselves according

to our feelings, but must hold on to the word that the Lord has solved all our sin. If we have done something wrong, we must honestly acknowledge it and turn from it in our conduct, but we must not think that because of that fault we have become sinners again.

God is not the God of perfect people only. He was the God of Abraham, the man of faith; He was the God of Isaac, who obeyed and offered himself; and He was the God of Jacob, who had much lack and human scheming and yet relied on God. Today also He becomes the God of the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and relies on the Lord.

To believe in the God of the living is not to rely on God only when our own faith feels strong. It is to confirm from the Word that God is my God even when our heart grows weak and the way ahead cannot be seen. The feelings of a saved person rise and fall, but the salvation Jesus accomplished does not change. We must hold, not to our changing heart, but to the unchanging gospel.

The circumstances of the world change ceaselessly. Health and property and relationships can be shaken at any moment, and even the institutions we relied on can collapse. But the God of the living never changes. Therefore the believer must rely on God more than on the conditions he sees. We must live with the faith that the God who saved us is alive today also and gives the grace and the wisdom we need.

The person who believes the resurrection does not cling to the things of the world in fear of death. He does not take the life of this earth lightly, but lives more responsibly, looking to eternity. He does not cast away the gospel for the sake of what will be here for a moment and then vanish, and, thinking of standing before the Lord on the day of the resurrection, he faithfully bears the work entrusted to him.

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A life of loving God

After the Sadducees had withdrawn, a lawyer asked Jesus which commandment in the law is great. Jesus said that to love God with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's mind is the great and first commandment, and that to love one's neighbor as one's own body is the second commandment. These two commandments are the sum of the whole Law and the Prophets.

With his nature under sin, man cannot love God wholly. He seeks his own profit first and serves countless idols in his heart. The law reveals that we are sinners who do not rightly love God and our neighbor. Therefore we do not become righteous merely by knowing the great commandment; we must first receive the salvation of the Lord.

God did not save us because we loved Him first. When we were sinners He sent His Son, and Jesus bore our sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and gave up His life on the cross. In the heart of the person who has believed this love and received the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit dwells. From that time on we give thanks for the love of God and love God and serve our neighbors.

The law demands perfect love of us, but it cannot produce that love. If a man tries to keep the commandments by his own strength, it is easy for him either to boast of what he has done well or to be condemned by what he has failed in. But the gospel engraves on the heart the love that God first bestowed. The one who has received the remission of great sin knows that he has received great love, and so he serves the Lord not by constraint but with thanksgiving. The demand of the law appears as the fruit of life when we receive the leading of the Holy Spirit within the gospel.

The person who loves God counts precious the souls whom

God loves. Not only his own family and those close to him, but also those who do not yet know the gospel and those whose thoughts differ from his own—to these also he seeks to deliver the word of life. Even when he meets misunderstanding and refusal while preaching the gospel, he does not give up. It is because he knows the fact that God saved him with longsuffering.

To love God with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's mind does not mean emotional zeal only. It is setting the purpose of one's life on the will of God. It is counting the preaching of the gospel and the receiving of the remission of sin by souls more precious than one's own affairs, and using one's heart and time and strength for that work. It is believing the Lord and continuing in the work entrusted to us, not only when circumstances are good but also when they are hard.

Loving God and loving one's neighbor are not separated. A man cannot say that he loves the God whom he does not see while hating and turning away from the brothers and sisters who are near him. The most fundamental way of loving one's neighbor is to preach to that soul the gospel of the remission of sin. Caring for the needs of the flesh is also important, but there is no greater love than helping a person escape eternal judgment and obtain life.

Working together within the church, waiting for those who are weak, and putting the profit of the gospel before one's own assertion are also love of neighbor. Since no one can do everything alone, we must acknowledge one another's roles and join our hearts. To do all with heart and soul and mind is not disorderly zeal but serving the gospel responsibly, following the leading of the church.

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He who is the Son of David and the Lord of David

Last of all, Jesus asked the Pharisees whose son the Christ is. They answered that He is the Son of David. That answer was not wrong, but it was not complete. According to the prophecy, the Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David. But David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ his own Lord.

Jesus is the Son of David, who came as true man, and at the same time He is God, who made David. He is not merely a great prophet or a moral teacher. He is the Son of God, who created the heavens and the earth and all things, and who put on a body and came in order to save man from sin. Because Jesus is God, He was able to bear all the sins of mankind and to overcome death and rise again.

According to whom we believe Jesus to be, our faith toward the gospel also differs. If we think of Jesus only as one man, we can regard His baptism and the cross as one among many religious events. But the person who believes that Jesus is God also believes the fact that the salvation He accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the cross is sufficient to save all mankind.

The Pharisees had much knowledge of the Scriptures, but they could not believe the Christ who stood before their eyes. They tested Jesus with questions, but at the last they could not answer a word. Faith does not lie in making Jesus the object of dispute. It lies in believing Him as my God and Savior and receiving the salvation He accomplished.

The latter part of Matthew chapter 22 asks us whose image we bear, by whose life we live, whom we love, and as whom we believe Jesus. We must faithfully bear the responsibilities entrusted to us in the world, and yet give our heart and our life to God. Believing the Scriptures and the power of God, we must

hold the hope of the resurrection and serve with all our heart and soul and mind the God who first loved us.

God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. We, who have received the remission of sin by believing the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross and the resurrection, are people who have come alive before God. Therefore we must not be bound by the fear of the world and by our own lack, but must believe the living God. We must give back our heart and our life to God, preach the gospel of life to our neighbors, and be believers who live by faith until the day of the resurrection. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 5

God is the God of the living

< Matthew 22:23-33 >

"The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching."

"The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection"

The close of a year is drawing near. When we look back on ourselves, there is much work still to do, there are things in which we followed the Lord though we lacked much, and there are things in which we did not wholly follow the will of the Lord.

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As we send off a year, there is no one who has anything to boast of. The only thing we hope for is this: that we believe God will keep us and bestow grace on us in the days to come, just as He has done until now.

Even among the Jews who said that they believed God, there were sects. There were those who believed the word of God just as it is, and there were those who believed and yet did not believe what they doubted. The Sadducees were such people, and many of them were involved in politics. They said that there is no resurrection. Their view was that when a man dies that is the end, and what resurrection could there be? The Pharisees, on the other hand, were legalists who believed everything just as it is recorded in the Scriptures, and they believed that there is a resurrection.

In Judea there was such a custom. If one of the brothers died leaving a wife without a child, that wife was married to the brother of her husband so as to carry on an heir. Concerning this custom a dispute arose. If in a certain household there were seven brothers who took that woman in turn, and at the last the woman also died, whose wife would that woman be at the resurrection?

Then Jesus said, *"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:29–30)*. It is the word that at the resurrection there is no being given in marriage or marrying, and that they are like the angels of heaven. Though He said that they are like the angels, our standing is higher than the angels. We are those who rule over the angels.

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God is the God of the living

And Jesus went on to say, *"But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching" (Matthew 22:31–33).*

That God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living—this is the very word we are to share today. God is the One who exists forever, and before God there are the living and there are the dead. Then who are the living and who are the dead?

The living are those who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given. It means that He is the God of those who are alive forever, of those who have come alive again—that is, the God of you and me. This is truly important.

Our Lord, in order to fulfill all righteousness, was baptized by John and so received all the sins of the world transferred onto Himself, and bore that sin and was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so delivered us from sin and the curse and judgment and destruction. It means that He becomes the God of those who believe that work. With what kind of person does God walk, through what kind of person does He work, what kind of person does He bless and uphold? He upholds and blesses the living.

We work by believing in Jesus Christ

We are lacking, and yet we have lived this past year in this way. There are things we did well and things we did not do well.

In the days ahead also there will be things we do well and things we do not do well. But since God said that He is the God of the living, it is the word that He is the God of the one who has faith.

It says, *"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:17)*. The righteous, that is, the one who has received the remission of sin, lives by the faith that believes God. God is our God and always takes our side, He has solved all our sin, and in the days to come also He upholds us and blesses us.

This word is a quotation of the word that is in the Book of Habakkuk. In the Book of Habakkuk the Chaldeans invade Israel and kill people and plunder. So the prophet Habakkuk cries out to God. Is God not alive? Does He not see this? How can He look on such unrighteousness?

Then God speaks. He says, "They are the ones I sent; because you would not listen at all, I sent them to sweep you away." He says, "In your sight they are wicked, but in My sight you are not different." He says, "I am the LORD God, and did you not refuse to believe Me and set up other images and bow before them and burn incense and offer sacrifices? In what are you better than they?"

But there is a turn in it. *"But the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4)*. It is the word that if, even in the midst of this, you believe Me and believe that I bestow mercy on you, you will live; and if you do not believe Me, you will meet destruction. The apostle Paul quoted that word again in Romans.

We have many faults and much lack before God. We do so knowingly and we do so unknowingly. But there is One who has saved you and me. He is God and He is Jesus Christ. We live by believing in Him. If we believe, we will live well in the days ahead also, and even the things we have done wrong all disappear. It is because the Lord bore them all by the baptism

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He received from John and received all the judgment and so solved the problem of our sin.

If we believe in Jesus Christ, we can go on serving the righteousness of God and following it, and we can receive the blessing He gives and do the work He sets us to do. But if we do not believe, we meet destruction. Even the person who has received the remission of sin must believe the fact that God has saved him. If a man looks only at himself and despairs, saying, "What can one like me do?" and gives up the life of faith, that is a thing the devil delights in.

The heart with which He said, "It is finished!"

When our Lord said on the cross, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, how relieved His heart must have been! Because He loved these people, He received all their sins transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John and bore them, not leaving out one person, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and went through every kind of shame and pain and poured out all His blood, and at the last, as His breath was passing, He said, "It is finished!"

From the time He bore the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John, the Lord knew that at the last He would hang on the cross. So His heart was always heavy with that burden. Because He knew how severe that pain would be, He prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane before the cross. *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).*

But the Father gave no answer at all. No answer is also an answer to prayer. It means that if He had borne sin, He had to pay death, the wages of sin. So He prayed again, and at last He

finished His prayer, saying, *"O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42).*

Though the Lord was God, because He loved us, in order to give us eternal life and to give us the kingdom of heaven and to make us a people of God, He bore that pain even while knowing it. And on the cross He said that it was finished. The work of saving us was accomplished in that way.

Take away faith and there is nothing

A year is passing away. Time flows like a river. Then where is the way by which we can live? It is faith. Though you and I are lacking, we must believe that the Lord has saved us, and if there is something we have done wrong through weakness, confess it and acknowledge it, and hold on to the word that the Lord bore our sin and solved it all, and settle it by faith. The Lord is our God and our Savior and our Shepherd and our Guide.

That is why God said, "I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob; I am not the God of the dead but of the living." Who are the living? It is the word that He is the God of you and me, who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the God of you and me, who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and live by that faith.

Abraham is another name for faith. Isaac is obedience. Since obedience requires faith, one cannot obey the will of God except by faith. Jacob is like another name for craftiness. And yet by faith he followed the God of his fathers and at last became the father of a nation.

It is the same with us. If we believe in Jesus Christ as our God and Savior, and live believing that He bore all the sins of

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you and me and was judged for them all, we live well. But if, having believed once, we live without going over it again, faith disappears. We must not settle anything by our own thoughts.

Man is truly weak, and while living absorbed in work there are times when he forgets even whether Jesus saved him or not and goes about in a daze. Then, when he comes to church and sits and hears the word of God, the heart revives in him: “Ah, I am one who believes in God; I must live by faith.” So we must hold on to God by all means. We settle weakness by faith, we receive blessing by faith, and we do the work of God by faith.

Take away faith and there is nothing. Our own thoughts keep rising up, and if we follow those thoughts we perish. We must follow the faith that believes the word God has promised. That faith is what makes us live.

The faith that always believes in the present tense

It is not that, having received salvation once, we put a period to it, saying, “I am one who has already been saved,” and push it aside into a corner. Always in the present tense we must say, “I am one who believes God; I live by faith,” and embrace that faith and follow the Lord.

It is not finished because we heard the gospel once and believed. Since in our lives lack and wrong can be exposed at any time, we need the gospel at any time and we need Jesus at any time. That Jesus has saved us is day by day present tense and progressive and future tense. Since He said that the just shall live by faith, we must live by faith today and live by faith tomorrow and live by faith until the day the Lord comes. This is normal faith.

When the time comes in which the gospel can no longer be

preached, this world collapses. Nature and the economy and politics and religion all collapse, and it becomes a world in which the devil enters into the hearts of men and rules. That is why it is written in the Book of Revelation, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (Revelation 14:13)*. That time is the time of tribulation.

But we must not fear beforehand because that time is coming, nor think of taking our own lives. At that time the Holy Spirit will speak within us more strongly. He said, *"But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11)*. He gives us what to say and brings the word of the Scriptures to our remembrance and fills us with faith. At that time, rather, joy overflows and we are not afraid.

Therefore next year also, and after that, let us live by faith. If we live by faith, we live well. Truly living by faith is living within the bounds the Lord allows, serving the Lord together with the brothers. The person who lives in that way is not living badly but rather living well.

Before our Lord, who has become the God of the living, you and I in the coming year also must hold on to this gospel of the water and the Spirit and be victorious by faith and serve the Lord by faith and preach the gospel by faith, and, joined together with our brothers and sisters, live for the Lord. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 6

Let us do the work of the Lord with all our body and heart and mind

< Matthew 22:34-40 >

“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’”

While Jesus was disputing with the Sadducees, He made them unable to answer. Among the religious people, many of the Sadducees were involved in politics, and those who said that one must believe the word of God just as it is were called Pharisees. When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had made the Sadducees unable to answer, they gathered together, and one lawyer among them tested Jesus and asked Him a question.

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matthew 22:36). Jesus answered, *“‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the*

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second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40).

This word was spoken by taking up the word of the Old Testament just as it is. It says, *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5),* and *"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).* So it is the word that the law of God and all that the servants of God teach are contained in this.

How must we live after we are saved?

As we believe God and live the life of faith, what does God want from us most of all? It is that, after we have received salvation by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength and all our mind, with the whole purpose of our life. And on this earth it is to love our neighbor.

Of course there is no one who keeps the whole law. But a right word is a right word. It is right that the saved person should serve with all his heart and strength and mind, desiring that the will of God be accomplished. And preaching the gospel in that way is in order to save people from sin. So the saying holds true that the person who is truly for God is also for people.

It says, *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).* The one who loves God also loves his brother.

Then how must we live after we have received salvation?

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The answer is one. It is to live with body and heart and mind for God, giving our whole self for the will of God—that is the purpose of living and the will of God.

That we can live in this way is because the Lord first loved us. Our Lord, in order to fulfill all righteousness, was baptized by John and so received all the sins of the world transferred onto Himself, and bore that sin and was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so delivered us wholly from sin. Because we have received the remission of sin by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can now love Him with all our heart and mind and strength.

What the law of God requires

We do the work of God from the moment we open our eyes, and then what is our heart like? Even when various situations arise, in the end doing the work God has entrusted to us is loving God and upholding the command of God and living according to the purpose of God, and therefore we must do it with all our heart.

So we do it with all our heart. Even when we give our heart and make effort, the amount we accomplish in one day is small. Even when we worry and think all day long and many people join together in the work, it comes to only this much. This much tomorrow and this much the day after, and when it is all added together, then at last one thing is accomplished. All of that is having given our heart for God.

We can see that when we do not give our heart to some work, that work is not well accomplished. We must give our heart, and if we give our heart, we must also give our mind so that the purpose is clear, and we must give our strength as well. If we

leave out the heart and work with the body only, in the manner of "if it works it works and if it does not it does not," then even if that work is completed it will be full of flaws.

Therefore loving God with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul is what the law of God requires and what our forerunners in faith taught. When we give our whole self with body and heart and mind, the will of God is accomplished and we come to love God.

The work of the Lord must be done with all the heart

When we do some work, we reckon it beforehand in our hearts. For example, suppose there is a place where water has flowed and cut away a slope. The tree standing on it may look as though it is living well outwardly, but beneath its roots there is a hollow and it is precarious. If the slope collapses, the tree collapses with it, and as it falls it takes even the building beside it down with it.

What must we do to reinforce it? We must keep the rainwater from falling there, and yet we must give water to the tree, and above all the safety of people must be kept. So we think it over. We picture beforehand in our minds three or four ways through the night—what it would be like to do it this way and what it would be like to do it that way. And judging that preserving the tree first is the way to accomplish the purpose, we begin with that work.

So it means that we must give our heart. In any work, it is a great help to measure on every side what the result will be if we do it this way and how it will turn out later, and to run through a rehearsal beforehand.

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Giving our soul may be understood as the word for giving our strength. At the time of martyrdom, if the Lord allows it, we must give even our life; but since the work must go on, it is giving our strength. In any work, we do not rush in blindly; before working we do preparatory work, then we carry it out, and while carrying it out we must look to safety as well.

If we plunge into work without preparation beforehand, it certainly brings on many failures. The flowering is the last thing; putting down roots and putting out stems and leaves is the preparatory work. When we have done the preparatory work countless times and then begin, there are no gaps and the probability of failure decreases.

The site of the work is different in each case. However much the same work is repeated, even though the purpose is the same and the method is similar, what must be prepared is different every time. If we plunge in, thinking that since we did it this way last time it will do to do it this way again, we fail again. We must look at whether the preparation is now complete for accomplishing this. The preparatory work is two thirds. As the saying goes that the beginning is half, when we prepare sufficiently and then begin, it is accomplished.

The person who does not work carefully begins blindly and then, when he runs into a difficulty, stops just as he is. Before working we must run through the whole rehearsal in our thoughts. It is reckoning up what variables there may be if we do it this way. The person who has much preparation beforehand has a high probability of accomplishing the work.

Give your mind before God

We give our heart and give our strength and give our mind,

but the purpose is one. It is doing it for God. When we have done the work of God in that way, to whom does the result return? It returns to our neighbor. That result returns to the fellow workers beside us and to souls. That is why the Lord said to love God and immediately went on to say to love your neighbor as your own body.

Of course we do not do it wholly. There are times when we do well and times when we do not. But you and I must work with this spirit. Rather than speaking many words, it is knowing what work God has entrusted to me and doing that work with all my best. Doing it as it comes and doing our best are different, and going and working with the body only without using the heart, and accomplishing the purpose by putting in heart and thought and strength, are different.

What God wants from us is to serve God with all our heart and strength and mind. Then God is pleased. God does not want us to do it as eye-service, as though doing it before men. It says, *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23–24).*

We are human, and so we have lack and we have weakness. But if God has entrusted some work to you and me, we must do it before God with all our strength and all our heart and all our thought and all our mind. It is not doing it roughly, as it comes.

It is so even in setting up one pillar. If we do not bury it properly in the ground but only lay it lightly on top, it looks as though it stands for the moment, but when the rain comes and the wind blows it collapses. So that this may not happen, we dig the ground deep and bury it firmly, so that it endures any ordinary wind and shock. It is because we do it before God.

Through this work, first the work of God goes well, second it becomes a profit to the brothers and sisters and the workers,

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and third it becomes a profit to the souls who have not yet been saved. It is for that purpose that we do it with all our mind.

Through the gospel we can respect one another

When we do so, whatever work we do, there is worth in it. Self-respect comes alive. It is that though I did this work today, I worked for God, for the brothers and sisters, and for souls. So a heart of respecting oneself arises. That is self-respect. Though the body is weary, since there is worth in it we pass another day, and since there is worth in it we can do it again the next day.

But if this were not a work for God and for upholding the will of God, since it is work we do every day the moment we open our eyes, we could not bear the tedium of it. If it were work done before men, nothing could be more tedious than this. But because it is the work of God, even doing the same work we cannot be bored. It is because today also we are doing the work of God.

Since I met the Lord, whatever I do, there has not been one work that is unimportant. All of it is important. When I look at the work others do also, there is not one work that is unimportant. Through that work, God's will is accomplished, and it brings benefit to the church and to souls, so I cannot help but respect them. Anyone who does any kind of work is worthy of respect. We come to say, "Ah, that person is a worker of the kingdom of God." And so we come to respect one another.

Loving God with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul, and loving our neighbor as our own body—this is what God requires of us. We must know it in this way and also receive it in this way. You and I must hold on to this gospel of the water and the Spirit and do the work of the Lord with all our body and heart and mind. ✉

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CHAPTER

23

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Matthew Chapter 23

< Matthew 23:1-39 >

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe

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to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the

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prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 23 is the word in which Jesus publicly rebuked the hypocritical faith of the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus' rebuke is not merely for the purpose of blaming a particular religious group of that time. It warns that the attitude of teaching the Word while not doing it oneself, a faith meant to be seen by others, a heart that loves position and praise, and a religion that keeps trivial rules thoroughly while abandoning justice and mercy can appear in anyone.

1. Leaders who speak but do not do (verses 1–4)

Jesus said that the scribes and the Pharisees *"sit in Moses'*

seat." They were people entrusted with the responsibility of studying the law and teaching it to the people. Therefore, when they taught the law of Moses rightly, the people were to do and observe that word. But He said not to imitate their actual works.

They laid the heavy burden of the law on other people while they themselves would not move that burden even with one finger. They required of others what they did not practice themselves, and while condemning those who failed, they did not help them to rise.

It is not that the truth becomes false because of the hypocrisy of the one who delivers it. Therefore we must not cast away the word of God because there is a problem with the one who teaches it. But the one who teaches the Word must first obey the word he preaches. When teaching and life are separated, that teaching becomes not a word that makes people live but a heavy burden that crushes them.

2. A faith meant to be seen by men, and the desire for position (verses 5–12)

The scribes and the Pharisees did all their religious acts to be seen by men. They made their phylacteries broad and enlarged the borders of their garments. The phylacteries and the borders were according to the law that told them to remember the word of God, but they used them not as a mark of obeying God but as a means of displaying their own devoutness.

They loved the best places at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and they enjoyed being greeted in the marketplaces and being called *"Rabbi."* They counted being exalted by people more important than being acknowledged by God.

Jesus told the disciples not to seek the title of rabbi or leader, and said, *"One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren."* He also said that the true leader is Christ alone.

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This word does not mean that using the word father in the home, or the titles of teacher and leader in a school, is in itself forbidden. It means that no one must take the authority of God and the place of Christ and so rule over the faith and the conscience of another person. The offices within the church also are not a rank for exalting oneself but a responsibility entrusted to us for serving others.

The great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who is served by many people but the one who serves much. The one who exalts himself is humbled, and the one who humbles himself and serves others is exalted by God.

3. A hypocritical faith that shuts the door of heaven (verses 13–15)

Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees with the word *"Woe to you."* This word is not a mere curse or an outburst of feeling; it is a solemn declaration that if they do not repent they will certainly receive the judgment of God.

The first problem was that they shut the door of heaven before men. They themselves did not enter the kingdom of God, and they even blocked those who were trying to enter. Leaders who ought to have taught the way of coming to God put forward their own tradition and authority and so drove people away from God.

The second problem was that their zeal stood upon a wrong teaching. They had zeal enough to travel land and sea in order to win one convert. But because the teaching they delivered was wrong, they made even the newly won person fall into a hypocrisy and stubbornness more serious than their own.

That a man has religious zeal and passion for evangelism does not mean that his teaching is necessarily the truth. More important than what and how zealously one preaches is what one

believes and preaches. If a wrong teaching is preached zealously, far from making people live, it plunges them into a deeper error.

4. Blind guides who counted the gold more important than the temple (verses 16–22)

The scribes and the Pharisees taught that what was sworn by the temple need not be kept, but that what was sworn by the gold of the temple had to be kept. They also said that swearing by the altar was not important, but that if one swore by the gift on the altar he must certainly keep it.

Jesus rebuked them, asking how the gold and the gift could be more important, since it is the temple that sanctifies the gold and the altar that sanctifies the gift. While counting material things more important than God, they justified their own greed with religious logic.

To swear by the temple is to swear before the temple and before God, who dwells in it, and to swear by heaven also is done before the throne of God and before God, who sits on it. Before God a man cannot escape responsibility by changing the form of his words. The word of a believer must be true and responsible even without elaborate oaths.

5. Keeping the trivial while abandoning the important (verses 23–24)

The scribes and the Pharisees were thorough in the tithe of small herbs, but they abandoned the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faith. Here *"justice"* is the righteousness of God, who accomplished the remission of sin; *"mercy"* is the love of God that appeared in that gospel; and *"faith"* is the faith by which one obtains the remission of sin and eternal life.

Jesus said, *"These you ought to have done, without leaving*

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the others undone." The problem was that they kept the outward regulations while abandoning the righteousness and the love and the faith of God that appear in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus described this as the figure of those who *"strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."* A gnat and a camel are both creatures counted unclean in the law, but there is an enormous difference in size. He was satirizing the contradiction of searching out and blaming a very small fault while accepting without concern the great sins of greed and unrighteousness.

The detailed order of faith is also necessary, but it cannot come before the will of God, which is to love people and make them live. If we keep the rules while condemning and breaking down a weak person, we have lost the true meaning of the law.

6. The outside of the cup is clean, but inside it is full of greed (verses 25–26)

Jesus compared the scribes and the Pharisees to a cup and dish washed clean only on the outside. Outwardly they looked devout and clean, but their hearts were full of greed and self-indulgence.

A man can adorn his outward appearance and behavior to some degree. He can use a devout manner of speech, keep religious rules, and receive a good estimate from other people. But God sees even the covetousness and hatred and false motives that are within a man's heart.

Jesus said, *"First cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."* This does not mean that the behavior that appears outwardly may be done in any way at all. It means that when the heart becomes right before God, the life and the behavior also change according to that heart. We must not try to correct only the outward behavior; the center of

the heart, out of which sin comes, must first be made new.

7. Hypocrisy like whitewashed tombs (verses 27–28)

At that time tombs were sometimes whitewashed on the outside in order to keep people from touching them unknowingly and becoming ceremonially unclean. Outwardly they looked clean and beautiful, but inside were the bones of dead men and unclean things.

Jesus said that the scribes and the Pharisees were like these whitewashed tombs. They appeared righteous to people, but their hearts were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Their greatest problem did not lie in their being weak and making mistakes. It lay in their hiding their own uncleanness and behaving as though they were righteous people, and in their condemning other sinners.

True faith is not hiding one's weakness and trying to look like a perfect person. It is acknowledging one's sin and lack before God and seeking His grace. God corrects the sinner who honestly reveals himself, but the person who claims that he is already righteous can hardly repent.

8. Adorning the tombs of the prophets while refusing the word of the prophets (verses 29–36)

The scribes and the Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets and adorned the monuments of the righteous, and said that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have killed the prophets. But they refused the word of repentance that the prophets had delivered, and now they were seeking to kill even Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus said that they would also kill and scourge the people He would send, and persecute them from city to city. He was pointing out the contradiction of respecting the prophets of the

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past while hating the word of God that now requires repentance of them.

The expression from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah encompasses the blood shed by the righteous and the prophets throughout the whole history of the Scriptures. God spoke again and again through His servants, but stubborn people, instead of receiving the word, sought to remove the one who delivered it.

We can respect the people of faith who lived long ago and yet refuse the word of Scripture that rebukes us now. If we truly respect a prophet, we must not stop at adorning his tomb but must believe and obey the word of God that he delivered.

9. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (verses 37–39)

At the end of His strong rebuke Jesus lamented over Jerusalem. He said that He had wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem together many times, *"as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings"* but they were not willing.

Jesus hated most of all the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, which led souls astray. It was because their hypocrisy and falsehood destroyed people. But His lament over Jerusalem does not mean that He delighted in the destruction of sinners. The Lord wanted them to turn and be saved, but they rejected the prophets and Jesus.

The word *"You were not willing!"* shows that man can stubbornly refuse the invitation of God's salvation. God spoke and called many times, but they would not lay down their own authority and their own thoughts.

As a result He said that their house would be left desolate. The temple and the city where God ought to have dwelt met with judgment because they refused the Son whom God sent. But in the last word a way of returning to the Lord is clearly set forth.

When they acknowledge Jesus, saying, *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* they will see the Lord again.

10. The overall lesson of Matthew Chapter 23

In reading Matthew Chapter 23 we must not conclude merely that "the scribes and the Pharisees were bad people." Jesus rebuked the sin of the leaders who had been entrusted with the word of God within the Jewish society of that time. Therefore we must not use this word as a ground for blaming or hating the Jewish people as a whole. Jesus and His disciples also were Jews.

Before this word both those who teach the Word today and all who believe must look back on themselves. We must examine whether our words and our deeds agree, whether we use our faith in order to be seen by people, whether we love office and position while not serving, and whether we judge others by small rules while abandoning justice and mercy.

The way of escaping hypocrisy is not adorning our outward appearance more elaborately. It is honestly acknowledging before God the reality of our heart, receiving Christ as our only leader, and humbling ourselves to serve others. True faith lies not in appearing right to people but in living truly before God.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 23 is the word that warns us: since judgment follows a hypocritical faith in which the Word and life are separated, which pursues the praise of men and religious position, and which adorns only the outward appearance, we must receive Christ alone as our true leader, make our hearts clean, practice justice and mercy and faith, and serve humbly.

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2) Matthew Chapter 23 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The center of Matthew Chapter 23 is the contrast between a religion that adorns itself outwardly as righteous and the gospel of God, which actually washes away the sin of the heart. The scribes and the Pharisees put forward the law and religious deeds in order to appear righteous to people, but sin and greed and lawlessness remained in their hearts just as they were.

Jesus did not tell them to adorn the outside more elaborately; He said, *"First cleanse the inside of the cup and dish."* What makes a man's heart clean is not the keeping of the law or prayers of repentance or good deeds, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the blood of the cross.

1. A faith that only speaks and does not do lays a heavy burden on people (verses 1–4)

The scribes and the Pharisees taught the law of Moses, but they themselves did not live according to that word. They laid heavy burdens on other people while they would not move them with even one finger.

The law is the good and righteous word of God, but if a man tries to receive the remission of sin and become righteous by keeping the law, it becomes a burden he cannot bear. It is because man cannot perfectly keep all the commandments the law requires. If even hating and coveting in the heart is sin, no one can be acknowledged as righteous before God by his own deeds.

A false religion demands of people, "Pray more earnestly, repent more, live more virtuously, and your sin will be washed away." But if a sinner must wash away his sin by his own effort,

he can never lay down the burden of sin all his life. It is because after he repents of yesterday's sin he sins again today, and when he thinks he has washed away today's sin, tomorrow new sin arises again.

Jesus is not One who has laid this heavy burden of sin on us alone. The Lord Himself bore all our sins. By being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River He received the sin of mankind transferred onto His own body, and bearing that sin He was judged on the cross, and by rising again in three days He completed our salvation. Because the Lord bore the burden in our place, we are completely freed from the burden of sin by faith.

2. A faith meant to be seen by people cannot solve the sin of the heart (verses 5–7)

The scribes and the Pharisees made their phylacteries broad and enlarged the borders of their garments in order to appear devout to people. They loved to sit in the high places, to be greeted in the marketplaces, and to be called rabbi.

The outward appearance can be adorned to some degree by training. One can use a devout manner of speech, never miss a service, pray and serve much, and even become a religious person respected by others. But these outward deeds cannot wash away the sin within the heart.

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. If there is hatred and lust and greed and pride in the heart, and yet a man behaves outwardly as though he were righteous, that is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is different from merely making a mistake or being weak. It is hiding one's true condition and adorning oneself as though one were more righteous than others.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not tell a man to adorn himself more splendidly. Rather it makes him

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acknowledge that nothing but sin can come out of his flesh, and believe the fact that Jesus bore all those sins with the baptism He received from John. The person who is honest before God does not boast of his own goodness but boasts of the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

3. Our true leader is Christ alone (verses 8–12)

Jesus told the disciples not to love being called rabbi or leader by people. He said that the true leader is Christ alone and that those who believe are all brethren.

This word does not mean that there must be no one at all in the church who teaches or bears responsibility. It means that no one must sit in the place of Christ and rule over the soul and the conscience of a person according to his own will. If the word of a particular leader comes to have higher authority than the word of God, people come to follow the judgment of the leader rather than the Scriptures.

A true worker of the gospel does not tell people to believe in himself. He makes known from the Scriptures how Jesus saved sinners, and helps people believe in Jesus' baptism and the cross and the resurrection. He does not exalt himself but exalts Christ, and he does not make followers of himself but makes disciples of the Lord.

The person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit also must not boast of his office or his career in the faith. He is not higher than others because he was saved first. The great person in the kingdom of God is the one who, giving thanks for the grace by which the Lord saved him with the water and the blood, serves the gospel and souls.

4. What kind of person shuts the door of heaven? (verses 13–15)

Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees, saying that they neither entered heaven themselves nor allowed those who were entering to go in. That a person who ought to teach the truth teaches a wrong way of salvation is a serious sin that shuts the door of heaven for souls.

The door of heaven is Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus is not merely to call on His name but to believe how the Lord actually saved us. Jesus put on flesh and came to this earth, and with the baptism He received from John the Baptist He bore all the sins of the world. Bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross, and in three days He rose again.

But if it is taught that Jesus took away only original sin and not all sin, and that the personal sins committed each day are washed away only when a man prays a prayer of repentance every day, then the sinner remains a sinner to the end. A man cannot repent of even the sins he does not remember, nor can he remember beforehand and confess the sins he will commit in the future.

The *"sin of the world"* that Jesus bore includes our original sin and our personal sins, the sins we commit knowingly and the sins we commit unknowingly, and all the sins of the past and the present and the future. When the Lord was baptized by John He bore all sin at once, and on the cross He received the judgment of that sin at once.

Therefore the gospel that opens the door of heaven is not a gospel that teaches a man to go on living as a sinner. It is the gospel that proclaims that Jesus has removed all sin, and that we should therefore believe that fact, receive the remission of sin, and become righteous. It is important not only to bring a person into the church but to have that person hear the gospel of the

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water and the Spirit rightly and be born again.

5. Blind guides exchange the essence of the gospel for religious accessories (verses 16–22)

The scribes and the Pharisees counted the gold of the temple more important than the temple, and the gift on the altar more important than the altar. Jesus rebuked them, asking how the gold and the gift could be more important, since it is the temple that sanctifies the gold and the altar that sanctifies the gift.

This shows that religion can count material things and institutions and human honor more important than God. The church building and the offerings and the organization and the offices can be used in serving the gospel, but they can never come before the gospel itself.

Today also there are people who emphasize the blood of the cross while counting it unimportant why Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. But for the Lord's death on the cross to become the atonement for our sin, Jesus must first bear that sin. The bearing of sin was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, and the judgment for that sin was accomplished on the cross.

The baptism of Jesus and the cross are not separate events of which one may be chosen. The water and the blood together form one work of salvation. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this Jesus is the Son of God and that His baptism and death and resurrection are the true salvation. If a man misses this essence of the gospel and holds on only to religious form, a spiritual blind man comes to lead other blind men.

6. We must not abandon the weightier justice and mercy and faith of the law (verses 23–24)

The scribes and the Pharisees offered even the tithe of small

herbs thoroughly, but they abandoned the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faith. Here justice and mercy and faith mean right justice before God, the compassion that has pity on people, and a faithful trust toward God and His word.

They kept the small rules strictly, but they did not know the heart of God, who seeks to save sinners. They eagerly established their own righteousness but did not receive the righteousness that God would accomplish through Jesus Christ.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit the righteousness and the mercy and the faithfulness of God all appear. God did not declare that sin had disappeared without any judgment. By passing sin onto Jesus and judging that sin on the cross He fulfilled His own justice. At the same time, by having His Son bear the judgment the sinner ought to have received, He bestowed mercy on us. And by saving those who believe from all sin according to His promise He revealed His faithfulness.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit also must not cling only to trivial religious rules and condemn people. Because he knows that he is a sinner who has received great mercy, he must have pity on the weak, practice justice and honesty, and be faithful in the work God has entrusted to him.

7. *"First cleanse the inside of the cup and dish"* (verses 25–26)

The word in Matthew Chapter 23 that is most directly connected with the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word *"First cleanse the inside of the cup and dish."* The scribes and the Pharisees cleansed the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence.

A man's heart does not become clean by religious training alone. Though he resolves not to sin, sin comes out again; and though he prays long, evil thoughts arise. By the law and by

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asceticism the acts of sin can be restrained to some degree, but the seed of sin cannot be removed from the heart.

The way the heart becomes clean is to believe the fact that my sin went over to Jesus and was judged. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist He received all the sins of our whole life transferred onto Himself. And on the cross He paid the whole price of that sin and declared, *"It is finished!"* By rising again from the dead the Lord testified that our salvation is complete.

When we believe this word with the heart, the sin that remained in the conscience is washed away. It is not that we become people who have never sinned, but because that sin has already gone over to Jesus and received its just judgment, we are acknowledged before God as righteous people without sin.

That a person has received the remission of sin does not mean that he has become perfect in the flesh and will never make a mistake again. The flesh is still weak and can do wrong. But he is not saved anew every time he sins; rather, believing the salvation of the Lord, who has already borne all sin, he acknowledges his fault and turns from it. The standing of salvation rests on the completed work of the Lord, and the correcting of life continues according to the leading of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

When the heart is made clean by the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit dwells in that heart. The Holy Spirit leads the thoughts of the believer by the Word and helps him to live not merely following his own desires but for the gospel and for his neighbor. This is the order of the gospel, in which the inside is first made clean and as a result the outside also becomes clean.

8. The whitewashed tomb shows the figure of a religion without the new birth (verses 27–28)

A whitewashed tomb is clean and beautiful outwardly, but inside are the bones of dead men and unclean things. This represents the figure of a religious person who appears righteous to people while sin remains in his heart just as it is.

A person who has not been born again can also look morally excellent and can perform much service and sacrifice. But however upright his outward deeds may be, if the sin of his heart has not been washed away, he is still a sinner before God. One enters the kingdom of God not by the estimate received from people but by the remission of sin that God has given.

On the other hand, to say that one has become righteous by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to boast that one's own deeds are perfect. It is to confess, "I am originally a person who can do nothing but sin, but because Jesus was baptized by John and took away all my sin and received the judgment of that sin on the cross, God has declared me righteous."

The person who boasts of his own righteousness puts forward his good deeds, but the person who has become righteous by the gospel boasts only of the righteousness Jesus accomplished. This is the difference between the righteousness of the Pharisee and the righteousness of God received by faith.

9. We can exalt the prophets of the past while refusing the word delivered now (verses 29–36)

The scribes and the Pharisees adorned the tombs of the prophets and said that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have killed the prophets. But they did not receive the way of righteousness that John the Baptist preached, and now they sought to kill even Jesus, the Son of God.

A man can respect the people of faith who lived long ago and

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yet dislike the word of God that now points out his own fault. To exalt a prophet and to receive the truth the prophet delivered are two different things.

Today also there are people who exalt the Scriptures and the name of Jesus while refusing the word that Jesus was baptized by John and so bore the sin of the world. But we must examine the Scriptures rather than the tradition of men. We must not look only at who delivered a word, but must confirm whether that word agrees with the word of God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a private interpretation but the truth of salvation to which the Scriptures bear witness. Within Christianity, a person who says that he believes in Jesus and yet does not know or does not believe the gospel accomplished by the baptism He received from John and the cross and the resurrection is a heretic. The preacher of the gospel must testify of this truth from the Scriptures, not by human authority.

10. In the lament over Jerusalem is the Lord's heart that seeks to save (verses 37–39)

After speaking the strong word of judgment, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem. He said that He had wanted to gather them many times, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they were not willing.

The Lord does not delight in the judgment of sinners. That Jesus put on flesh and came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist, and shed His blood and died on the cross is the perfect love of God, who makes sinners live.

God has already prepared a perfect salvation, but a man can refuse that salvation because of his own righteousness and religious stubbornness. If a man insists, "I am still a sinner, but I only have to keep repenting in my own way," he is not

receiving the word that Jesus has washed away all sin.

The Lord does not tell us to hide our sin. He tells us to acknowledge our true condition and come in under His wings. To believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to cease from trying to survive by our own strength and to flee into the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

11. The new hypocrisy that the person who has received the remission of sin must guard against

Matthew Chapter 23 is not a word that applies only to the religious person who has not been born again. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also look back on himself by this word.

If a man makes the fact that he has been saved a ground for being higher than others, or boasts only of the knowledge that he knows the gospel well while in reality not serving people, he can come to resemble the attitude of the Pharisee. If with his mouth he says that all his sin has been washed away while he carries on greed and unrighteousness and falsehood without concern, he is using the grace of the gospel to justify the desires of the flesh.

The remission of sin is not a permission to live without a good life. Salvation is received by faith without works, but since the Holy Spirit dwells in the saved person, the fruit of justice and mercy and faith must appear. He must acknowledge his own faults, have pity on others, live honestly, and humble himself to serve the gospel and souls.

It is not that deeds produce salvation, but the grace of salvation changes the life of the one who believes. The Lord, who has made the inside clean, also goes on shaping by His word the life that appears outwardly.

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12. The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 23 conveys

The scribes and the Pharisees adorned the outside with the law and religious deeds, but they could not solve the sin of the heart. They appeared righteous to people, but before God they were still sinners. And at the same time they laid on other people the heavy burden of works and kept them from seeing the way of salvation that God had prepared.

Jesus put on flesh and came in order to save such sinners. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist the Lord received all our sins transferred onto Himself. Bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment of sin completely; and by rising again He completed our salvation.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all sin and becomes a righteous person, and in his cleansed heart he receives the Holy Spirit. And following the leading of the Holy Spirit he lives honestly before God rather than living a religious life meant to be seen by people, and he serves the gospel and his neighbor rather than exalting himself, and bears the fruit of justice and mercy and faith.

To put it in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 23 is the word which says that since the sin of the heart cannot be washed away by man's legalistic deeds and religious outward form, we must cast away our own righteousness and hypocrisy, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit—which Jesus accomplished by bearing all sin with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completing it with the blood of the cross and the resurrection—and so first make the inside clean, and then bear the fruit of humility and mercy and faith according to the Holy Spirit. ✉

Matthew Chapter 23

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 23 is the word in which Jesus publicly rebuked the hypocritical faith of the scribes and the Pharisees. They sat in Moses' seat and taught the law, but they themselves did not do it; they laid heavy burdens on others while they would not lay a finger on them. Jesus laid bare one by one the figure of leaders whose words and deeds differed.

They did all their works to be seen by men. They made their phylacteries broad and enlarged the borders of their garments, and they loved the best places at feasts and the high seats in the synagogues and being greeted by people. But Jesus said that the great one among them must become a servant, and that whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Then Jesus rebuked their hypocrisy, repeating the word, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"* Shutting the

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door of heaven before men, counting the gold more important than the temple, tithing mint and anise while abandoning justice and mercy and faith, cleansing the outside of the cup while inside it was full of greed—they were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful outwardly but full of dead men's bones within.

Jesus pointed out that while they adorned the tombs of the prophets, they were in fact the sons of those who had killed those very prophets. That they put forward devoutness outwardly while rejecting the people God sent was the reality of hypocrisy. The religious zeal that appears to the eyes of men does not solve the sin of the heart in the least.

The way a man is truly made clean lies in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus bore all the sins of the world by being baptized by John the Baptist, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received all the judgment, and by rising again from death He overcame the power of sin and death. The man who can never be made clean by a religion that adorns the outside receives the washing even of the sin of his heart when he believes this gospel.

Last of all, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, saying that He had wanted to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they were not willing. In that lament is the love of the Lord, who would rather embrace sinners than judge them. Now, examining the words of the text in order, we will look into the reality of hypocrisy and into the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which makes clean not the outside but the heart.

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy and the works-centered faith that seek to be seen by men, and taught that we are to enter the door of heaven only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Christ accomplished

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:1–13).

Jesus spoke His warning against the scribes and the Pharisees not to them only but also in the hearing of the multitudes and His disciples. This was at once to lay bare their fault and to say that the disciples of Jesus also could fall into the same hypocrisy and must therefore take heed to themselves.

The scribes and the Pharisees sat in *"Moses' seat."* Moses

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was the man who received the law from God and delivered it to the people of Israel. Therefore that they sat in Moses' seat means that they held the public responsibility of interpreting the law and teaching the people.

The word of God itself is right and holy. So Jesus said that when they delivered the law of Moses rightly, the people were to do and observe that word. But He said not to imitate their works. He distinguished between the word of God and the wrong deeds of the one who teaches that word.

This word does not mean that we are to follow unconditionally everything a religious leader says. We are to receive what he delivers when it accords with the written word of God. When the tradition of men or a wrong doctrine is exalted above the word of God, we must discern that teaching.

The first problem of the scribes and the Pharisees was that *"they say, and do not do."* They taught other people to keep the law and to live holy lives, but they themselves did not live according to the Word. What they taught with their mouths and their actual lives differed from each other.

It is easy for a man to point out the fault of another but hard to acknowledge his own sin and weakness. If a man does not first apply the word of God to himself but uses it only as a tool for judging others, he becomes a hypocrite. The more a man teaches the Word, the more he must not forget that he himself is also a man under that Word.

They *"bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders."* They made countless rules that men could hardly keep, and taught that one must keep them in order to be acknowledged by God and saved. As a result people came to be pressed down by condemnation and fear and guilt rather than by the joy of coming to God.

The law of God is originally the holy word that makes us

realize sin. But the scribes and the Pharisees established their own righteousness by the works of the law and ruled over others. Though the law ought to make a man realize that he is a sinner and go to the Savior, they taught instead that a man could become righteous by human effort.

Today also, if it is taught that sin is washed away only when one does much praying and fasting and giving and serving and daily prayers of repentance, that is laying a heavy burden on men's shoulders. These deeds have meaning in the life of faith, but they are never the way of salvation that removes sin.

However hard a man tries to live virtuously, he goes on committing sin in heart and in deed. That a man who has not perfectly kept the law piles up more religious works does not make the sins he has already committed disappear. A sinner must believe, not his own deeds, but the salvation God has prepared.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not require a man to carry the heavy burden of sin by himself. It testifies that Jesus bore in His own body the sins of every person in the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Our sin of not having loved God and the sins we committed against our neighbors and all the sins we will commit in our whole life went over to Jesus.

Jesus went to the cross bearing the sin He had taken on with His baptism. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross He received in our place the judgment of all that sin, and by rising again in three days He completed our salvation. The One who actually bore and removed the burden of sin is Jesus Christ.

Therefore the remission of sin is not obtained as the price of a man's having carried many religious burdens. It is received freely when we believe with the heart the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with His baptism and the cross and the resurrection. This is the true gospel that saves the man from sin

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and condemnation under which he is pressed down.

The second problem of the scribes and the Pharisees was that they did all their works to be seen by men. They made broad the phylacteries in which the word of God was written and worn on the body, and they enlarged the borders of their garments. Originally the phylacteries and the borders were for remembering the word of God, but they used them as a means of displaying their own devoutness.

The problem was not the phylacteries or the borders themselves but the motive of the heart that used them. They enlarged the religious outward form in order to appear devout to people and to be respected. But God looks not at the outward form that is seen but at whether there is true faith in the heart.

Today also there are people who boast of office and clothing and theological knowledge and a long career in the faith while sin remains in their hearts just as it is. There are also people who never miss a service and do much serving and yet do not know when and how their own sin went over to Jesus. This is the hypocrisy that is devout in outward appearance but has no reality of the gospel.

They loved the best places at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues. They enjoyed having people greet them first in the marketplaces and call them rabbi. They turned the office of serving God into a means of being treated well by people and of exalting their own authority.

The word in which Jesus said, "*But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'"* does not mean that the teaching office within the church is to be abolished. It means that no one must become an absolute teacher who takes the place of Christ and rules over the conscience and the faith of another believer. All teaching must be under the word of Scripture and the gospel of Christ.

The word *"you are all brethren"* means that believers who

have received the remission of sin are people who have received the same grace before God. The roles entrusted to pastors and teachers differ, but that does not make them essentially higher beings than other believers. All are brothers and sisters who have become children of God by believing the salvation of Jesus.

The word *"Do not call anyone on earth your father"* also must not be understood as an absolute prohibition against calling one's physical father father. It means that we must not ascribe to any human being the source and the final authority of the soul, which belong to God. The true Father, who gives us new life and makes us children of God, is God in heaven alone.

Our ultimate leader also is Christ alone. A leader of the church is not one who binds people to himself but one who must lead them to Christ. He must not demand unconditional obedience to his own words but must serve so that believers may know and believe and follow the word of Jesus.

A true leader does not exalt himself as though he were a mediator of salvation. He knows that he himself was a sinner saved by believing Jesus' baptism and the cross and the resurrection. Therefore he does not boast to other souls of his own ability or authority but preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which saved him.

Jesus said, *"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant."* The great person in the kingdom of God is not one who sits in a high place and only gives orders. He is one who labors for the souls God has entrusted to him, helps the weak, and humbles himself to serve so that the gospel may be preached.

Jesus Himself showed this example of serving. Though He is God, who created all things, He put on the body of a man and came into this world, bore all the sins of sinners, and gave up even His own life on the cross. Jesus, who is Lord, served us from the place of a servant.

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Therefore a leader who preaches the gospel must not demand sacrifice only from people while seeking ease and good treatment for himself. He must believe and live by the Word first, help believers to serve the gospel, and bear hardship together with them. Authority appears not in the size of a title but through truth and service.

The word *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* does not mean that we should put on a show of servility. It means that we should lay down our own righteousness and ability and acknowledge before God that we are beings who cannot live without His grace.

The person who humbles himself does not claim, "I have lived virtuously, so I am qualified to be saved." He acknowledges that he is a sinner and cannot solve his sin by his own strength, and he receives the salvation Jesus accomplished. God exalts such a person as a righteous man who has received the remission of sin and as His own child.

To believe that Jesus bore all my sins with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the cross, and rose again and became my Savior—this is the faith that humbles oneself and exalts the righteousness of God. Only the person who casts away his own righteousness and puts on the righteousness of God receives true salvation.

Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for shutting the door of heaven before men. The door that leads into heaven is Jesus Christ, and the truth that opens that door is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed. Yet the religious leaders put forward the works of the law and the tradition of men and so hid that gospel.

They themselves did not believe in Jesus, and they even hindered those who were trying to believe in Him. If it is not preached that sin went over to Jesus by His baptism and that the

judgment ended on the cross, people become shut up all their lives in a religious life of trying to wash away their own sin.

To make people into zealous religious persons without teaching the gospel of salvation is not opening the door of heaven for them. Though the number of church members increases and religious activity becomes lively, if the sin of the heart is not solved, they have not been led to heaven. A true servant of God does not make people imagine that they have no sin; he teaches how Jesus completely removed that sin.

This warning does not apply only to the scribes and the Pharisees of a particular age. Today not only pastors and teachers but also all believers who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit must examine themselves so as not to fall into hypocrisy. It is because a man can speak the gospel with his mouth and yet love more the recognition of people and a high position.

The person who has received the remission of sin must not think that he was saved because he is better than others. Since he was saved only by the merit of Jesus, he must humbly serve others and open the way so that anyone may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter heaven.

Matthew 23:1–13 is the word that warns us against the hypocrisy in which words and deeds differ, against the legalism that lays a heavy religious burden on people, and against the desire to exalt oneself with office and honor. A true leader does not bind people to himself but leads them to Christ, the only Leader. The person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed by Jesus' baptism and the cross and the resurrection, and so serves sinners that they may receive the remission of sin by faith and enter the door of heaven, is the truly great person in the kingdom of God.

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A false zeal cannot lead people to heaven; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit leads a sinner into true salvation

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:15–24).

Jesus did not praise the zeal of the scribes and the Pharisees in itself. They had zeal enough to travel land and sea in order to win one convert. But what they delivered was not the truth that saves a man from sin; it was a wrong teaching that made people rely on human works and tradition.

This word shows the fact that a faith is not necessarily true because it has zeal. A person who preaches a wrong gospel can also give much time and material things to evangelism. But if the content he delivers does not agree with the righteousness of

God, that zeal drags people not into heaven but into a deeper religious bondage.

The Pharisees ought to have realized their own sin through the law of God and waited for the Savior. The law is not a means of proving how righteous a man is; it is the word that lays bare the fact that all people are sinners before God. Yet they turned the law into a tool for establishing their own righteousness.

The people who received their teaching came to rely on their own deeds. They believed that if they thoroughly kept prayer and fasting and tithes and religious rules they would become righteous. So they appeared devout outwardly, but sin still remained in their hearts, and rather they came to boast of their own faith and to condemn other people.

That Jesus said of the convert so won, *"you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves"* was to point out the danger of a wrong doctrine being reproduced again and again. A person who has learned a false teaching receives that teaching firmly as his own faith, and at times he comes to refuse the truth even more stubbornly than the one who taught him.

True evangelism does not have its purpose in making a person a member of some religious body. To lead a person to Jesus Christ so that he receives the remission of sin is true evangelism. More important than increasing the number of members and enlarging the strength of an organization is that one soul hears and believes the exact gospel of salvation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit testifies that Jesus was incarnated and, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore all the sins of mankind. Bearing the sin He had thus taken on, Jesus was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and so received the judgment of sin, and by rising again in three days He completed salvation.

Therefore the remission of sin is not obtained by a man's

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religious deeds or merits. It is received when we believe with the heart the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with His own baptism and the cross and the resurrection. If this complete gospel is left out and only good deeds and prayers of repentance and religious zeal are required of a person, the problem of the sin in his heart cannot be solved.

From verse 16 Jesus called them *"blind guides."* It does not mean that the eyes of their flesh could not see, but that they could not discern what is important before God. A spiritually blind guide does not himself know the way of life and yet leads others, and so in the end he makes them all go the wrong way.

They taught that if a man swore by the temple he bore no responsibility, but that if he swore by the gold of the temple he must certainly keep it. They also said that swearing by the altar was all right, but that if one swore by the gift on the altar he must keep it. In this way they made subtle distinctions and interpreted the word of God in a manner favorable to themselves.

Jesus asked, *"Which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?"* The gold is not holy in itself; it is set apart as holy because it belongs to the temple, which is offered to God. Yet they counted the gold more important than the temple, where God is present.

It is the same with the gift. It is not that the gift itself makes the altar holy; it is the altar that sanctifies the gift offered on it. Yet they counted the gift greater than the altar. While saying that they served God, in reality they counted material things and religious profit more important.

Today also, if we count the building and the offerings and the position of people more important than the church and the gospel, we can fall into the same fault. Offerings and service are a means of serving God, not a price by which salvation is obtained. Material things exist for God; God does not exist in

order to fill the material desires of men.

Jesus said that to swear by the altar is to swear by the altar and by all things on it, and that to swear by the temple is to swear by the temple and by God, who dwells in it. Man tries to escape responsibility by making subtle distinctions in his words, but God knows all his heart and his intent.

To swear by heaven also is to swear by the throne of God and by God, who sits on it. Therefore a man must be true to his word before God. More important than what expression he used is whether there is falsehood and greed in his heart.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not try to become righteous by his own words and deeds. He believes that Jesus bore all his sins with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin on the cross. So he relies not on his own righteousness but on the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished.

But that a man has received the remission of sin does not mean that he may lie. Rather, the person saved by the perfect grace of God desires to live truly before God. Honesty is not a condition of salvation but a fruit of faith that the saved person ought to bear.

In verse 23 Jesus said that the Pharisees paid tithe even of mint and anise and cummin. They kept the outward regulations so thoroughly as to calculate a tenth even of small herbs and spices. But they abandoned the weightier content of the law, *"justice and mercy and faith."*

Here "*justice*" means what God declares to be right. It includes a life of treating people fairly, but in the dimension of salvation its center is receiving the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ completed. That Jesus bore sin with His own baptism and paid the wages of that sin on the cross is the righteousness of God.

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"Mercy" means compassion and pity. If a man boasts that he keeps religious rules well while condemning a person suffering under sin, he has abandoned the mercy of God. God loved sinners and sent His only begotten Son, and Jesus Himself bore all sin and its punishment in order to save sinners.

"Faith" means faith toward God and faithfulness. To believe God is not vaguely to acknowledge that God exists. It is to receive just as it is the word that God has completely saved sinners through the baptism and the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, *"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."* This word does not mean that keeping outward responsibilities such as the tithe is itself wrong. It means that even while being faithful in small things, we must not abandon the weightier things—the righteousness and the mercy and the faith of God.

The saved person also ought to give offerings and serve and do good works. But these are not a condition for obtaining the remission of sin; they are the fruit of faith offered in thanksgiving for the grace of salvation already received. Sin is not washed away because one gives and serves much; the remission of sin is received only by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"* The gnat and the camel both refer to creatures unclean according to the law, but there is an enormous difference in size. It is a figure meaning that while they examined small faults thoroughly, they committed far weightier sins without hesitation.

If a man judges minutely another's clothing and food and forms of worship and religious habits, and yet refuses the gospel of the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished, it is like

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. To keep the small rules that appear outwardly while holding greed and falsehood and hatred and self-righteousness in the heart is the same figure.

Above all, the greatest sin is not believing the Savior whom God sent and holding on to a religious righteousness of one's own making. The Pharisees kept the small provisions of the law thoroughly and yet rejected the Messiah to whom that law bore witness. They spoke of the temple and the altar and yet did not recognize Jesus, the Master of the temple.

Therefore a true guide in the faith must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin himself. If a man leads others while holding sin in his heart just as it is, he becomes a blind guide who does not know the way himself. A guide must not bind people to himself but must have them believe the salvation Jesus Christ completed.

Believers also must not receive a teaching merely because of a leader's office or fame or the number of members or outward zeal. They must discern by the word of God whether that teaching testifies of the complete remission of sin accomplished through Jesus' baptism and the cross and the resurrection.

Matthew 23:15–24 tells us to set right the center and the order of our faith. First we must believe the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished, and within that grace have mercy on people and live with true faith before God. Upon that foundation offerings and service and a devout life must follow.

In the end, the faith in which God delights is not a faith that boasts of outward appearance and religious achievement. It is the faith that receives the washing of all sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, counts precious the righteousness and the mercy and the faith of God, and rightly delivers that truth of salvation to other souls.

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True cleanness lies not in adorning the outside but in having the sin of the heart washed away by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:25–36).

Jesus compared the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees to a cup and dish. A cup and a dish are vessels that hold food and supply it to people. However clean and beautiful

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

the outside of a vessel may be, if there is something unclean inside it, the food held in that vessel cannot be eaten.

The scribes and the Pharisees counted it important to appear devout to people. They behaved as though they kept the law thoroughly, and they displayed their own righteousness through prayer and fasting and tithes. But Jesus saw, not their outward appearance, but the greed and self-indulgence within their hearts.

Here greed does not mean only loving money. To seek one's own honor and power and profit under the name of serving God is also greed. The desire to be respected by people, to sit in high places, and to keep many people under oneself is also a religious greed.

Self-indulgence means the state of living according to one's own desire, apart from the will of God. Though a man appears temperate and devout outwardly, if in his heart he pursues wealth and honor and pleasure, then inside him it is full of self-indulgence. Man can see the outward appearance, but God sees the center of the heart.

That Jesus said, "*First cleanse the inside of the cup and dish,*" means that we are first to solve the problem of the sin of the heart. It is easy for a man to think that he has become clean if he corrects his outward behavior and lives a diligent religious life. But though he can restrain his behavior to some degree, he cannot by his own effort remove the sinful thoughts that keep rising within his heart.

The law is not a means of making a man's heart clean but the word that lays bare the fact that sin is in that heart. Through the commandment not to covet it makes him realize that he has covetousness, and through the commandment not to lie it makes him acknowledge that he is a false being. Therefore the man who has honestly examined himself before the law comes to know that he cannot become righteous by his own deeds.

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The sin of the heart cannot be washed away by discipline or good deeds or repeated prayers of repentance. It can be washed away only by the way of salvation that God has appointed. In order to make sinners clean, God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this earth.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore in His own body the sins of every person in the world. And bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and so received the punishment of sin, and by rising again in three days He overcame sin and death. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which God accomplished in order to make the inside of the sinner clean.

Therefore we must not understand the word *"first cleanse the inside"* merely as a lesson to set our hearts on being good. We must first acknowledge that we are fundamentally sinners, and believe the gospel that Jesus bore all sin with the water and the blood and was judged for it. When a man believes this gospel with his heart, God counts that faith as righteousness and washes away all the sin of his heart.

When the heart is made clean by the gospel, the outside also gradually becomes clean. This does not mean that from the moment of receiving the remission of sin the flesh becomes perfect and never does wrong again. The saved person also makes mistakes because his flesh is weak, but now he does not justify his own desires and desires to live according to the word of God.

A clean life is not a condition of salvation but a fruit that the person who has received the remission of sin bears. It is not that we are saved by first making our conduct clean; it is that the person whose heart has been made clean by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit goes on correcting his conduct with thanksgiving. This is the order in which the inside becomes clean

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

and thereby the outside also becomes clean.

Jesus went on to compare the scribes and the Pharisees to *"whitewashed tombs."* At that time tombs were sometimes whitewashed on the outside so that they might be easily seen. Outwardly they appeared white and clean, but inside were the bones of dead men and corrupted things.

The whitewashed tomb represents the reality of a religion without life. Though a man has a beautiful sanctuary and solemn ceremonies and devout words and a high office, if sin remains in his heart just as it is, he is spiritually dead. The religious ornament attached to the outside cannot remove the sin of the heart and spiritual death.

Hypocrisy is behaving as though one had no sin while sin is in fact there. It is living a religious life in order to appear right to people rather than before God. In order to hide his true condition a man may even adorn the outside with more devout words and deeds.

But the gospel of the water and the Spirit first makes a man acknowledge his own sin. It makes him realize that he has no righteousness and that without the salvation of God he cannot but be judged. And it makes him believe in Jesus, who bore all sin with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin on the cross.

The person who believes this gospel cannot put forward his own good deeds. That he has been made clean is not because he lived a devout life well but because Jesus washed his sin away completely. Therefore the person who has truly been born again does not exalt himself but gives all the glory of salvation to God.

In verse 29 the scribes and the Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets and adorned the monuments of the righteous. While commemorating the prophets who had already died, they said, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have

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taken part in killing the prophets."

But they did not believe in Jesus, the Son of God, who stood before them. While respecting the prophets of the past, they rejected the Messiah whom those prophets had foretold. Commemorating dead righteous men raised their own honor, but they hated the living word of truth because it laid bare their sin and hypocrisy.

This is the contradiction that a false religion holds. A man can respect the people of faith of the past and yet refuse the word of God delivered in the present. He can build a memorial in the name of a prophet and adorn a monument, and yet not receive the word of sin and judgment and salvation that the prophet delivered.

That Jesus called them *"sons of those who murdered the prophets"* was not merely a rebuke of their lineage. It means that they had inherited the same unbelief and rebellion as their fathers. Just as their fathers persecuted the prophets who delivered the word of God, so they too would persecute Jesus and the workers of the gospel He would send.

The word *"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt"* was not an encouragement of their evil deeds. It is a solemn declaration of judgment: that if they did not repent they would in the end go so far as to complete the sin of their fathers. Indeed they took part in nailing Jesus to the cross, and afterward they persecuted the apostles and the believers who preached the gospel.

That Jesus said, *"Serpents, brood of vipers!"* was also not an insult spoken out of personal feeling. Just as the serpent deceived Eve with a lie and brought her to death, so He was exposing the spiritual reality in which false religious leaders lead souls to destruction with a wrong teaching.

Therefore we must not use this word as a ground for

recklessly condemning or insulting other people. We must first look back and see whether we ourselves are not hypocritical believers who have only the outward appearance. We must also examine whether the teaching we deliver binds people to their own righteousness or leads them to the remission of sin that Jesus completed.

In verse 34 Jesus said that He would send prophets and wise men and scribes. This points to the risen Lord sending apostles and preachers of the gospel into the world. But those who hate the truth would kill them and scourge them and pursue and persecute them from city to city.

The true gospel meets opposition because it lays bare the hidden sin and the self-righteousness of men. Especially to the person who establishes his own righteousness by religious merit, the gospel that all sin was washed away once for all by Jesus' baptism and the cross becomes a word hard to receive. It is because this gospel does not acknowledge human merit in the least but exalts only the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The Abel of verse 35 is the first martyr, killed by Cain because of his righteous faith. Zechariah, son of Berechiah, refers to a righteous man who was killed while delivering the word of God. Speaking of the span from Abel to Zechariah, Jesus bound together and rebuked the long history of persecuting the righteous of God.

The word *"on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth"* does not mean that each person automatically inherits the sin of his forefathers and is punished for it. It means that by following the unbelief of their fathers and doing the same evil, and going further and refusing even the Son of God, they consented to the sins of the past.

That generation saw with their own eyes the Messiah whom countless prophets had foretold, and yet they rejected Him. They

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prided themselves on knowing the word of God more than anyone, and yet they nailed to the cross Jesus, the Master of that word. Therefore their sin was not a simple sin of ignorance but the sin of refusing to the end a truth that had been plainly revealed.

The way of escaping the judgment of God does not lie in adorning the outside more beautifully. Neither can it be escaped by piling up religious achievements and setting up monuments to the righteous. We must acknowledge that we are sinners and believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent.

The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit has already received the washing of all sin in Jesus. But he does not follow greed and self-indulgence on the excuse of the salvation he has received. Seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, he examines his own heart, acknowledges his faults, and seeks to live honestly and cleanly according to the word of God.

Matthew 23:25–36 tells us that the sin of the heart must be solved before the outward appearance. A religion that adorns the outside can deceive the eyes of men, but it cannot make them escape the judgment of God. Only when we believe the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit is the heart made clean from all sin.

Therefore true faith is not a life that seeks to appear holy to people. It is believing with the heart the complete remission of sin that Jesus Christ accomplished, and, giving thanks for that grace, casting away falsehood and greed and living within the truth. When there is in the heart a faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that faith appears as a life of humility and honesty and love.

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

Jesus' lament is a call of love, by which He would rather embrace and save sinners within the gospel of the water and the Spirit than judge them

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matthew 23:37–39).

In Matthew Chapter 23 Jesus solemnly rebuked the hypocrisy and unbelief of the scribes and the Pharisees. But the word that comes at the end does not close with a cold declaration of judgment. Jesus called out again and again, *"O Jerusalem"* and lamented deeply.

Jerusalem was the center of the faith of Israel, where the temple stood and the priests and the religious leaders were gathered. For long ages God sent prophets to Jerusalem and to the people of Israel. It was because He wanted them to realize their sin and return to God and be saved.

But many people did not gladly receive the word of God. When the prophets rebuked idolatry and unrighteousness and hypocrisy, they hated and persecuted them. Rather than reflecting on themselves in the light of the word of God and repenting, they sought to remove the one who delivered the word.

Jesus called Jerusalem the one who *"stones those who are sent to her."* The history of Jerusalem was a history of receiving much grace from God and yet repeatedly refusing that grace. God kept sending His word, but the people loved their own thoughts and religious traditions more.

Toward such a Jerusalem Jesus said that He had wanted to

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gather them, *"as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings."* A hen calls her chicks under her wings when danger draws near. In order to protect her young she blocks the danger with her own body.

This figure shows the will of Jesus to save sinners. Jesus did not delight in judging people and destroying them. He desired to gather under His own grace the people who were under sin and death and the wrath of God, and to give them life.

The chick that has come in under the hen's wings does not overcome the danger by its own strength. The mother protects her young with her own body. In the same way a sinner does not escape the judgment of God by his own good deeds and religious effort; he must enter into the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished and be protected there.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus did not say with words only that He would embrace sinners. He actually came to this earth and, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore in His own body all the sins of mankind. And bearing that sin He went to the cross and shed His blood and died and so received in our place the judgment of all sin.

The baptism of Jesus was the work of salvation in which all the sins of sinners were passed onto the Lord, and the cross was the work of judgment in which He received in their place the punishment for that sin. By rising again in three days Jesus overcame sin and death and gave eternal life to the one who believes in Him.

Therefore to come in under the wings of Jesus does not mean coming under a religious system or under the authority of a particular person. It means believing with the heart the salvation that Jesus completed with His own baptism and the cross and the resurrection. The person who believes the gospel of the water

and the Spirit is protected in Christ from sin and judgment.

Jesus said, *"How often I wanted to gather your children together."* God did not give the opportunity of salvation only once or twice. He called again and again through the word of the prophets, and at last He sent His own Son directly and showed the way of salvation.

This word shows how long God bears with and waits in order to save a sinner. Even though a man has refused the word of God many times, God lets him hear the gospel again and gives him an opportunity to return. That a man hears the gospel is evidence that God is still calling that soul to salvation.

But Jesus said, *"But you were not willing!"* The destruction of Jerusalem did not come about because Jesus was unwilling to embrace them. Jesus sought to embrace them, but they were not willing to come into the Lord's embrace.

The salvation of God is already perfectly prepared. What is lacking is not the love of Jesus or the power of His salvation. The problem lies in this, that a man does not lay down his own righteousness and stubbornness and so refuses the way of salvation that God has prepared.

The scribes and the Pharisees said that they were waiting for the Messiah, but when the Messiah actually came they did not receive Him. When Jesus did not act in the way they expected, they rejected Him. It was because they counted their own traditions and judgments more right than the word of God.

Today also there are people who say that they believe in Jesus and yet do not receive the complete remission of sin that the Lord accomplished. If a man thinks that he is saved only by adding his own deeds and repeated repentance and religious merit, he is holding on to his own righteousness rather than the righteousness of God.

If Jesus bore all sin with the baptism He received from John

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and paid the whole wages of that sin on the cross, then the sin of the one who believes has been completely washed away. Yet if a man thinks that the work of Jesus is not sufficient and adds human deeds as a condition of salvation, he is not wholly receiving the righteousness the Lord completed.

The word *"You were not willing!"* is a warning given to us today also. It is not that a man fails to be saved because the gospel is difficult; it is that he refuses the gospel in the end because he will not cast away his own thoughts and his own righteousness. The heart that thinks it must accomplish something itself, rather than believing the salvation God has accomplished, keeps a man from entering into the Lord's embrace.

In verse 38 Jesus said, *"See! Your house is left to you desolate."* Here *"Your house"* refers to the religious system built around Jerusalem and its temple. They boasted of the temple, but they refused Jesus, the Master of the temple.

A temple that God has left, however great and beautiful, is no more than an empty building. Though the forms of sacrifice and worship are maintained, if the righteousness of God is refused, there is no true life there. Though the number of people and the wealth and the religious power be great, if there is no gospel, it is spiritually a desolate house.

This word of Jesus was a foretelling of the historical judgment that would come upon Jerusalem and the temple. But at the same time it is also a spiritual warning given to religious people of every age. Apart from Jesus Christ, no religious tradition or system can save a man.

It is the same with a man's heart. Though it be full of knowledge and wealth and honor, if there is no gospel of the water and the Spirit it is spiritually desolate. On the other hand, though a man has little in the world, in the heart of the one who

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

believes the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished the Holy Spirit dwells and there is eternal life.

That Jesus said the house would be *"left to you desolate"* is a solemn declaration that judgment certainly follows the choice of refusing God. If a man refuses to the end the Savior whom God sent and holds only to a religious outward form, in the end he remains under sin and judgment.

In verse 39 Jesus said, *"You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"* The words *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* are a confession that welcomes the Messiah whom God has sent. It is the confession of faith that acknowledges and receives Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior.

Jesus withdraws from those who refuse Him, but He has not shut the door of salvation forever. When they cast away their own stubbornness and acknowledge Jesus as the Savior whom God sent, they will truly meet the Lord. In this word, along with the warning of judgment, a way of returning is set forth.

To see the Lord does not mean merely seeing Jesus with the eyes of the flesh. It includes realizing through the Word who Jesus is and what He has accomplished, and receiving Him by faith. The Holy Spirit makes us know through the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus is our Savior.

To welcome Jesus truly is not merely to call His name. It is to receive the fact that Jesus took our sin upon Himself by His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again and completed our salvation. When we believe the whole work of the Lord, the confession *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* becomes a confession of true faith.

This word is not spoken in order to condemn a particular people. It is a warning given to all who can know much of the word of God and enjoy religious privilege and yet reject Jesus

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Christ. Before we judge the people of Jerusalem, we too must examine whether we are receiving the gospel of the Lord just as it is.

The church also must set at its center the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ rather than boast of its building and tradition and offices. If the gospel disappears and only human deeds and honor and material things remain, then however prosperous it may appear outwardly, it cannot but become spiritually desolate.

In Matthew 23:37–39 there is contained, within the heart of Jesus who declares judgment, a deep love and sorrow toward sinners. The Lord desires that no one perish, and He wants sinners to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and come in under His grace.

Therefore we must lay down our own righteousness and religious stubbornness and respond to the calling of the Lord. We must believe with the heart the salvation of the baptism and the cross and the resurrection that Jesus accomplished, and enter into the Lord's embrace. In that embrace are the complete remission of sin, the protection of God, and eternal life. ✉

The hypocrisy that adorns the outside cannot wash away the sin of the heart; only the gospel of the water and the Spirit truly makes a man clean

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 23

[Question] 1. What is the core message that Matthew Chapter 23 seeks to convey?

The central thought of Matthew Chapter 23 is that Jesus rebuked the hypocritical faith of the scribes and the Pharisees and taught the humility and the service that the true people of God and true leaders must have.

The scribes and the Pharisees taught the law, but they themselves did not do it. They laid heavy burdens on people while they themselves would not move them with even one finger, and they loved to be acknowledged and exalted by men rather than by God.

Jesus rebuked their hypocrisy again and again with the word *"Woe to you."* They appeared devout outwardly, but their hearts were full of greed and lawlessness; and they themselves did not enter the kingdom of God, and they even kept other people from entering.

In contrast to this, Jesus taught that the great one in the kingdom of God must become the one who serves others, and that whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Last of all, Jesus grieved over Jerusalem, which had killed the prophets and refused the word of God, and foretold the judgment that would come.

Therefore the central thought of this chapter is that we must cast away a faith that is only outward appearance and words,

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believe God with the heart, practice the Word, and humbly serve other people. Also, the judgment of God certainly follows a hypocritical religion that does not repent.

[Question] 2. Divide Matthew Chapter 23 into three sections and tell the content of each.

The content of Matthew Chapter 23 can be divided into the following three parts.

1. He warned against the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees (verses 1–12)

Jesus told the multitudes and His disciples to observe the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees but not to imitate their works. They only spoke and did not do, and they loved to be exalted by people. Jesus taught that whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

2. He declared woes upon the scribes and the Pharisees (verses 13–36)

Jesus rebuked their hypocrisy and greed and their spiritual ignorance and lawlessness one by one. They shut the door of the kingdom of God before people, and while emphasizing trivial religious regulations they abandoned justice and mercy and faith. They adorned the outside to be clean, but inside they were full of greed and lawlessness; and while adorning the tombs of the prophets they in fact walked the same road as the fathers who had killed the prophets.

3. The lament over Jerusalem and the foretelling of judgment (verses 37–39)

Jesus lamented that He had sought to embrace and save the people of Jerusalem but they had not been willing. He foretold that as a result of their continually rejecting the prophets and

the Messiah, their house would be left desolate.

Therefore this chapter is composed of three parts: the warning against a hypocritical religion, the judgment that would come upon the religious leaders, and Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 23:1, whom does the Bible name as those who heard Jesus' word?

The message of Matthew Chapter 23 was proclaimed first to the multitudes and to Jesus' disciples. Jesus warned them not to imitate the hypocritical works of the scribes and the Pharisees (verses 1–12).

Then Jesus spoke directly to the scribes and the Pharisees, rebuking their hypocrisy and greed and their spiritual ignorance and lawlessness, and declaring judgment (verses 13–36).

Last of all, He lamented over Jerusalem and its people, who had rejected the prophets of God and the Messiah, and foretold the judgment that would come (verses 37–39).

Therefore the message of this chapter is directly a word that rebukes the scribes and the Pharisees, but at the same time it is a word given to the disciples and to all believers, telling them to guard against a hypocritical faith and to serve God and their neighbors humbly.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 23:2, explain the standing and the religious role of "*the scribes and the Pharisees.*"

"*The scribes*" refers to the experts in the law who wrote

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and studied the law and taught it to the people. Because they interpreted the law and judged religious and legal matters, they had great authority in Jewish society.

"*The Pharisees*" were a religious body within Judaism that sought to keep the law and the tradition of the fathers thoroughly. They believed in the resurrection and in the existence of angels and spirits, and in daily life they strictly kept the regulations of cleanness and the rules of the Sabbath.

A scribe indicates an occupation and a Pharisee indicates a religious affiliation, so not every scribe was a Pharisee, but there were many scribes among the Pharisees.

Jesus rebuked them not because they studied or kept the law, but because they themselves did not live according to the Word while requiring heavy regulations of other people only. They appeared devout outwardly, but they loved the praise of men and the high places, and they abandoned justice and mercy and faith, which are the center of the law.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 23:2, how did the "*scribe*" come into being?

The word "*scribe*" is sopher (סוֹפֵר) in Hebrew, and it originally means 'one who writes' or 'one who draws up documents.'

In the days of the kingdom of Israel a scribe was an official who drew up the commands of the king and the documents of the state and the historical records. At that time not many people could read and write, so he served as a professional keeper of records.

After the Babylonian captivity the law became still more important to the Jews, who had lost the temple and their nation.

At this time the scribes developed into experts in the law who copied and preserved the law of Moses accurately, and studied and interpreted it and taught it to the people.

Ezra in particular was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, and he studied the law and practiced it and taught it to the people. So Ezra is regarded as the representative figure who established the tradition of the scribes after the captivity.

By the time of the New Testament the scribes had become teachers of the law who exercised great influence in the interpretation of the law and in judgment, and they also served as members of the Sanhedrin council. But some scribes put their own interpretations and traditions ahead of the word of God, and only spoke without doing, and so they received the rebuke of Jesus.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 23:2, out of what background did the "*Pharisee*" come?

The name "*Pharisee*" is generally regarded as having come from the Hebrew and Aramaic perushim (פְּרוּשִׁים), and it means 'the separated ones.' There are, however, other views concerning the exact origin of this name.

The root of the Pharisaic party can be found in the Hasidim, the devout people who sought to keep the law and their faith when Greek culture and the religions of the Gentiles spread through Jewish society around the second century B.C. They are regarded as having developed into one independent religious body after the Maccabean revolt.

They were called 'the separated ones' because they set themselves apart from Gentile culture and from an unclean manner of life and sought to keep the law and the regulations

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of cleanness thoroughly. They also counted important not only the written law but the oral tradition handed down from the fathers.

In the days of the New Testament the Pharisees were not a body centered on the priests; they were made up mainly of lay teachers of the law and devout people, and they had considerable influence over the common people. Jesus rebuked them not because they sought to keep the law, but because they put human tradition ahead of the word of God and fell into a hypocrisy that was devout only outwardly.

[Question] 7. In Matthew 23:2, what is the meaning of the word that the scribes and the Pharisees sat in "*Moses' seat*"?

That *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat"* does not mean that they literally sat on the chair of Moses; rather it means that they occupied the authoritative position of interpreting the law of Moses and teaching the people.

Moses was the leader who received the law from God and delivered it to the people of Israel. The scribes and the Pharisees of the New Testament times counted themselves as successors of Moses, studying and interpreting the law and judging religious matters and matters of daily life.

Jesus did not deny the office of teaching the law that had been entrusted to them. But while they taught other people to keep the law, they themselves did not do it. They also added human tradition to the word of God and so laid a heavy burden on the people.

Therefore that they sat in Moses' seat means that they had been entrusted with the office and the authority of teaching the

word of God, and at the same time it is an expression that lays bare their contradiction and their responsibility, since they did not live a life worthy of that authority.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 23:3–7, what was the actual manner of life of the scribes and the Pharisees?

The scribes and the Pharisees lived the following hypocritical life.

First, their words and their deeds differed. They taught other people to keep the law, but they themselves did not do according to the word they taught.

Second, they laid heavy religious burdens on people. They made countless regulations and had the people keep them, but they would not lighten those burdens for them or bear them together with them.

Third, they acted so as to appear devout to people. They made broad the phylacteries in which the word of God was placed, and they enlarged the borders of their garments, and so displayed their own faith.

Fourth, they loved the high places and the praise of men. They wanted to sit in the best places at feasts and in the best seats in the synagogues, and they loved to be greeted in the marketplaces and to be called by the honorable title *"Rabbi."*

Therefore their life was not a faith that sought to be acknowledged by God but a hypocritical faith that sought to be seen by men and exalted by them. Jesus warned us not to imitate this faith of words only, this self-display, and this desire for honor.

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[Question] 9. In Matthew 23:3, explain how the words and the deeds of the Pharisees differed from each other.

The Pharisees taught other people to keep the law while they themselves did not do according to that word. They lived a double life in which their words and their deeds differed from each other.

[Question] 10. In Matthew 23:4, after the Pharisees had laid heavy burdens on others, how did they themselves act?

While they required of people countless religious regulations that were hard to keep, they themselves would not move those burdens with even one finger. They did not understand the difficulty of other people or help them.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 23:5, what was the life they lived in order to be seen by men?

They acted in order to appear devout to people and to be praised by them rather than to be acknowledged by God. The center of all their religious acts lay not in God but in the eyes and the estimate of men.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 23:5, what are the *"phylacteries"*?

The phylacteries are small leather boxes called tephillin (תְּפִלִּין) in Hebrew. Inside them were placed pieces of parchment on which were written the words of Exodus 13:1–10 and 13:11–16 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21. One was bound on the forehead and the other on the arm with leather straps.

Originally they were for thinking upon and remembering the word of God, but the Pharisees made their phylacteries large in order to show people that they were devout. What Jesus rebuked was not the phylacteries themselves but the hypocrisy of using them as a means of displaying their own faith.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 23:5, what do the *"borders"* refer to?

The *"borders"* are called tzitzit (צִיצִית) in Hebrew, and they refer to the tassels or the ornamental cords that the Jews attached to the four corners of the outer garment.

In Numbers 15:38–40 and Deuteronomy 22:12 God commanded the people of Israel to make tassels on the corners of their garments and to attach a blue cord. It was so that whenever they saw the tassels they might remember the commandments of God and obey them and live holy lives.

The borders themselves were a normal thing according to the law, and Jesus Himself also wore a garment with borders on it. But the Pharisees made their borders large so that they might appear more devout than other people.

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Therefore what Jesus rebuked was not the borders themselves but the hypocritical attitude of the Pharisees, who used them as a means of displaying their faith to people and of being respected by them.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 23:6, 7, what is written as the things the Pharisees loved?

The Pharisees loved the best places at feasts and the high seats in the synagogues, being greeted by people in the marketplaces, and being called by the honorable title of rabbi. Rather than exalting God, they sought to be respected and exalted by people themselves.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 23:8–10, what are the three things Jesus told His disciples not to do?

The three prohibitions Jesus gave are as follows.

1. *"Do not be called 'Rabbi'"*

It is because the true teacher is One, and all believers are brothers to one another.

2. *"Do not call anyone on earth your father"*

It is because the true Father, who gives spiritual life and salvation, is God in heaven alone.

3. *"Do not be called teachers"*

It is because the true leader, who saves believers and leads them into the truth, is Christ alone.

This word does not mean that in daily life the titles of teacher or of a physical father must never be used. It means that no one must take the place of God, or use a religious title

in order to rule over other people and be exalted by them. The source of all spiritual authority is in God and in Jesus Christ.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 23:8, how does the Bible reveal the reason Jesus told the disciples not to be called rabbi?

The reason Jesus said not to be called rabbi is that the true Teacher of believers is One alone, and all believers are brothers to one another.

At that time the scribes and the Pharisees sought to receive special authority and honor from people through the honorable title *"Rabbi."* They counted their own teaching as absolute, and at times they even ruled over people.

Jesus' word did not forbid the office of teaching or the ordinary title of 'teacher' itself. It means that we must not use a religious title in order to exalt ourselves and take as our own the authority of teaching that belongs to Christ.

Therefore the person who teaches the gospel must not boast of his own wisdom or become the master of people. All believers are brothers in Christ, and we must preach only the word of Christ and exalt Him.

[Question] 17. In Matthew 23:9, what does Jesus' word not to call a man on earth father mean?

The word *"Do not call anyone on earth your father"* does not mean that we must not call our physical father father. The Scriptures teach us to honor our parents, and they also use the expression physical father.

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This word means that we must not exalt any person as an absolute spiritual father like God and rely on him or serve him. The true Father, who gives spiritual life and salvation and makes us children of God, is God in heaven alone.

The religious leaders of that time sought to receive honor and obedience from people through special titles. Jesus forbade a man to take the place of God, and forbade believers to exalt a human leader above God and rely on him absolutely.

Therefore a spiritual leader must not play the part of a father who exalts himself; he must lead believers to God the Father in heaven. Believers also must not make a man the absolute object of their faith but must believe and rely on God alone.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 23:10, what is the meaning of Jesus' word, given as the third prohibition, not to be called leader?

Jesus spoke this word to mean that no one must take the place of Christ and become the absolute leader or master of the saints.

"And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ" (Matthew 23:10).

The scribes and the Pharisees put themselves forward as high religious leaders and wanted to receive respect and obedience from people. While saying that they taught the word of God, they themselves did not do it; they laid heavy burdens on people and ruled over them. Jesus warned that His disciples must not become religious leaders like these.

This word does not mean that offices and order such as pastors and workers are not needed at all in the church of God.

God entrusts offices in order to establish order in the church and to have the work of the gospel divided and carried out. But an office is not a standing given for exalting oneself and ruling over the saints; it is a responsibility entrusted for serving the church and souls. Before God all the saints are the same brothers and sisters.

Even the one who is ahead in the church must not make others follow his own thoughts and authority. He must first believe and follow the word of Jesus Christ, the only Leader, and must serve so that the saints also may follow Christ and the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The standard of judgment also must not be a man's position or word but the word Jesus has spoken.

Therefore the word not to be called leader means that a man must not take the place of the authority of Christ or put forward his own position and rule over the saints. The further ahead a person is in faith, the more he must humble himself and serve his brothers and sisters, and give all glory and authority to Jesus Christ, the true Leader.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 23:11, 12, explain what Jesus said concerning the great one and the one who humbles himself.

Jesus said that the great one before God is not the person who sits in a high position and commands other people and is served by them, but the person who humbles himself and serves his brothers and sisters.

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).

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The scribes and the Pharisees loved the best places and the best seats, and they wanted to be exalted and greeted by people. They laid heavy burdens on other people while they themselves would not bear those burdens. Jesus rebuked this figure and taught that His disciples must walk a road opposite to theirs.

The great one of whom Jesus spoke is not one who uses his office or his power to rule over people. He is one who cares for his brothers and sisters so that they may stand rightly in the faith, who preaches the gospel so that souls may receive the remission of sin, and who sacrifices himself for the church and the work of the gospel. The further ahead a person is in faith, the more he must think first of the souls and the circumstances of others rather than of his own profit, and actually serve them.

The one who exalts himself is the person who boasts of his own knowledge and righteousness and office and seeks to be higher than others. Such a person may be exalted by people for a while, but God lays bare his pride and humbles him. On the other hand, the one who humbles himself is not a person who degrades himself as worthless or who shows humility only outwardly. He is a person who lays down his own thoughts and his own righteousness, obeys the word of God, and quietly serves other people in the place the Lord has entrusted to him.

Therefore high and low before God are not decided by the position or the honor of the world. The person who follows Jesus Christ, the only Leader, and serves the church and souls is the great one before God, and God exalts the person who does not exalt himself but obeys the will of the Lord and serves in a low place.

[Question] 20. In Matthew 23:12, how is it actually possible to become one who humbles himself?

"And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

To humble oneself is not to say outwardly that one is a worthless person or to put on a shabby appearance before people on purpose. It is to exalt God and His word above oneself, and to lay down one's own thoughts and righteousness and greed and obey the will of the Lord.

First we must acknowledge that we were not saved by our deeds and merits but received the remission of sin by the grace of God. The person who has been saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not boast of himself but boasts of Jesus Christ, who saved him, and of the righteousness of God. True humbling begins in knowing the fact that one is a person who has received a grace one can never repay.

We must also receive the word of God as more right than our own thoughts. We must not cling to our own judgment and experience, but when the Word says a thing is right we must acknowledge it as it is and follow the leading of those who are ahead in the faith and of the church. To fit our thoughts and our life to the Word, rather than to fit the word of Scripture to our own thoughts, is the attitude of humbling oneself.

The faith that humbles itself appears as the act of actually serving one's brothers and sisters. Such a person does not lay heavy burdens on others while remaining comfortable himself, but helps them so that they may live the life of faith well and their faith may grow. He also looks into their circumstances and bears the necessary work together with them, so that souls may receive the remission of sin and live serving the gospel. He does not seek first his own profit and convenience but

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thinks first of the profit of the church and the gospel and other souls.

Such a life is not accomplished perfectly in every respect from the beginning. But we must receive with the heart the fact that serving is right, desire to live so, and keep going on in that direction even when we fall short. To acknowledge and correct our own faults before the Word, and to carry out faithfully even the small work entrusted to us as though we were serving the Lord, is actually the life of humbling oneself.

Therefore becoming one who humbles himself does not lie in degrading oneself. The life that humbles itself is accomplished when we obey the word of Christ, the only Leader, do not put forward our own righteousness and position, and actually serve the church and the gospel and our brothers and sisters. God establishes and exalts such a person, who humbles himself and serves, as one who is ahead in the faith.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, who are the two hypocritical groups whom Jesus rebuked again and again, saying, "*Woe to you*"?

Jesus proclaimed seven woes upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. They appeared devout outwardly, but inside they were full of greed and lawlessness, and they hindered not only their own salvation but also the salvation of other people.

The content of the seven woes is as follows.

1. He proclaimed it upon those who shut the door of heaven (verse 13).

They themselves did not enter, and they also blocked those who were trying to enter.

2. He proclaimed it upon those who lead people into a wrong faith (verse 15).

After they had won a convert, they made him fall into a faith more wrong than their own.

3. He proclaimed it upon the blind guides who distorted the word concerning oaths (verses 16–22).

They counted the gold of the temple more important than the temple, and the gift more important than the altar.

4. He proclaimed it upon those who kept trivial regulations while abandoning the important meaning of the law (verses 23–24).

They gave the tithe but abandoned justice and mercy and faith.

5. He proclaimed it upon those who make only the outside clean (verses 25–26).

They made the outside of the cup and dish clean, but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence.

6. He proclaimed it upon those who are like whitewashed tombs (verses 27–28).

Outwardly they appeared beautiful and righteous, but inside they were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

7. He proclaimed it upon those who reject the prophets (verses 29–36).

While adorning the tombs of the prophets, they persecuted and killed the people who delivered the word of God.

Therefore the seven woes are a declaration of the judgment of God that would come upon the religious leaders, who adorned only their outward appearance as devout and hindered the way of truth and salvation.

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[Question] 22. In Matthew 23:13–36, how are the several woes connected with one another?

The seven woes do not speak of sins that stand apart from one another; they form a structure in which the sins that come out of the one root of a hypocritical faith are laid bare step by step.

The first to the third woes show the harm that the wrong teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees did to other people. They blocked the door of heaven, led their converts into a still more wrong faith, and distorted the word concerning oaths.

The fourth to the sixth woes lay bare the contradiction between their inside and their outside. They kept trivial regulations thoroughly while abandoning justice and mercy and faith, and they adorned the outside to be clean while inside they were full of greed and lawlessness. In the end they were people whose outside and inside were altogether different, like whitewashed tombs.

The seventh woe shows the final result that all the preceding sins reached. They adorned the tombs of the prophets and claimed that they were different from their fathers, but in reality they persecuted the prophets of God and sought to kill Jesus.

Therefore the seven woes form the following flow.

A wrong teaching → hindering the salvation of other people → clinging to outward regulations → the greed and lawlessness within → rejecting the word of God and the Messiah → judgment

In the end a hypocritical faith does not stop at the hypocrisy of one person; it blocks the salvation of other people, and at last it makes a man oppose even the Messiah whom God has sent.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 23:13, how does Jesus say that the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees shut the door of heaven?

The scribes and the Pharisees blocked the way of salvation, in that they themselves did not enter the kingdom of God and they also kept those who were trying to enter from entering.

First, they did not believe in Jesus, the Messiah to whom the Scriptures bear witness, but rejected Him. They also taught the people that Jesus was a false one, and so kept them from believing.

Second, they emphasized the works of men and the tradition of the fathers rather than the grace of God and faith. They taught that people could become righteous only by keeping their own complicated regulations, and so they made the way of salvation difficult.

Therefore, while standing in the position of spiritual leaders who ought to have led people to God, they kept people from believing in Jesus and put forward human tradition and works as the condition of salvation, and so shut the door of heaven before men. The wrong teaching of a spiritual leader can bring not only himself but also those who follow him to destruction, so we must certainly guard against it.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 23:13, 15, how did the scribes and the Pharisees hinder the way that leads to eternal life?

The scribes and the Pharisees claimed to be religious leaders who sat in Moses' seat and taught the word of God, but in reality they shut the door of heaven before men. They

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themselves did not believe the truth of salvation, and they also led into a wrong way those who were seeking to be saved.

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

First, they taught that a man must be made righteous by the works of the law and not by the grace of God. They required people to keep the law and religious regulations thoroughly and laid heavy burdens on them, but they themselves also could not wholly keep that word. Although a sinner cannot be made righteous by the works of the law, they made people rely on their own works and their own righteousness.

Second, they did not believe in Jesus Christ, to whom the Law and the Prophets bore witness. They did not acknowledge the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ who came to save sinners; rather they opposed Jesus and sought to kill Him. Even when people were about to hear the word of Jesus and believe, they hindered them and condemned them.

Third, they counted outward religious acts more important than faith. They were zealous in fasting and prayer and tithes and every kind of regulation, but they abandoned justice and mercy and faith, the weightier matters of the law. They did not believe the righteousness that God had accomplished, they did not have pity on sinners, and they did not receive the word of God with their hearts. As a result the people came to be bound to the rules and the traditions of their religious leaders instead of believing God.

Fourth, they zealously made people into their own converts but could not lead them into the true way of salvation. The person who received their wrong teaching came to rely on his own works more than on the grace of God, and to cling to his

own doctrine and religious righteousness.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

The true way that leads to eternal life is to believe in Jesus Christ. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist Jesus received all the sins of the world transferred onto His own body, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received the judgment of sin, and by rising from death He completed salvation. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all sin and obtains eternal life.

But the scribes and the Pharisees did not lead people to believe this salvation that God had accomplished; they put forward human works and religious zeal as the condition of salvation. In this way they themselves could not enter heaven, and they also made those who followed them go astray from the way of eternal life, and so they shut the door of heaven before men.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 23:20–22, does this word concerning oaths not contradict Matthew 5:33–37?

The two words do not contradict each other. Matthew Chapter 5 is the word that reveals Jesus' basic principle concerning oaths, and Matthew Chapter 23 is the word that rebukes the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, who divided oaths to suit their own profit and misused them.

In Matthew Chapter 5 Jesus taught that a man must not try

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to exaggerate or guarantee the truthfulness of his own word by an oath, but must always speak honestly.

"But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne" (Matthew 5:34).

"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

But the scribes and the Pharisees taught that what was sworn by the temple need not be kept while what was sworn by the gold of the temple must certainly be kept, and that what was sworn by the altar was nothing while what was sworn by the gift upon it must be kept. They artificially divided the objects of an oath and so made a way of escape for themselves, and they counted the gold and the gift more important than the temple and the altar.

Then Jesus said that to swear by the altar is to swear by the altar and by all things upon it, that to swear by the temple is to swear by the temple and by God, who is in it, and that to swear by heaven is to swear by the throne of God and by God, who sits upon it. This is the word that broke down their wrong distinction, by which putting forward a particular object was supposed to make an oath unrelated to God.

"And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it" (Matthew 23:22).

Therefore Matthew Chapter 23 is not a word that teaches by what object one should swear or that permits oaths. It reveals that even if a man puts forward the altar or the temple or heaven, in the end it becomes a word spoken before God, and so he cannot escape responsibility by changing the object of his oath.

The conclusion of Matthew Chapter 5 and of Chapter 23 is the same. We must not adorn our own words with a subtle oath

before God or make a way of escape, but must always speak truthfully, saying that what is right is right and what is not is not.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 23:23, in what relation are the tithe of mint and anise and justice and mercy and faith spoken of?

The tithe of mint and anise and cummin represents the outward works of the law that the scribes and the Pharisees kept thoroughly. Justice and mercy and faith, on the other hand, represent the will of God and the essence of faith, which are to be counted still more important in the law.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:23).

The scribes and the Pharisees calculated exactly even the small herbs and spices and gave the tithe of them. But while being zealous in the detailed regulations that appear in works, they abandoned the more important will that God had sought to reveal through the law. They showed their own righteousness by keeping the outward works well, but they did not have the righteousness that God had accomplished, nor a heart that had pity on people, nor the faith that believes the word of God.

Here *"justice"* means the righteousness of God, which He accomplished in order to save sinners, and the doing of what is right according to that righteousness. To put forward only one's own works without believing the salvation of God accomplished by the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not

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true righteousness.

"Mercy' is the heart of the person who has received the mercy of God, which has pity on other souls and loves them. The Pharisees only condemned the people who could not keep the law; they did not seek to lead into the way of salvation those who were in sin and weakness.

"Faith" is the faith that believes God and the word He has spoken and follows it faithfully. However thoroughly a man keeps the outward regulations, if he does not believe the truth of salvation that God has spoken, it cannot become true faith.

Jesus said, *"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."* This does not mean that we are to disregard what ought outwardly to be done; it means that while keeping the small works we must not abandon the more important righteousness and mercy and faith of God.

Therefore the tithe of mint and anise and justice and mercy and faith are not in a relation of opposition in which one must be chosen. But the order of importance is clear. Outward works are also necessary, but first there must be the faith that believes the righteousness of God, has mercy on people, and follows the Word. To put forward works only without this faith is precisely the hypocrisy of the Pharisees that Jesus rebuked.

[Question] 27. In Matthew 23:25, 26, how did the scribes and the Pharisees display a faith that adorns the outward appearance?

The hypocrisy of those who make only the outside clean is that they carry out thoroughly the outward religious life that is seen by people while leaving the greed and self-indulgence within the heart just as they are.

Jesus compared this to the figure of a cup and dish whose outside had been wiped clean while inside they were full of unclean things. The scribes and the Pharisees appeared outwardly to be devout and righteous people, but inside they were full of desire for material things, of impure lust, and of self-satisfaction.

Jesus said to make the inside of the cup clean first. Rather than correcting the outward behavior only, we must first solve the sin and the wrong desires within the heart. When the heart becomes clean, as a result the outward life also is rightly changed.

Therefore their hypocrisy lay in this, that while the inside remained unclean they adorned only their religious acts and their outward appearance so as to make themselves look like righteous people. God looks not at a man's outward appearance but at his heart and his center.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 23:29–31, where is the contradictory figure of the scribes and the Pharisees, who adorn the outward appearance, laid bare?

The hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees reached its height in the act of building the tombs of the prophets and adorning the monuments of the righteous while in reality rejecting the prophets of God and Jesus.

They said that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have taken part in killing the prophets. But this very word was their own testimony that they were the descendants of those who had killed the prophets.

They respected and adorned the tombs of the dead prophets,

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but they refused John the Baptist and Jesus, who were living and who rebuked their sin and delivered the word of God. At last, by seeking to seize Jesus and kill Him, they laid bare the same nature as their fathers, who had killed the prophets.

Therefore their hypocrisy reached its height in this, that while pretending to respect the prophets of the past they refused the word of God that was being delivered to them in the present, and even sought to kill Jesus, the Son of God.

[Question] 29. In Matthew 23:32, explain the prophetic meaning of the word, *"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt."*

The word *"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt"* is not a command in which Jesus permitted or urged the scribes and the Pharisees to commit more sin. It is a declaration of judgment and a prophecy in which He revealed that they would follow the same unbelief as their fathers, who had killed the prophets, and would in the end fill up the measure of iniquity.

The scribes and the Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets and adorned the monuments of the righteous, and claimed that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have taken part in killing the prophets. But they did not believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had come before them, and they persecuted Him. Outwardly they respected the dead prophets, but in reality they rejected the Christ to whom the prophets had borne witness, and so they were people who had the same heart as their fathers, who had killed the prophets.

"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt" (Matthew 23:32).

Here to fill up the measure means to fill full the measure of iniquity that had been piling up from the days of their fathers. They would resolve to kill Jesus and hand Him over to the cross, and afterward they would kill and scourge the apostles and the workers of the gospel whom Jesus would send, and would pursue and persecute them from town to town.

"Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city" (Matthew 23:34).

This word does not mean that the sin of the fathers is automatically passed on to their descendants along the line of blood. It means that by refusing the word of God and persecuting the righteous just as their fathers had done, they themselves took part in the sin of their fathers and made its responsibility their own. In particular, the sin of rejecting the Messiah whom the prophets had foretold, even after seeing Him directly, laid bare their stubbornness most clearly.

As a result the judgment for the righteous blood shed on the earth, from righteous Abel to Zechariah, comes upon that generation. This is the word that foretold that the generation which rejected Jesus and the workers of the gospel would receive the solemn judgment of God, and that Jerusalem and the temple would be left desolate.

Therefore the word *"the measure of your fathers' guilt"* lays bare the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, who said that they respected the dead prophets while refusing the living Christ and the servants He had sent. It is also a warning that the person who keeps on refusing the word of God and the gospel of salvation and persecuting its witnesses will in the end fill up the measure of iniquity and will not escape the judgment of God.

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[Question] 30. In Matthew 23:33, what word of judgment did Jesus speak toward the hypocritical religious leaders?

upon the scribes and the Pharisees as follows.

"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).

According to the word *"Serpents, brood of vipers!"* their hearts and their teaching were evil and deadly, and they were leading even the souls of other people to destruction.

The word *"How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"* is a solemn declaration that if they did not repent of their hypocrisy and unbelief but kept on rejecting Jesus, they could not escape the final judgment of God. It means that neither the position of a religious leader nor an outward devoutness can save them from judgment.

[Question] 31. In Matthew 23:34, what persecution did Jesus foretell that those who were sent would suffer?

Jesus foretold the persecution as follows.

"Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city" (Matthew 23:34).

Here the prophets and wise men and scribes refer to the apostles and the evangelists whom Jesus would send to preach the gospel. The religious leaders refused the gospel these preached and persecuted them as follows.

• Stephen was stoned to death while bearing witness of

Jesus (Acts 7).

• The apostle James was killed with the sword by the command of Herod (Acts 12:2).

• Peter and John were seized and examined and threatened because they preached the gospel (Acts 4).

• The apostles were dragged before the council and scourged, and were commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40).

• Paul was persecuted as he went about many cities, and at Lystra he was stoned and cast outside the city like a dead man (Acts 14:19).

Therefore Jesus' prophecy was actually fulfilled in the days of the early church. The religious leaders scourged the servants of God in the synagogues and pursued and persecuted and killed them from city to city. They went on carrying just as it was the sin of their fathers, who had killed the prophets.

[Question] 32. In Matthew 23:35, from whom to whom does the Bible say the righteous blood comes upon those who killed the prophets?

Those who killed the prophets come to bear responsibility for all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, who was killed between the temple and the altar.

Abel is the first righteous man in the Scriptures who was killed though he was innocent, and Zechariah represents a prophet of God who was killed in the temple. Therefore this expression takes in from first to last the whole historical sin of killing the righteous ones and the prophets of God.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day did not repent of the sin

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of their fathers, and by persecuting Jesus and even the servants He would send, they came to take part in the same sin as their fathers, who had killed the prophets. Therefore it means that the judgment of God for the righteous blood shed until then comes upon them.

[Question] 33. In Matthew 23:36, what kind of generation is *"this generation"* of which Jesus spoke?

"This generation" directly refers to the generation of the Jews who were living in Jesus' day and rejected Jesus and the servants He sent, and especially to the religious leaders, including the scribes and the Pharisees.

They did not repent of the sin of their fathers, who had killed the prophets, and by persecuting Jesus, the Son of God, and even the preachers of the gospel, they completed the iniquity of their fathers. Therefore the judgment of God for the sin that had been piling up for a long time came upon that generation.

This judgment appeared historically through the event in which the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, about forty years after Jesus was hanged on the cross.

At the same time, in a broad sense *"this generation"* shows the character of stubborn people who refuse the word of God and oppose the Messiah. But the object to which the text primarily refers is the unbelieving generation of Jesus' day.

[Question] 34. In Matthew 23:37, explain how Jesus called the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

Jesus called Jerusalem as follows.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" (Matthew 23:37).

This is the word by which He rebuked the fact that though Jerusalem was called the holy city where the temple of God stood, it had in reality become a city that rejected and killed the prophets God had sent.

In His calling *"O Jerusalem"* twice there is contained the deep love and the sorrow of Jesus, who had sought to save them. While rebuking the sin of Jerusalem, Jesus wanted them to repent and return.

[Question] 35. In Matthew 23:37, 38, what does the sentence *"Your house is left to you desolate"* mean?

Concerning the fate of Jerusalem Jesus spoke as follows.

"See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38).

It means that because Jerusalem kept on rejecting the prophets of God and Jesus, the Messiah, it would lose the protection of God and be left desolate.

This word was fulfilled historically when the Roman army attacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and threw down the city and the temple. Therefore the desolation of Jerusalem was the judgment that followed their refusing to the end the grace of God and the invitation of salvation.

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[Question] 36. In Matthew 23:39, look into the bright side of the word added at the end of the declaration of judgment.

In the fate of Jerusalem there is not only desolation and judgment; there is also contained the positive hope that they may one day recognize and receive the Messiah.

"You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matthew 23:39).

Here the word *"till you say"* shows that there is a time when they will see Jesus again. Jerusalem receives judgment for rejecting Jesus, but a time is coming when people will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah whom God has sent and will praise Him.

This can be seen as a word connected with the second coming of Jesus. When Jesus comes again, the people who believe in Him and receive Him will praise the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

Therefore even after the judgment of God the hope of salvation remains, in which one may repent and believe in the Messiah, and at last the kingship of Jesus Christ will be revealed and acknowledged. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 1

Let us not imitate the works of the Pharisees

< Matthew 23:1-12 >

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The works we must not imitate

The word today is the word in which Jesus told us not to imitate the works of the scribes and the Pharisees. Let us

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consider together what the Lord tells us to do and what He tells us not to do in this passage, and what it is that we must take heed to.

When Jesus was on this earth, the scribes, to speak in the terms of today, may be called those who took charge of the affairs of the nation, and the Pharisees may be called the religious leaders. It was the works of these very men that the Lord told us not to imitate.

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:2–4). He said that what they say is to be done and kept, but that their works are not to be imitated. What works does He tell us not to imitate? They are the works of binding heavy burdens and laying them on other men's shoulders while they themselves will not move so much as one finger.

I too look back on myself before this word. Of course there are things that cannot be done merely because one gives the order, and not everything is accomplished merely because one helps; but I often think about whether there is not something of that kind in my own heart, whether I am not only giving orders continually while I myself am unwilling to work.

"All their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'" (Matthew 23:5–7).

To sit in Moses' seat means to sit in the seat of a judge. He says that what they speak while sitting in that seat is right, and

so we are to do it and keep it. But He says that their works are not to be imitated. What is the problem? It is that they only speak and do not do. It is that they only give orders and only point out faults, while they themselves do not do. The Lord greatly hated this.

The phylacteries were things on which the Word of God was written and which they wore about their bodies. They were made so that one could read and look at and recite the Word even while going along the road. In the time of the Old Testament those who served God, out of zeal for God, sought to remember and recite and believe and follow the Word. But before long that good intention was changed into something done to be seen by men. They made their phylacteries broad and enlarged their borders in order to be seen by others, and they came to love to sit in the best places and to love to be greeted.

In the synagogue the seat for preaching the Word was at the front, and chairs were placed on both sides. Those who were said to be of high position sat in those best seats, and the rest sat in the seats of the congregation. But these men, even when they were invited to a feast, would seek out the highest place for themselves and sit there, and they loved to be called Rabbi in the marketplaces and to be greeted. They loved to receive greetings and loved to be served and hated to work, and they loved to lay the heavy work on others.

But in the time of the New Testament our Lord said to let the left hand not know what the right hand is doing. That heart which seeks to be seen by men is a problem that neither you nor I can escape. One may say that it has nothing to do with him because he does nothing but work all day long, but the Lord is telling us that the center of the heart must not be like that.

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The leader is none other than the Christ

"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ" (Matthew 23:8–10).

The leader is none other than the Christ. Therefore those who go ahead must also consider what the Lord has said and believe it and follow it. It is the same with the fellow workers who follow the Lord together. Just as in one household there is a father and a son and a daughter, so in the church also there are those who go ahead and those who come after; but our leader is Christ alone.

"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).

No man on this earth has ever spoken such words. The religious leaders of the world do not speak such words either. But our Lord said plainly that He does not want us to lord it over others and rule over them and despise them. This word, that he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted, is in the end one with the word before it. It is the one who serves who becomes the one who goes ahead.

The one who goes ahead must become the one who serves

If one truly thinks that he has gone ahead of his brothers and sisters, he must consider and prepare how they may live the life of faith well, how they may live well in the days to come, and how they may live serving the Lord alone without being

harassed by the problem of food and clothing and shelter. If he does not do this but is only for himself, and seeks to live well only himself, and seeks to be at ease only himself, and seeks to accomplish only his own will, and if he seeks his own advancement by making use of his brothers and sisters, then he is not a guide who is in Christ.

Therefore one must become the one who serves. He must not become only the one who gives orders but the one who serves; and if he thinks that he has gone ahead, he must lay the ground well for those who come after, so that they may serve the gospel and may not be anxious about the problem of making a living.

Only when we are not bound by food and clothing and shelter can we serve the Lord. If we are tied to the matter of eating and sleeping and clothing ourselves, it is hard to serve the gospel. That is why all of us strive not to be bound by food and clothing and shelter but to obey the Lord's command first, and to make every single thing we do profitable for the spreading of the gospel.

When one first meets the Lord, he thinks only of himself and is anxious about what he will eat and what he will drink. Then, as he looks at the church, he comes to know that the church has served the gospel in this way and has laid the ground so that we may not be bound by the problem of food and clothing and shelter but may live for the Lord alone, and that it is striving for that work. Then afterward he too comes to his senses and is joined to it, and while serving the Lord he becomes a person who lays the ground so that yet another person may live the life of faith well.

The Lord said that we would know the tree by its fruit. If we look at the fruit, we can know at once. If one only gives orders for the work and no one prepares refreshment for those who are working, that too is wrong. To give the orders for the work, and

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also to prepare so that those who work may eat their refreshment, and to look after them so that they are not hurt, and to see that their labor is not in vain—that is the work of serving. Giving the orders is by no means easy either, so to give the orders properly and to help properly is also to work.

People commonly say that a man has good faith because he greets others well, speaks well, recites the verses of the Bible well, recites the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed well, gives his offerings well, and is well mannered. But that is not what the Lord looks at. He said that obedience is better than sacrifice. The Lord wants us to obey and wants us to live joined together, and He does not want us to live only for ourselves.

When we say, "What is my life?"

Then we must look back on ourselves and see whether what we are now doing is being done well or not. We must also see whether or not there is such a person around us. If there is some part in which we do wrong because our faith has not yet grown, it is enough to learn, saying, since the Lord speaks in this way, this is not right, and to receive that word into our heart. Then that part is set in order, and from now on we come to grow in the midst of training.

There is truly much work to do in the days ahead. But when one is restricted in his actions in some part, he may become irritated, and the thought may come to him, wondering what his life is and whether his whole lifetime is to go by like this.

Do you think it would be different if you went out into the world? Even if you go out into the world, you still have to live held fast by the problem of food and clothing and shelter, and you have to live bowing day after day to things that are not even

good. A man is bound to live belonging somewhere and submitting to something. It is only that whether we will submit to what is right or submit to what is not right—that alone depends on our choice.

But even if a man lives only for himself, there are still things in which he must bow to others. It is nothing much. We come to know that this life—in which those who go ahead in the church lead us, and in which we live for others and for the gospel and for the Lord and for the salvation of other people, and yet are not bound by food and clothing and shelter—is the happiest life of all.

The world grows harder as time goes on. If we cannot look ahead and do not know the current of things, then when men are shaken we are shaken along with them. That is like setting out on the road without knowing where to go, and like running without knowing the goal. That is why a guide is needed. Our guide is Christ Jesus. The Lord has told us all of it in this Bible.

Like Jesus, who Himself came down to the lowest place…

Then what has Christ, who is our leader, done for us? To fulfill all righteousness our Lord was baptized by John and so received all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and delivered us perfectly from sin. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this way the Lord Himself came down to the lowest place and served us. That is why He could say, *"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11)*. Here lies the very reason we must not imitate the works of the scribes and

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the Pharisees. They laid burdens on others and did not move themselves, but our Lord Himself bore our burden and went all the way to the cross.

Therefore we must believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit and serve one another with the same heart with which the Lord served us. Those who go ahead serve those who come after, and those who come after are joined to those who go ahead, and all together we live serving the gospel.

The problem of food and clothing and shelter is also truly important. To solve it without anxiety, and to set the direction so that the life we live may be given to what is right—our Lord has set that direction for us and is leading us. I also am following that road, and you are following it as well.

You and I must not imitate the works of the Pharisees, but must imitate Christ, our true leader, and serve one another, and live according to that word which says that he who humbles himself will be exalted. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 2

Hypocrisy and blind guides

< Matthew 23:1-33 >

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won,

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you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against

yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

The men whom Jesus hated

Matthew chapter 23 records the woe that the scribes and the Pharisees were to receive, and the wrong life of faith and the evil works that they practiced on this earth. Jesus hated these scribes and Pharisees most of all. Jesus came to this earth and loved everyone, but these men in particular He hated exceedingly. Why is this so? It is because, more than their own problem, they make those who believe in God believe wrongly.

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matthew 23:2–3) is what He said. Those men will not lift so much as a finger, and yet they tell people to do this and to do that. That is why He said that what they say is to be done but their works are not to be imitated.

"All their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments" (Matthew 23:5). The phylacteries were things on which the Word of God was written and which they wore about their bodies. They were made so that one could turn them and look at the Word even in the midst of work; but though they were clearly visible even when made small, they made them broad on purpose and wore them about. It was the same with the borders. They made their sleeves large so that they would flutter as they went about, and they went about for all to see.

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And these men, whenever they were invited to a feast, always sat in the best place, and in the synagogue also they loved to sit in the good seats, and they loved to be greeted in the marketplaces and to be called Rabbi by men. They went out on purpose to places where there were many people and dressed in a conspicuous way, and they loved to have people call them teacher and leader. To speak in the terms of today, it is the same as loving to be called by every sort of title with an honorific attached to it.

Jesus, who is the true leader

But Jesus speaks in this way. *"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matthew 23:8).* It is truly so. Our true teacher is Jesus. There are those who came first and those who came later, and so the word guide is used as well; but in fact we are all creatures, and in Christ we are brothers.

It is only that God has given the discernment and the gifts by which the work of God can be done, and so there is a difference in that respect. To some He gives the understanding of the Word and the intelligence and the faith by which they can feed the flock, and so He has them lead; the Chief Shepherd is Jesus Christ, and those who take charge of each part under Him and serve are the officers.

Therefore we must learn from Jesus Christ through this word of the Bible. If this word says so, then whoever he may be, he must cast away his own thought and surrender and follow. Whether he is a pastor or one who goes ahead, there is no exception. If the Word says so, we must follow.

"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your

Father, He who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). The parents of the flesh are parents indeed, but once we are born again, the father of the flesh is the one who brought this flesh into being, and the Father of the spirit is God the Father. That is why we call Him our Father who is in heaven. There cannot be two fathers. Of course, on this earth we must call the father of our flesh father out of courtesy and duty, and serve him in the flesh. But our true spiritual Father is our Father who is in heaven.

"And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ" (Matthew 23:10). The true leader is the Christ. Christ is a word that points to Jesus, and that Jesus is God Himself. God came as the Savior, and as a Prophet He taught us all things, and as the High Priest He saved us from sin; so that true leader is Jesus.

"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12). This word also is right just as it stands. It is because before God, God alone is high.

"You make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

From verse 13 on, the Lord tells us what hypocrisy these scribes and Pharisees practice before God and what sin they commit. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13)*.

It means that those who shut the door of heaven are the scribes and the Pharisees. They themselves do not go in, and they do not allow those who are entering to go in. This very sin is the

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greatest sin of the scribes and the Pharisees. These are men who have finished all their theology and received their degrees and carried on a ministry and risen even to high positions.

Such men have shut the door of heaven before men. It means that they have hidden it away. While telling people to believe in Jesus, they have covered up how one must believe in Jesus in order to be born again. And they have hidden it away, saying that all of that is wrong and that one must not believe in that way.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). It means that they set themselves against God most thoroughly and make it impossible for people to believe the word of Jesus Christ.

In the world there is such a thing as theology, which unravels the Word of God as a branch of learning with the head of man. It unravels it word by word and according to the letter. Among them there are scholars who criticize the Bible, and they ask whether the Bible is all the Word of God, saying that there are in it the words of the devil also and the words of men also. And so a Bible even came out in which the words Jesus Himself spoke were called the words of God, the words the disciples spoke the words of men, and the words Satan spoke the words of the devil, all distinguished by color.

The purpose of their studying in that way lies in teaching, in the end, that this Bible is not the Word of God. But there is no contradiction in the Bible. When a man who has not been born again tries to judge with his own head, the Bible looks full of contradictions. The Old Testament and the New Testament seem not to agree; and since He says not to call anyone on earth father, they say that it makes no sense. If they are told not to call a teacher a teacher, they ask whether the order of society will not

collapse. If one sets out to find fault in that way, there is no end to it.

And so, because they teach in such a way that the Bible is not the Word of God, people who came in order to believe in Jesus come instead to distrust the Bible, and afterward they do not believe at all. That is why He says that they make them twice as much sons of hell.

The one who follows righteousness and the one who follows the law

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?" (Matthew 23:16–17).

To speak in the terms of today, it is like this. They say that what one has vowed in the name of Jesus Christ, that he will do this or that, need not be kept if his circumstances are hard. But they say that what one has resolved to give to the church must be kept without fail. They regarded the gold as greater than the temple. That is why He called them blind. It is because they did not know the word of the Bible and followed only what is seen with the eyes.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:23). Here justice and mercy and faith are righteousness, the loving of men, and belief in God. It is the word that while they gave the tithe even of their garden herbs,

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they cast away the very thing that is weightier.

What is the difference between the man who has been born again and the man who has not been born again? The man who believes in God believes this word and loves men and follows righteousness. But the man who has not been born again says that the law is weightier than this gospel by which God has saved us. He says that the law is more important than loving men.

So when Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath, the scribes and the Pharisees rebuked Him, saying, why do you heal a man on the Sabbath? You have broken the law. While they would lay hold of their own sheep and lift it out if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:11), they said that healing a man on the Sabbath was breaking the law. To emphasize only the law, saying do this and do not do that—that is the Pharisee.

Even now there are many such things. While they say that they believe in God, the fact that their own denomination believes in this way is more important to them than the word written in the Bible. That is their law and their law of works. And so they have cast away justice and mercy and faith. It means that they have cast away what is right, and the loving of men, and this way of obtaining salvation by believing the word of truth.

So even now, when they meet a man who has been born again, they denounce him as a heretic. Without even meeting him they add to the story and make personal attacks and denounce him. The religious leaders who have not been born again are the very scribes and Pharisees of today.

"Woe to you"—those who kill the souls of men

"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

(Matthew 23:24). The great will of God—that is, this salvation that has come by the water and the Spirit, this great truth of the remission of sin and of being born again and of becoming a child of God and a righteous man—they swallow whole. And meanwhile they take pains to emphasize only the small things, saying let us live kindly, let us live good lives.

It is good to teach filial duty, and it is good to do good. But it means that while they strain out the gnat, and while they argue over whether this was done well or badly, they swallow the great will of God whole.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25–26).

It is making only the outside glossy. There ought to be in the heart a faith that believes the Word of God, but inside it is full of sin. Men who have not been born again say that they are righteous, and yet they say that there is sin in their hearts. That is a sinner. Without the Word of God, one is a sinner. But the Lord said to cleanse the inside first. When a man receives the remission of sin, his works also change little by little.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:27–28).

Outwardly they appear truly beautiful. Their manner of walking is such, and they do not speak coarsely but gently. Even at their meals they conduct themselves by rule, and they pray in a holy manner. But He said that inside them are full of dead

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men's bones and all uncleanness. Only the voice is holy and only the appearance is holy and only the form is holy, while the sin of the heart remains as it is and the gospel of Jesus is not there.

What are those bones? There is no telling how many souls have gone to hell after hearing the words of false guides and believing them just as they were. It is not only those who are in prison who are murderers. To kill the soul of a man is the more fearful thing.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets" (Matthew 23:29–31).

They commemorate those who believed well in the past and those who were martyred as the pride of their own denomination. They say that since there were elders in our denomination who believed so well, we too have inherited that spirit and are a denomination that believes well, and that therefore our church is the true church. It is not that they themselves are such; they are setting up the monuments of the fathers of faith. And meanwhile they say that if they had been in such circumstances they would not have done so.

But the Lord said that they were bearing witness against themselves that they were the sons of the very men who had done that evil work, and He said, *"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).* The conclusion of the scribes and the Pharisees is hell. While there was sin in their own hearts they told others to receive the remission of sin, and while they themselves had not been saved they told others that if they believed in Jesus they

would be saved; so they are hypocrites.

He who cannot discern spiritually is blind

In this age also there are truly many modern-day scribes and Pharisees. They are many in number, they are men who hold power, and they are men who sit in the place of religious leaders. In the days of Jesus also, all were on their side except Jesus and His disciples and the multitude that followed Him. So both Jesus and His disciples were despised by them and treated as beggars. There is good reason why Jesus spoke this whole chapter of Matthew 23 to them.

If you see that there are such men around you and yet cannot discern them, that is blindness. If this flower and that flower are plainly different in color and one does not know the difference, then he has eyes and yet does not see. How much more when this is a matter of life. If a man cannot discern between the one who has been born again and the one who has not been born again, in the end he comes to resemble them. He does the very things they do and passes on the very words they pass on.

I too, before I was born again, lived the life of faith diligently for ten years. But those who taught me were all scribes and Pharisees. They did not know the word of being born again and told me only to keep the law unconditionally. And they said only who the forefather of our denomination was, and that we were the descendants of martyrs, and that though we were few in number we were a remarkable denomination.

After I was born again, I once met on a bus the pastor who had taught me in the old days. I was glad and took his hand and shook it for a while; but suddenly the thought came to me that by following this man's teaching I had nearly gone to hell, and

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my affection fell away at once. Still, thinking that I might have understood wrongly and that I would ask him once, I talked with him.

When I asked where he had been, he said that he was on his way back from leading a meeting at a prayer house. When I asked how many had gathered, he said that more than three thousand had gathered. He said that he had the sick come forward and prayed with the laying on of hands, and that some were healed of their diseases and demons also went out, and that God had worked a marvelous work. So I asked him whether he had preached the word of being born again as well, and he said that of course he had, that he had preached that one is born again by the blood of Jesus.

To every word I asked, his answer went astray. That diseases are healed and demons go out is not what the Lord wants. It is that people say they will believe in Jesus only if such things happen; but that is not salvation. I could not sit there any longer, so I said, Pastor, I am not well and will go to the back and rest a little, and I greeted him politely and moved to another seat. And I thought to myself: I truly came near to a terrible thing; by following such teaching I nearly went to hell.

Let us discern and enter rightly through the door of heaven

Dear fellow believers, if after receiving the remission of sin you cling to the scribes and the Pharisees again, you come to resemble them exactly. And you die. When the Lord comes and asks who your friends are, if you say that the scribes and the Pharisees are your friends, He will tell you to go to the place where your friends go. Ought we to go under the men whom

Jesus hated so much and try to live the life of faith there?

However weak you may be and however many thoughts of your own you may have, ought you to go under hypocrites and live the life of faith and listen to their preaching? How can you call those men who in the old days were trying to drag you to hell your guides and your shepherds?

I am a man who is not perfect in works, but in faith I am a perfect man. I am a righteous man and a child of God. Though I am lacking and cannot strain out the gnat, I do not swallow the camel whole. I am holding fast to the most important thing.

To fulfill all righteousness our Lord was baptized by John and so received all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and delivered us perfectly from sin. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is that very camel, and the great will of God, and the door of heaven. This is the very door that the scribes and the Pharisees shut before men.

Therefore we must live discerning. If we cannot discern, we ourselves suffer the loss. We must know the fact that Jesus hated the scribes and the Pharisees, and that He said that such men are the very scribes and Pharisees of today. You and I must hold fast to this gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter rightly through the door of heaven. ✉

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Paul C. Jong Sermon 3

We must come out of heresy

< Matthew 23:1-34 >

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won,

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you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against

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yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city."

Do not imitate the scribes and the Pharisees

The word of Matthew chapter 23 that we have read today is the word He speaks following on from chapter 22. In the preceding chapter a lawyer tested Jesus and asked which commandment in the law is the great one, and the Lord answered that to love God is the great and first commandment, and that to love your neighbor as your own body is the second. After He had spoken with those lawyers who challenged Him in such hypocrisy, this word today is the word the Lord speaks concerning those hypocrites.

In this chapter 23 our Lord spoke the word *"Woe to you"* as many as eight times. He is showing us what kind of man meets with woe from God and meets with destruction. Then upon what kind of man is there woe? It is upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees.

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:2–4).

The scribes and the Pharisees, to speak in the terms of today,

are religious people. It is a word spoken concerning those who do believe in Jesus and do attend church, but who know only outwardly and believe only outwardly. He said that what they say is to be done but their works are not to be imitated. He means those works of binding heavy burdens and laying them on other men's shoulders while they themselves will not move so much as one finger.

"All their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'" (Matthew 23:5–7). They make their phylacteries large and wear them, and fasten them on their foreheads as well, and make their garments large, and walk even their walk in a holy manner. They do everything in order to be seen by men.

But the Lord said, *"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matthew 23:8), "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9),* and *"And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ" (Matthew 23:10).* And He said, *"He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).*

Who is a heretic in the sight of God?

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in"

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(Matthew 23:13). Whenever a man believed, it is enough that he believes. And he must believe quickly. But they will not let even the one who wants to believe go in, and they themselves do not go in, and they shut the door of heaven with their own hands—that, He says, is heresy.

The word heresy has commonly become a word used to denounce others. But the heresy of which the Bible speaks is those who preach what is not the gospel the Lord speaks of and yet say that they alone have the true gospel. Both the man who believes without knowing and the man who knows and yet does not believe accordingly are included here.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

It is not that such men do no mission work. They give their lives to mission work. And when they win one convert in the course of it, they make him twice as much a son of hell as themselves. Since they themselves do not believe the gospel, and add falsehood to it and season it with other things when they preach, that person ends up very far removed from the gospel.

What is the greatest sin among sins? A man who does not know Jesus and does not believe has, rather, an opportunity to believe hereafter, so that if only he is taught properly he can believe rightly. But the problem is those who say that they believe in Jesus and yet believe without knowing properly, and those who preach to others without even knowing properly themselves.

Jesus came to this earth and by the baptism He received from John took our sin transferred onto Himself and bore it, and on the cross He received in our place the judgment for that sin and shed His blood and died and rose again, and so saved us; and yet

there are those who preach only half of it. Those who know only half and believe only half, and those who know this gospel of truth and yet cannot believe it because they are pressed by the custom of the world—such men will meet with woe before God.

There are people who, after believing another religion, come to know Jesus as their own Savior and come forward wanting truly to rely upon God. But because they teach what is not the truth to a person who is trying to believe so sincerely, it means that they instead drive in a wedge and make him a son of hell.

Those who regard the gold as greater than the temple

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?" (Matthew 23:16–17).

They regarded the gold as greater than the temple. To speak in the terms of today, it is the same as saying that what one has vowed before the Lord need not be kept if his circumstances are hard, while saying that what he has resolved in money must be kept without fail. Because they follow only what is seen with the eyes, He called them blind.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:23).

It means that while they liked better the giving of the tithe well, and while they regarded a legalistic and doctrinal faith as

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weightier, they cast away the very faith that knows and believes the righteousness of God and the love of God and the truth.

But the Lord said to do these and not to leave the others undone. Such things as the tithe, whatever ought properly to be done before God, must be done; and this faith—the righteousness of God, and that love with which God has loved us, and the faith by which we obtain salvation and obtain eternal life and receive the remission of sin—must never be cast away.

The man to whom his own righteousness is important thinks in this way. He regards it as important that he has done this and done that before God, and he does not regard as important what God has done for us. He pushes aside that work by which the Lord bore our sin through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment, and rose again from death, and saved us; and he is busy putting forward his own righteousness, saying how much he has done for the church and that without him the church cannot go on.

The heretic is the one who makes those who would enter heaven sons of hell

"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:24). It is the word that while they strain out the small things, they swallow the great will of God whole.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all

uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:25–28).

This passage can be understood only when one knows the background. The graves of our country have a mound raised above the ground, so that one knows even from far off that it is a grave. But the graves of that land were made by digging the ground and burying the coffin and leveling it flat, and then setting up a stone, and they smeared lime on the covering and whitewashed it. It was in order to keep the rainwater from leaking in. So when a man saw something white, he knew that a grave was there.

The outside is white and clean, but inside the corpse lies rotting. It means that the heretics are like that before God. While there is sin in their hearts they say that they believe in Jesus, and while they teach the church members and make them twice as much sons of hell, when someone asks in order to know the gospel they block him, saying that if he tries to know too deeply he will be hurt.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets" (Matthew 23:29–31).

And the Lord said, *"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33)*. God came to this earth and was baptized by John and so received our sin transferred onto Himself, and on the cross He shed His blood and died and rose again and saved us; and it is the word that asks how those who know this and yet do not believe it, and do not

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preach it as it is, and preach it with falsehood added, and block those who would enter heaven and instead make them twice as much sons of hell—how such men can escape the condemnation of hell.

"Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city" (Matthew 23:34) is what He said.

Is there really no sin in your conscience?

Some time ago I was riding in a taxi, and the driver asked me whether I believed in Jesus. When I said that I did, from that moment he began to evangelize me. He raised his voice and spoke as though he were preaching. He said that it had been about four years since he believed, and that formerly he had lived bound by drink but had now escaped it, and that it was truly a fortunate thing.

I said that it was truly a precious thing, and that his faith seemed to be good. Then I asked him: Sir, you would have no sin in your conscience, would you? At that he said that of course one has no sin if he believes in Jesus. So I asked him again: But as one goes on living he comes to commit sin as well; before God, in your conscience, do you really have no sin? Still he said that because he believed in Jesus he had no sin, and that the price had already been paid.

In words they speak so. When they preach, it seems that they would believe even if a sword were put to their throats. But when a man stands alone before God and thinks with his conscience, not only does he remember his sins one by one, but the sin is recorded in his heart just as it is. It is because the sin of the heart

has not been washed away by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Lord who has washed away all the uncleanness of this world

We must know how greatly God has loved us and how rightly and justly He has saved us from sin. He put on the body of a man and came to this earth and was baptized by John and so took our sin transferred onto Himself and bore it, and He was hanged on the cross and received the judgment for that sin and died, and He arose from death and rose again and saved us.

That He has saved us from sin so greatly, so rightly, so justly, and with the truth—that is the very righteousness of God and the rightness of God and the love of God. We must know it and believe it.

Therefore, whether we are alone or in the midst of many people, whether we are working or resting, whether asleep or awake, at all times the love of the Lord must rule our hearts. That the Lord has saved me so greatly and so rightly and so perfectly, and that this love is so very thankful a thing—this must be within the hearts of you and me.

But people put their own works in front and do not know what to do about the wrong in their own works. At such a time it would be enough to think of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and to settle it by faith, but they cannot do so. Because their own heart becomes unclean, they keep seeing the uncleanness of others; and while they drag out the uncleanness of others, the uncleanness within their own heart grows greater, and they fall into that mire.

The One who has washed away all the uncleanness of this

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world is our Lord. The One who has removed all sin is the Lord. That is why we must know and give thanks and believe that the Lord has saved us from sin so greatly and so perfectly and so rightly and has made us the children of God.

We must repay that love before God with faith. It is to say: God, I believe; I thank You; I am so lacking, and our brothers and sisters also have much lack, and yet You have saved me. We must become people of such faith. Only a person of such faith comes out of heresy.

Every time I face this word and preach it, I am so very thankful for that perfect love of God and that perfect salvation. There are times when the work is hard and the body is weary. But the thing that never changes, the thing that does not disappear from my heart, is that God has loved us and saved us so wholly and so perfectly.

It is not because we are excellent that we have become like this. It is God who has made us so. That is why we are thankful. You and I must know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit wholly, and so come out of heresy. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 4

The faith that has woe

< Matthew 23:13-39 >

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a

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camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

Salvation is obtained by faith

The Lord has saved you and me, and all the people of this world, from all sin. Jesus came to this earth and by the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the cross and by His resurrection delivered those who believe from all sin. This gospel is the gospel by which one becomes a righteous man and receives the remission of sin through the faith of the heart.

If the works of man enter even a little into believing in God, that is already not the gospel. Salvation is obtained by faith; it is by believing with the heart that one comes to salvation, and by confessing with the mouth that one receives the remission of sin wholly. True faith is obtaining salvation by hearing the Word of God, by believing the written word of truth.

If the works of man had to be added, there would not be one person in this world who could obtain salvation. Each man knows himself well. If salvation depended on the state of his own works, he could not but admit that he had already gone to hell.

So God, knowing the corruption and the weakness of man, accomplished salvation wholly and purely, so that not one of the works of man should enter into it. Jesus put on the body of a man and came to this earth and was baptized by John in the Jordan River and so received all the sin of mankind transferred onto Himself, and on the cross He received the judgment in our place and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and saved sinners from sin. He has given salvation to those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Today, precious as this gospel is, I mean to share the word concerning those who in this world preach a false gospel and deceive people under the pretext of Jesus—that is, those who will receive woe from the Lord. It is not my word but the word

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written in the Bible, and the word our Lord Himself spoke at that time.

The two kinds of men who will receive woe

When we look at all of this word, it is truly severe. And it is fitting that they should receive woe. But the point is that such men are found in this age today also, and within this Christianity as well.

There are the Pharisees. They are men who are said to believe very well, men who are said to believe well according to the letter. But they never believe that Jesus has made them born again by the water and the Spirit and has removed all their sin. Those who teach that Jesus took away only original sin, and that personal sins receive remission only when one prays a prayer of repentance every day—they are the Pharisees. To speak in the terms of today, they are the religious leaders.

What they say is the law itself, and it has more authority than the Word of God. If they say that Jesus took away only original sin, everyone must take it to be so; and if anyone says that He took away personal sins as well, he is driven out at once. If one testifies that Jesus has removed all sin by the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the cross, they do not receive it but instead denounce him.

Therefore the scribes and the Pharisees receive woe. On the last day God sends them to hell. And their house is left desolate.

Those who preach the gospel without knowing the gospel

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

The sheep who know nothing at all, lacking though they are, still believe in Jesus in order to receive the remission of all the sins of their whole lifetime—both the sins they have committed and the sins they will commit hereafter—and in order to go to heaven by believing with the heart. But the point is that these men keep them from believing it. It is truly fitting that such a man should receive woe.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). They go about diligently, and when they win one church member, since they themselves do not believe the gospel and preach it with falsehood added to it, they end by making that person twice as much a son of hell.

The law was given to make us know sin

There is no telling how many things a man stumbles over while believing in Jesus. He becomes unable to lie easily, and his heart is uneasy even when he does business. Then does a man really keep the law well and live well once he believes in Jesus? Some say that because a man always comes to lie when he does business, he must go into the mountains and farm. Then does a man not lie if he farms? A man lies until he dies, and he commits

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sin until he dies.

But if, as we read the Bible, we understand only that since He says do not murder and do not commit adultery, we must not do these things, that is a great mistake. That God said not to lie is meant to make it known to us that we are the very ones who are lying.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20) is what is written. The law was given in order to make us know and understand all that sin which we have inherited as the descendants of Adam. It is meant to teach us that I am a sinner who murders and a sinner who commits adultery, a sinner who cannot serve God first, a sinner who takes the name of God in vain, and a sinner who cannot keep the Sabbath holy.

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24) is what is written. But if we misunderstand this letter that God has given, and take it to mean that it is enough not to do what He says not to do and to do what He says to do, then it becomes a religion.

The Bible is the letter God has written to us

A young man and a young woman write love letters. At first they take fine phrases from here and there and paste them in. But one whose heart has grown deep does not do so. He pours out just as it is everything that is in his heart. He does not even try to make his handwriting pretty but writes it as it comes. That letter is full of words about the ice melting and the brook flowing, about the cherry blossoms and the magnolias having bloomed, about a sparrow chirping and waking him from sweet sleep. What is that? It is not a report of what is now seen with the eyes.

It is speaking in metaphor of how his own heart is at this moment. There is not one word that says I love you, and yet the whole of it is that word. But if someone looks at it and says, if you like her, say that you like her—why do you talk only about brooks? There is no content at all here—and throws it into the wastebasket, then that person has read the letter wrongly.

God has written a letter to us. This Bible is the very letter of God. And He said, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)* and He established the law of God and gave the Ten Commandments. When we look at those Ten Commandments, it seems that there are only two things, what to do and what not to do. If we understand it as saying that since He said to honor our parents, that is right, and since He said not to lie, that is bad, then this becomes a religion.

That was not the meaning of the word. The law was given in order to make man know and understand his sin. The man who interprets the Bible as he pleases meets with woe. The man who interprets it as he pleases and preaches it is even more so.

What kind of being are you yourselves? You are beings who cannot but commit sin, and you are those who have all manner of sin within your hearts and commit sin at every turn. So when God said do not murder and do not commit adultery, the focus did not lie in the not doing, but it was meant to teach you that you are sinners who commit adultery and sinners who murder and sinners who steal.

The blind guides have no interest

Let us look at these words: *"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'*

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Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?" (Matthew 23:16–17) and *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23–24).*

The blind guides strain out the gnat and swallow the camel. They have no interest in whether the church members receive the remission of sin or not. They have no interest in whether they go to hell or not. They have no interest in whether they receive blessing or receive a curse. They only pretend to love.

Only the ceremony of worship is grand. But do they preach the Word of God? They avoid the Word itself and spread out a great deal of talk that is beside the point. Even when they tell people to help the pitiful circumstances before their eyes, that is only a temporary filling of the gap and cannot solve the problem that is fundamental. They have no interest in that fundamental matter, that the soul of a man must receive the remission of sin.

Through the word *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25–26)* and the word *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:27–28).* He sets forth the man who appears beautiful outwardly but in whom the sin remains just as it is inside.

Because they were not willing, the house is left desolate

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets" (Matthew 23:29–31).

And the Lord said, *"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).* Then He said, *"That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar" (Matthew 23:35).*

And the Lord lamented over Jerusalem. *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:37–38).*

How many times the Lord sought to embrace them, and yet they were not willing. The result of that is desolation. And He said, *"For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matthew 23:39).*

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From a religious faith that has woe to a faith that has blessing…

Today we have seen from the Word of God what kind of people they are who will receive woe. Though He spoke of it divided in many ways, in the end it all belongs to the scribes and the Pharisees. They are those who shut the door of heaven, those who make men twice as much sons of hell, those who regard the gold as greater than the temple, those who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel, those who are clean only on the outside, and those who only adorn the monuments of their fathers.

We must look back on ourselves before this word. It is to ask whether I am holding a faith that is holy only on the outside, and whether I am bound to the small things and swallowing the great thing.

To fulfill all righteousness our Lord was baptized by John and so received all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again from death and delivered us perfectly from sin. To believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart and to receive the remission of sin—this one gospel of the water and the Spirit is the way of escape from a faith that has woe.

It is not works but faith. It is believing with the heart the perfect salvation of God, into which not the least of the works of man has entered. You and I must by that faith receive the remission of sin and become the children of God, and live not with a faith that has woe but with a faith that has blessing. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 5

Believe and keep the true gospel that opens the door of heaven

< Matthew 23:13-39 >

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe

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of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your

children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

The religion that shuts the door of heaven

In the latter part of Matthew chapter 23 the solemn word *"Woe to you"* appears again and again. The reason Jesus, who is full of love, rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees so strongly is that their fault was bound up with the salvation of countless souls. Not only did they themselves not enter heaven, but they even blocked those who were trying to enter. This was not merely a matter of having a poor character or of committing a small mistake. It was the sin of covering over the way of salvation that God had opened and of leading people into a wrong faith.

People seek out the church in order to lay down the heavy burden of sin and to meet God. Because they know that there is sin in their own conscience and they fear the judgment, they desire to hear the word of salvation. If at such a time the one who teaches the Word cannot clearly preach how sin is cleanly removed, and teaches only that one must live as a sinner all his life and pray a prayer of repentance every day, that man becomes one who blocks souls before the door of heaven. If a man tells others to believe in Jesus and yet does not teach how Jesus bore sin and removed it completely, then even though a person is inside the church he cannot escape the condemnation of sin.

The door of heaven is not opened by the religious merit of man or by the authority of a denomination. It is opened only by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ

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has accomplished. John 3:5 says, *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'"* Therefore whoever has been entrusted with the gospel must not hide or change the way of being born again of water and the Spirit, but must preach it according to the Bible.

The truth that is needed before zeal

The scribes and the Pharisees traveled sea and land to win one church member. They had religious zeal. But Jesus said that the man who came into being as the result became twice as much a son of hell as they. This shows us the fact that zeal in itself cannot save a man. If a wrong gospel is preached zealously, only more people are taken captive by a wrong faith.

We must not judge a faith to be right merely by looking at the act of evangelizing. How large an organization has been formed, how far missionaries have been sent, how many people have been gathered—these do not determine the truthfulness of the gospel. We must examine whether the word they preach actually saves sinners from sin. If they preach that the salvation of Jesus is complete and yet teach that sin must continue to remain in the heart of a believer, that teaching does not hold together.

The true gospel does not say that a sinner must wash away his own sin himself. It testifies that Jesus, by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took all the sin of the world over onto His own body, and on the cross received the punishment for that sin, and by rising again completed salvation. The thing a man has to do is to believe this righteous work of God with his heart. Romans 10:10 says, *"For with the heart one believes unto*

righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is not by works but by the faith that believes the truth that we are saved.

The salvation to which the water and the blood and the Spirit bear witness

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is not an incidental event within His public ministry. It is the starting point of the salvation in which God passed the sin of all mankind onto Jesus and fulfilled all righteousness. Jesus is the Son of God who has no sin, but by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of sinners, He bore all our sin. For that reason John the Baptist, seeing Jesus the next day, could testify, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

Jesus carried to the cross the sin He had borne through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The blood of the cross is the proof that He actually bore the death and the judgment that are the wages of sin. And the Holy Spirit bears witness that this salvation Jesus has accomplished is the will of God and is the true truth. 1 John 5:8 says, *"For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV"* The witness of the water and the blood and the Spirit is not three salvations separate from one another; it sets forth the one truth that Jesus Christ has perfectly saved the sinner.

If one speaks only of the cross of Jesus and leaves out the fact that He bore sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, then it does not become clear what sin the Lord bore and was judged for on the cross. Conversely, one cannot speak only

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of the baptism and leave out the blood of the cross and the resurrection. The Lord took sin over onto Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and by the blood of the cross He received the judgment for that sin, and by the resurrection He gave new life to those who believe. The man who believes this whole gospel has all the sin of his heart washed away and calls God his Father.

The blind guides who have lost the order of values

Jesus called those who regarded the gold of the temple as more important than the temple, and the gift upon the altar as more important than the altar, blind guides. It is the temple that sanctifies the gold and the altar that sanctifies the gift, but they saw the order the other way round. It is because they esteemed material things above God and put the maintaining of a religious organization ahead of the salvation of souls.

It is not wrong for the church to use material things. Material things are needed in order to preach the gospel and to nurture workers and to serve those in difficulty. But material things are, after all, a tool for serving the gospel. If one judges faith by the amount of the offering, or regards the growth and the finances of the organization as more important than a soul's receiving the remission of sin, then the essence and the means are turned upside down. It is not that man exists for the gospel; God has entrusted the gospel to us in order to save the souls of men. All the ministry of the church must stand under this purpose.

A blind guide leads other people while he himself cannot see the road. However great the position and the knowledge he holds may be, if he does not know the way of the remission of sin he cannot lead a soul into heaven. Therefore we must not accept

something unconditionally merely because it is the word of a famous man. We must examine whether it agrees with the salvation to which the Bible bears witness. The standard by which truth is discerned is not the number of people or the length of a tradition, but the Word of God.

A faith that has cast away justice and mercy and faith

The Pharisees gave in fine detail even the tithe of mint and anise and cummin. But Jesus said that they had cast away justice and mercy and faith, the weightier matters of the law. While they kept the small ordinances strictly, they cast away the very righteousness and mercy and faith of God. The Lord likened this to the picture of straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel.

In the life of faith also, one may regard the small forms as important and miss the truth of salvation. One may be very strict about the order of the service and the dress, and about the customs and the terms of the church, and yet be indifferent to whether there is sin in the heart and whether one truly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But the thing that must be settled first of all before God is the problem of sin. A soul that has sin is under judgment however decent a religious life it may lead, and a soul that has received the remission of sin puts on the righteousness the Lord has given and stands boldly before God.

The righteousness of God spoken of here is not a righteousness that man produces by his own works. It is the righteousness by which Jesus completely removed sin through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and through the blood of the cross. The mercy of God is the compassion by which He had pity on sinners and sent His only begotten Son and

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opened the way of salvation. The faith of God is the faith that believes His promise and what He has accomplished just as it is. The man who has received this righteousness and mercy and faith into his heart is not bound to forms but keeps the essence of the gospel and shows mercy to other souls also.

First cleanse the inside of the heart

Jesus likened the Pharisees to a man who cleanses only the outside of the cup and dish, and to whitewashed tombs. Though they appeared beautiful outwardly, inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence, of hypocrisy and lawlessness. A man can trim his outward appearance and correct his bad habits to a certain degree. But he cannot remove the sin itself within his heart by his own effort. It is because sin is not merely a trace of behavior but a matter that condemns the conscience before God.

People commonly strive not to commit sin, and when they do commit sin they repeat a prayer of repentance and try to make their hearts clean. But even though a prayer of repentance may be needed for acknowledging one's own fault before God and turning from it, it cannot become a means of atonement that washes away again the sin Jesus has already borne. The wages of sin must be paid not with the tears or the resolve of a man but with the blood of a life. Because Jesus took all our sin over onto Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and shed His blood on the cross, a perfect atonement was accomplished.

Here we must clearly distinguish between repentance and the remission of sin. Biblical repentance is turning from wrong thoughts and wrong belief and believing what God has done. To realize that one is a sinner, to acknowledge that one cannot be

saved by his own works, and to turn his heart to the salvation Jesus has accomplished—that is true repentance. Even when a believer commits a fault after being saved, he must not hide it but must acknowledge it before God and turn from it. But it is not that Jesus is baptized again or hangs on the cross again each time. It is that, in believing the atonement already completed, he casts away his own fault and lives according to the Word.

If one regards a prayer of repentance as a repeated sacrifice that washes away sin, the heart of man can never obtain perfect rest. It is because he must endlessly reckon whether he has repented enough, whether there is any sin he has left out, and whether he has prayed sincerely. But the ground of the remission of sin is not our feeling but the salvation Jesus has completed. The word that the Lord bore all sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid the price for it on the cross does not change according to our memory or our feeling. When we believe this certain gospel, the conscience enjoys true peace before God.

Therefore the way to cleanse the inside of the heart lies not in adorning oneself but in believing the truth of the gospel. When we believe the word that Jesus bore all the sins of our entire lives and was judged for them, our consciences no longer hold on to the debt of sin. The Holy Spirit seals in the heart of the person who believes this word that God's salvation is true, and makes His dwelling there. The man whose inside has been made clean does not do good in order to be saved, but does good in thankfulness for the grace he has already received. And so his outside also is gradually changed within the Word.

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We must not reject the living truth

The Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets and adorned the monuments of the righteous. While they said that they honored the prophets of the past, they rejected Jesus, who had come before them in the present, and the words of the men whom God had sent. It is because it is easy to commemorate a righteous man who has passed away, but hard to receive the truth that exposes one's own fault now.

A man may push away the plain word of the Bible in order to keep the doctrine and the authority that he has already set up. When he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit, instead of first examining the Bible he may reject it as an unfamiliar teaching, and he may even condemn the one who preaches it. But what is important is not who spoke it, but whether that word agrees with the salvation written in the Bible. The truth may wound a man's pride, but it makes alive the soul that receives it, out of sin and destruction.

The rebuke of Jesus was not a word spoken merely in order to condemn. It was a last warning given in His desire that they should turn from the wrong road and be saved. The Lord said toward Jerusalem that He had wanted many times to gather them, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Within that solemn rebuke there is contained a deep mercy toward perishing souls. But because they were not willing to the end, that house was left desolate.

The choice we must make before the gospel

Matthew chapter 23 teaches us that by becoming an outward religious person one cannot enter heaven. Though a man gathers many people and serves zealously and keeps the fine ordinances, if he rejects the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has accomplished, the sin of his heart remains just as it is. Conversely, even though he has no works of his own to boast of, the man who believes the salvation the Lord has completed obtains the righteousness of God.

We must examine our own conscience honestly. While saying that you believe in Jesus, are you not still confessing that there is sin in your heart? If so, you must examine again what your faith is holding on to. It is not that sin remains because the power of Jesus was insufficient. Neither did He bear only a part of the sin of man. Jesus bore all the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and on the cross, by saying *"It is finished!"* He completed the judgment, and He came alive again. The man who believes this truth with his heart receives the remission of sin and becomes a righteous man.

Moreover, the man who has believed this gospel must become one who opens the door of heaven, not one who shuts it. He must not add his own thoughts or blur the gospel, but must preach it just as the Bible bears witness. He must not lay a heavier religious burden upon the one who suffers because of sin, but must make known to him the news that Jesus has already borne that burden. Rather than binding people to his own organization, he must lead them to believe the perfect salvation of Christ.

When we preach the gospel we must explain it kindly and clearly, suited to the circumstances of the hearer, but we must not change the content of salvation itself. In order to gain a

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response from people we must not hide the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, nor reduce it to saying that it is enough to believe only the blood of the cross. Neither must we mix faith with human merit and teach that the remission of sin is accomplished by degrees. Since the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a work that God has completed, the evangelist must testify to that truth just as it is, and must help the hearer to confirm the Word and believe it with his heart.

Even now the Lord wants to gather souls under His wings. The way into that bosom is to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must not be whitewashed tombs that are decent only on the outside, but people whose sin of the heart has been cleanly washed away by the gospel. We must not cast away justice and mercy and faith; we must exalt the Word of God above the authority of men, and humbly receive the living truth. When we do so, we do not hear the warning of judgment only with fear, but we come to discover the mercy of the Lord, who calls sinners to the very end.

The door of heaven has already been opened by Jesus Christ. Whoever believes the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross and the resurrection receives the remission of sin and enters the kingdom of God. To believe and keep this gospel and to preach it rightly to others as well—this is the most precious mission God has entrusted to us in an age full of hypocrisy and false teaching. ✉

Paul C. Jong Sermon 6

Come back under the wings of the Lord

< Matthew 23:29-39 >

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

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A faith that adorns tombs is not a living faith

Beloved saints, the text today is the last part of Matthew chapter 23. While rebuking the hypocrisy and the unbelief of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus said that they were those who build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.

They said that they honored the prophets of the past. They boasted that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have taken part in shedding the blood of the prophets. But right before their own eyes stood Jesus Christ, to whom all the prophets of the Old Testament had borne witness. While they exalted the dead prophets, they did not receive the Son of God to whom those prophets had borne witness.

It is not hard to adorn the tomb of a prophet who has passed away. It is because a dead prophet does not now point out their faults or rebuke their own righteousness. But to receive the word that the living God is giving now, a man must lay down his own thought and his own pride. That is why people honor the servants of faith who have passed away and yet hate and oppose the servant who is preaching the Word of God to them now.

The man who truly honors a prophet is not the man who only adorns his tomb. He is the man who believes the Word of God that the prophet preached and casts away his own thought before that word. If the prophets of the Old Testament bore witness to the Christ who was to come, then the man who truly honors them must believe as his Savior the Jesus Christ to whom they bore witness.

Even today there are people who boast of the long history of their church and the tradition of their denomination and the famous forerunners of the faith, and yet reject the very gospel of the water and the Spirit that is written in the Bible. But boasting

of the fathers of faith does not make one's own faith right as well. What is important for us is whether the Word of God is in our hearts now, and whether we believe according to the Bible the salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished.

We must not build our faith upon the tradition of men or upon the teaching of a denomination. We must build it upon the Word of God. We must become those who believe the righteousness of God written in the Bible, not those who believe the authority of men.

"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt."

Jesus said to the scribes and the Pharisees, *"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt."* This is not a word urging them to commit more sin. It is a word making plain that they would oppose the servants of God exactly as their fathers had done, and would at last fill up the sin for which they would be judged.

Their fathers persecuted and killed the prophets whom God had sent. The scribes and the Pharisees of that day also rejected Jesus and sought to kill Him. Afterward they scourged in their synagogues the apostles and the servants of God whom Jesus had sent, and persecuted them, pursuing them from town to town.

It is not that the sin of the fathers is carried on just as it is merely because the blood of the flesh is the same. But if a man follows just as it is the unbelief of the fathers who rejected the Word of God and persecuted the righteous, he becomes their spiritual descendant. The scribes and the Pharisees lived in a different age from their fathers, but they had the same heart that hates the word God has sent and opposes the man who preaches that word.

Jesus said that all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from

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the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, would come upon that generation. God never forgets the suffering that the righteous have undergone and the blood they have shed. In the world the persecuting of the servants of God may even be acknowledged as right religious conduct. But God is looking upon all those things, and He will surely judge them justly.

To hate and hinder the man who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not simply a matter of disliking some individual. If a man rejects the word that such a person preaches, though it agrees with the righteousness of God written in the Bible, for the reason that it differs from his own doctrine, this is opposing the salvation that God has accomplished.

Therefore we must not look only at a man's fame and position. We must examine whether the word he preaches agrees with the Bible. If it agrees with the Word of God, we must cast away our own thought and believe that word. This is a faith that is meek before God.

Why religious people oppose the righteousness of God

The scribes and the Pharisees said that they believed in God, but they did not cast away their own righteousness. They thought that they themselves, who kept the law well and did many religious works, were more righteous than other people. Therefore they could not receive the word of Jesus, who has pity on sinners and saves them by grace.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit sets forth not the righteousness of man but the righteousness of God. No man can be made righteous before God by his own works. Man is a being who commits sin all his life, and he cannot keep the law of God

perfectly either. If in spite of this he tries to wash away his sin by his own works and by prayers of repentance and by religious merit, this is not believing the salvation that God has already accomplished.

Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world in order to save us from all sin. By the baptism He received from John, Jesus received onto His own body all the sin from Adam to the last day of the world, transferred onto Him. And bearing that sin He was hanged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received all the judgment of sin, and He rose again from among the dead and became our eternal Savior.

We believe this fact with our hearts. We believe that Jesus did not bear only a part of our sin but bore all our sin. We believe that He received all our judgment on the cross and that by rising again He completely overcame sin and death. This is the righteousness that God has accomplished, and it is the true gospel that saves us.

Into this salvation not the least of human merit or works enters. A sinner receives the remission of all his sin by believing with his heart the work that God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. We have not become righteous by living well; we have become righteous by believing the fact that Jesus has removed all our sin.

But if the religious leaders are to receive this gospel, they must lay down the righteousness and the authority of their own that they have built up until now. They must acknowledge that they too are beings who need the grace of God exactly as other sinners do. It was because they did not want this very thing that the scribes and the Pharisees opposed Jesus. They loved their own righteousness more than the righteousness of God, and they regarded the keeping of their own religious position as more important than the salvation of souls.

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"How often I wanted to gather your children together."

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" (Matthew 23:37).

In Jerusalem were gathered the chief priests and the priests and the religious leaders who taught the law. The temple of God was also there. Seen from the outside, Jerusalem seemed to be the very holy city that believed in God best of all. But they killed the prophets whom God had sent, and at last they rejected even Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus hated the hypocrisy and the falsehood of the scribes and the Pharisees, who led souls into the wrong road. It is because they led countless people into hell. But the Lord sought many times to gather the souls of Jerusalem into the bosom of salvation. Whenever the people of Israel went along the wrong road, God sent prophets and rebuked them, and He waited for them to turn, and He showed them grace again. At the last He sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ into this world.

When danger draws near, a hen calls her chicks together under her wings. When the chicks go in under those wings, the mother blocks the danger with her own body. Jesus also gave His own body in order to save us who were under sin and judgment. The Lord did not lay a heavy religious burden upon us; He Himself bore our sin and received the judgment in our place.

But the Lord said, *"But you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).* It is not that they perished because the Lord had no power to save. Neither is it that God had not prepared the way of salvation. It is because they held on to their own thought and their own righteousness and were not willing to receive the

salvation the Lord had prepared.

God causes us to hear His Word and tells us to believe the salvation He has accomplished. But if a man asserts his own thought to the end and rejects the truth, he cannot receive the grace of the salvation of God. It is not because the door of salvation is shut, but because he himself refuses to enter through the door God has opened.

The salvation prepared under the wings of the Lord

Then how can we today enter under the wings of the Lord? Do we enter by doing many religious works and keeping the law well? Do we enter by shedding tears and praying a prayer of repentance every day? It is not so. The way to enter under the wings of the Lord is to believe with the heart the salvation that God has completed by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

When Jesus was about to fulfill all righteousness by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He spoke in this way.

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body and fulfilled all the righteousness of God. So the next day John the Baptist looked upon Jesus and bore witness.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

That Jesus could take away the sin of the world is because He bore all sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. The cross is not the place where the sin of the world first passed over to Jesus. It is the place

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where Jesus was judged for the sin He had borne at the Jordan River. On the cross Jesus shed His blood and died, and by rising again He completely overcame sin and death and the power of the devil.

We believe this very gospel. We believe that Jesus bore all our sin, past and present and future. We believe that He was judged and died because of our sin, and that He came alive again from among the dead. Therefore in our hearts, which believe this gospel, there is no longer any sin.

The man who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make repeated prayers of repentance or his own works the ground of the remission of sin. He believes the word that God has already washed away all his sin. He makes the perfect salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished, and not his own feeling or good works, the ground of his faith.

Is there sin in your heart now? If you have believed in Jesus for a long time and yet there is still sin in your heart, you must examine your own faith again before the Word. It is not that sin remains because the power of Jesus was insufficient. Neither did Jesus bear only a part of the sin of the world. The Lord bore all the sin of the world once for all and received even its judgment completely.

Therefore the man who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all his sin and becomes a righteous man. He receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God, and he escapes the fear of condemnation and judgment. That we can say we have no sin is not because our works are perfect. It is because Jesus has perfectly removed all our sin. This is the bosom of salvation into which the Lord gathers sinners.

A house without the gospel is left desolate

Jesus said, *"See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38)*. Outwardly there was the temple and there were the priests and countless religious ceremonies were being performed, but that house, which had rejected Jesus Christ, was already a desolate house before God.

A church does not become a church with which God is present merely because its building is large and its members are many. Though it has a long history and tradition and performs countless religious events, if the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not there, there is no life there that makes souls live. If, when a sinner has come seeking, it cannot teach how sin is cleanly washed away and teaches only that he must live as a sinner all his life and wash away his own sin every day, that house is a spiritually desolate house.

It is the same with the heart of an individual. However decently a man may live the life of faith outwardly and however many good deeds he may do, if the sin remains in his heart just as it is, he cannot become a clean temple in which God dwells. He must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of all the sin of his heart.

In the heart of the man who has received the remission of sin there is the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells there. He does not exalt his own righteousness but boasts of the righteousness of God. He has pity on the souls who suffer because of sin, and he preaches to them the gospel of the salvation he himself has received. Such a man is the living temple of God in which the Lord dwells.

We have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our hearts are no longer a desolate house in which sin and condemnation dwell. They have

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become a house of faith in which the Word of God is and in which the Holy Spirit dwells. We must believe this grace of salvation and give thanks for it.

We must receive the word that is given now

We must not become people who honor only the servants of God of the past and reject the Word of God that is preached today. Nor does that mean that we are to believe absolutely in the authority of some man. We must examine every word by the Bible and discern whether it agrees with the salvation that God has accomplished.

If that word agrees with the Bible, we must not reject it for the reason that it differs from the tradition of our own denomination or from our own thought. The truth may wound our pride, and it may expose the fact that the faith we have held until now was wrong. But it is when we believe that very word that we turn from a wrong faith and receive true salvation.

The word with which the Lord rebuked the false guides is a solemn warning that He hates their hypocrisy and their evil and will judge them. At the same time, to the one who is still hearing this word it is a call of salvation, telling him to turn from the wrong road and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The scribes and the Pharisees rejected the living truth in order to keep their own religious authority. As a result, while they adorned the tombs of the prophets, they came to follow the road of those who had killed the prophets. We must not imitate their works.

Even now the Lord is calling souls through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The bosom of the Lord’s salvation is already open. Whoever casts away his own righteousness and

believes according to the Word the salvation that Jesus has accomplished receives the remission of all his sin.

We who have already received the remission of sin have the mission of preaching the word of salvation to those who do not yet know this gospel. We must not become those who lay a heavier religious burden upon people. We must preach the glad news that Jesus has borne all their sin and has received even the judgment for it.

While preaching the gospel we may receive hatred and persecution. But God never forgets the suffering that the righteous undergo. Therefore we must not seek the recognition and the praise of men, but must boldly preach by faith the gospel that God has entrusted to us.

Beloved saints, do not become religious people who only adorn the tombs of the prophets. Receive the living Word of God with your hearts. Lay down your own righteousness and your pride and your religious tradition, and come into the bosom of the Lord's salvation.

In order to embrace us, the Lord received all the sin of the world transferred onto Himself by the baptism He received from John, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross, and by rising again from among the dead He completed our salvation. The man who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit escapes the judgment and obtains eternal life.

We also have received the remission of all our sin by believing this gospel. We are no longer sinners but righteous. We are the children of God and people of faith who have received the Holy Spirit. With this assurance of salvation we must live preaching the gospel to the souls who are still in sin.

Until the Lord comes again, let us believe and keep this gospel and preach it to all the world. As those who have come in under the wings of the Lord, let us call and gather the souls

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who are still outside. Let us exalt and boast, not of the righteousness of man, but of the righteousness that God has accomplished.

The Lord who has saved us from all sin is truly righteous and faithful. The Lord has saved us perfectly and will never forsake us. We believe this fact. And with this faith we live serving the Lord and the gospel. This is the true life of faith that God has entrusted to us. ✉

◇ Next in the Series: “Matthew Volume 6”

Following this book, the Matthew Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series, Volume 6, which examines Matthew Chapters 24 through 28 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will soon be published.

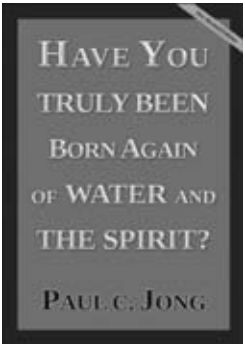
> ***Matthew Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (VI)***

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.

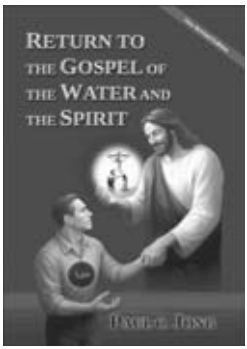
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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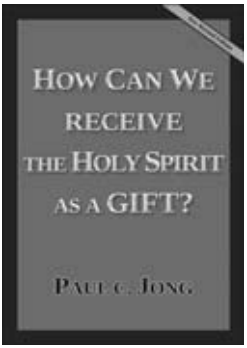
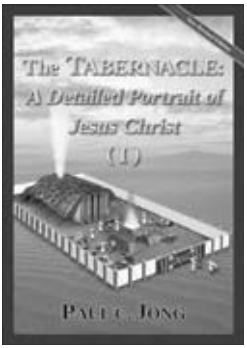
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



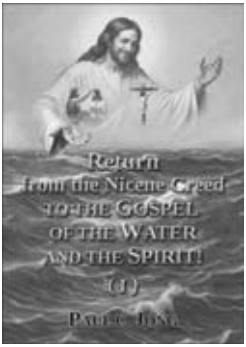
How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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.

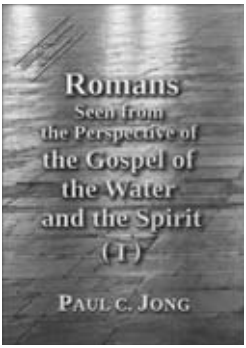
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching 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.

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

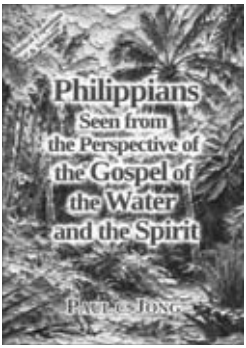


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who 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.

Philippians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



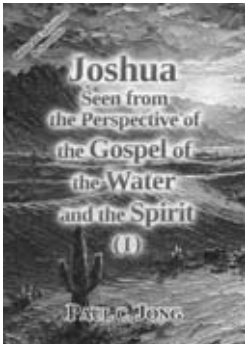
This book offers a fresh understanding of the Epistle to the Philippians from the perspective of the 'gospel of the water and the Spirit.' When we hold fast to the truth that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John, suffered judgment on the Cross, and was resurrected, 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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)

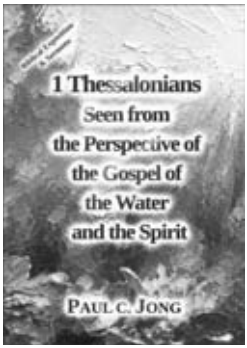


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



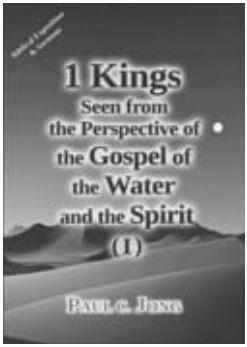
The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered in word only, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

This book opens the five chapters of First Thessalonians anew with that very gospel. It is the gospel by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and bore the sin of the world, was judged in our place for that sin on the cross, and rose again from death, delivering us from sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the power of God that turns a sinner into a righteous one, and turns the fear of death into living hope.

If you desire a faith unshaken in the last days, open this book. Here is the sure word by which you receive the remission of sins—life and true comfort for you.

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 (4-Volume Series)

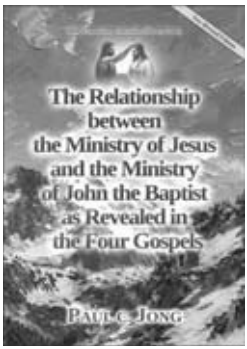


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

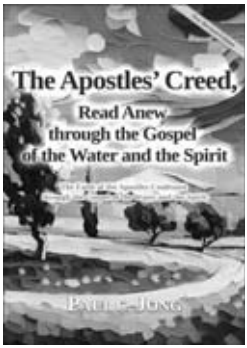
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

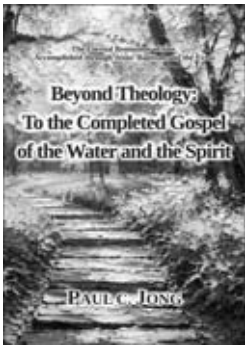


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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.

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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 90-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.

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Matthew, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

This book teaches, through the words of Matthew chapters 19–23, what kind of faith a person must have in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

What kind of wedding garment must a person put on in order to enter the feast of the Kingdom of God?

The rich young man in chapter 19 held on to his own righteousness and his possessions and went away sorrowful, and the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in chapter 20 shows that salvation is not wages earned by labor but the grace of God. Chapter 21, through the cleansing of the temple and the fig tree, exposes a faith that bears no fruit; chapter 22 shows that one must put on the garment of righteousness; and chapter 23 rebukes the hypocrisy of those who appear godly on the outside but harbor greed and lawlessness within.

The garment of righteousness that God gives is not something a person prepares by his own works. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world at the Jordan River, paid the wages of that sin in our place on the cross, and thereby removed all sins; and He rose from death to give eternal life to those who believe. Believing in the work of salvation that Jesus has accomplished is the faith that puts on the garment of righteousness. Do not rely on your own righteousness or on the teachings of religion. Believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, put on the righteousness of God, and follow the will of the Lord and serve the gospel.

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