

Is there anybody
who will never die?

Prof. M.Y. YOHANNAN

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FOREWORD

It is with immense pleasure and happiness that I am writing the foreword for my father (we call him Chachan), Prof. M.Y. Yohannan Sir's 100th book, 'Is there anybody who will never die?' I take this as a great honour and privilege not only because a son got this rare chance



to write the foreword for his father's book but also the topic he discussed matters to each and every one of us; Death and the Resurrection of the Dead.

Since childhood, I heard Chachan saying in almost all his gospel messages that all of us have to leave this world one day which ends at the grave and we should prepare for the everlasting life beyond death and surrender our life to the pierced hands of Jesus who will give us eternal salvation. As everyone knows, he was born in a family that faced five deaths including my grandfather when Chachan was only one year old and of his brother when he was only two years old. He always used to say that there was an odour of death in our family.

This book, 'Is there anybody who will never die?' can be taken as the second part or a sequel of Chachan's earlier book, 'Beyond Death.' In this book he discusses in detail about the topics such as the second coming of

Jesus, resurrection of the righteous dead (first resurrection), resurrection of unrighteous dead, transformation of the bodies of holy living men, eternal judgement, eternal Heaven and hell and the awesome power of the Blood of Jesus which can give salvation to whoever believes in Him. Chachan tries to inspire readers to acquire the brilliant glory of eternal heaven during the second coming of Jesus Christ with the transformed character and holy life gained through believing in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and washing away their sins by His precious Blood.

This book talks about two types of people, the first one who had physical death and waiting in the graves for Jesus' second coming and the second type of people who will not die but will be transformed at the last trumpet. The first set of people will be raised from the dead i.e. the resurrection of the righteous or first resurrection and those people who are leading holy life and still on earth will be transformed as St. Paul said in I Corinthians 15 : 51-56,

“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed.....Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?....”

Jesus said the same thing which we see in John 11 : 25

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies and

whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

Psalms 89: 48 also describes this as,

"What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?"

St. John says in Revelations 20:6,

"Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."

The second set of people, the unrighteous dead will rise for the eternal punishment and torture as written in Daniel 12:2,

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

Bible says there are only two places, Heaven and Hell. So, what happens to a person when he dies? This book narrated it extensively. Jesus said to the thief on the cross. "Truly I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). St. Paul told Philippians, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, that is far better" (Philippians 1:23). Jesus said again, "Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in me has eternal life." Bible says we have been created for heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." This is the hope of every follower of Jesus Christ to be with Him one day in Heaven.

How do we prepare for that last day in our life? When death becomes a reality, we should know whether we have left our earthly home in order or not before we embark on our final journey. Prophet Isaiah delivered a tough message of God to King Hezekiah, “Put, your house in order because you are going to die.” 2 Kings 20:1 & Isaiah 38:1.

Billy Graham during his speech at the funeral of U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson said, “Death is no frightful leap in the dark but it is the entrance to a glorious life. For the believer, the brutal fact of death has been conquered by the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the person who has turned from sin and received Christ as Lord and Savior, death is not the end.”

An old hymn says:

“Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious at the Judgement day”

The other important topic which is discussed in this book is, “What should we do to receive eternal salvation because we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad?” Chachan narrated so lucidly that we must acknowledge that we are sinners and repent our sins and ask Jesus Christ to come into our heart. No matter how good we are, we can never go to heaven on our own merit but we need to repent-to turn from our sins. Christ did everything for us what we could never do for ourselves. We deserved only

the judgement and He shed His precious Blood to save us from our sins. "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) When Jesus comes in to our heart, He will make us a new creation as St. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come."

I hope that everyone who reads this book will commit their lives to Christ and follow Him every day and as we face that day in future when God will call us to be with him forever in heaven, may all of us say with apostle St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day." (2 Timothy 1 : 12) and as he said again in chapter 4 : 7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Let this book be an inspiration for all of us to be prepared to depart from this earth to heavenly places. Praise God. Sthothram.

With humble prayers,

Dr. Isac John, PhD

M.D., Rapha Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd.

PREFACE

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India, in his book “Indomitable Spirit” has written these simple but powerful words from his heart:

"Books are always my friends. Last more than fifty years, books gave me dreams. Dreams resulted in missions. Books helped me to take up the mission confidently. Books gave me courage at the time of failures. Good books are angels for me who touch my heart gently. Hence I ask young friends to have books as friends. Books are your good friends."

The former president entreats young men to have good books as their soul mates. Great books help us to achieve eminent missions and splendid visions for life as well as to face failures and adversities with courage and self-confidence. When we read great books habitually we attain and experience the amazing power and the sublime ability of heavenly angels to guide us and comfort us through their ethereal touch of hands.

John Ruskin, an English author, in his book “Unto This Last” calls books, “Kings Treasuries” – *“treasuries filled, not with gold and silver and precious stones, but with riches much more valuable than these – knowledge,*

noble thoughts and high ideals.”

Good books open the inner doors to creative thoughts of high worth and wisdom and these most profound thoughts lead us to the splendid and sublime world of venerable ideas and noble concepts, which spur us to action. That is why it is said that 'leaders are readers'.

Francis Bacon, a prolific English philosopher, writer, and scholar of the arts and humanities wrote in his essay “Of Studies” that *“Reading maketh a full man, writing an exact man and conference a ready man.”* He mentioned that reading makes a man richer and fuller in character.

I have heard a story about a tired elderly gentleman with a slightly unsteady gait, who boarded a train in France. This old man was stooping slightly to one side. He sat down on one of the seats, took out a Bible from his shoulder bag and started to read. He was sharing the compartment with a group of young men who started laughing and ridiculing him. One of the young men mocked him and said – “There are still people reading this outdated Bible, even though science has advanced so rapidly and has rendered the beliefs of religion irrelevant. What a pity, no awareness of science!”. Another young man exclaimed that this ignorant old man needed to be educated with some basic lessons in science.

When they noticed that the old man was quietly and intently reading his Bible without taking notice of any of their taunts, a young man asked "Sir, do you still believe

in such outdated things? Try to learn what science has to say about it."

The old man responded. "Science? I do not understand this science. Perhaps you can explain it to me", the man said humbly.

The young man took pity on the ignorance of this old man and so he offered to send him a few texts and public lecture notes on scientific truths for his enlightenment. "What's your address?" he asked, "I'll send you the material via post." The old man rummaged in his coat pocket and produced a tattered business card that read, "Louis Pasteur, Director, Paris Institute of Scientific Research".

The shocked young men stood up and apologised when they realized that they had encountered Louis Pasteur, the country's leading chemist and a giant of microbiology who invented the rabies vaccine. Louis Pasteur was a believer in Christ.

Even today there are people who are reluctant to read and are hesitant to comprehend the eternal yet novel truths in the Holy Bible. There are people who do not understand how ephemeral and fleeting human life is and who are unaware of the amazing fortune of eternal life. The inspiration behind the writing of this book is the overwhelming desire to open up the Bible's abundant repository of insight and wisdom to these people.

This book also attempts to explain the moral values and topics such as the state beyond death, the second

coming of Jesus, eternal judgement, eternal heaven, the awesome power of the most Holy Blood of Jesus capable of giving salvation from eternal hell. The answer to the question – “Is there anybody who will never die?” is the fact that the bodies of holy living men will be transformed at the second coming of Jesus.

My heart is brimming with the sole aspiration that everyone has an eager thirst for acquiring the brilliant glory of eternal heaven. I will be most gratified if my readers could reach the heavenly shores of eternity at the second coming of Jesus Christ by acquiring the transformation of character and a holy life gained though the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This can be accomplished without changing the church, denominations or congregations.

This book is a sequel to the book – “Beyond Death”. To understand and grasp the biblical truths about the state after death one has to read both the books – “Beyond Death” and “Is there anybody who will never die?”

I anticipate and hope that this book will be gladly welcomed and received with the same eagerness as my past books.

I also express my sincere regards and deep gratitude to Dr. Gilu George, who undertook the translation of this book, "Marikkaatha Manushyanundo", from Malayalam to English. She was ably assisted in this work by her husband Joe Augustine. They have done this work for the glory of God in the midst of their busy official

duties in the UK.

Let me conclude by requesting your benevolence and good will in future as well.

Yours truly

M.Y. Yohannan

NB: The following versions of the Holy Scriptures were used in the translation of this book

NIV - New International Version (where not explicitly specified)

ESV - English Standard Version

KJV - King James Version

NLT - New Living Translation

TLB - The Living Bible

CHAPTER 1

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

2 Peter 1 : 19

None of the prophecies in the Scriptures arose from a prophet's own interpretation. Scriptural prophecies were never written by any man's own wish or his own words. These prophecies never had any origin in the wills of men; the men were appointed by God and the words were conveyed by the Holy Spirit. The holy men of God - devoted to Him, and set apart by Him for this mission, spoke his words.

A true prophet is called and equipped by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform his job - to speak God's message, confront people with their sin, warn of coming judgment and the consequences of unrepentance and disobedience.

The books in the Bible can be categorised as books of Prophecies, books of Poetry and Wisdom, books of Law, History, Gospels and Letters.

Books of prophecies reveal very clear indications of

future happenings. Prophecies are not deciphered by human intellect but by the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The divine grace of the Holy Spirit is essential for that.

The very first question about the state beyond death is – “But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?” (Job 14:10). We come across the answer to this question in part one of this book – “Beyond Death”. which talks about the state after death.

The second question related to this is: “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). In this book we find an answer to this question.

The answer for this question is given by our Lord:

“The one who believes in me will live, even though they die”. *John 11 : 25*

We are in the dark concerning the things that will take place in the future. However, like a ray of light shining into darkness, the Holy Spirit foretells and reveals through prophecies the events of the future.

“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” *2 Peter 1 : 21*

We read in the King James version;

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first that no prophecy of the

scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2 Peter 1 : 19 - 21 (KJV)

In the Living Bible the same appears as follows;

“So we have seen and proved that what the prophets said came true. You will do well to pay close attention to everything they have written, for, like lights shining into dark corners, their words help us to understand many things that otherwise would be dark and difficult. But when you consider the wonderful truth of the prophets' words, then the light will dawn in your souls and Christ the morning star will shine in your hearts. For no prophesy recorded in scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages of God.”

2 Peter 1 : 19 - 21 (TLB)

When we receive the light of prophesy, we realize the experience of a morning star rising in our hearts. We attain clarity and sensibility in our hearts.

Prophecy is the shedding of light into darkened consciences, like a beacon in a dark place. Not only that, till the darkness is gone and the day dawns, till the day our Lord Christ comes again, these prophesies are like lamps shining in dark places.

Such prophecies do not emanate from a man's

preference, opinion or viewpoint.

For the prophecy did not originate from the will of man, but the holy men of God spoke being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“If a man dies, shall he live again?” The answer is - Yes, he will live again.

“The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.” John 11 : 25

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”

1 Corinthians 15 : 20 - 24

Christ has risen from the dead as the first fruit of a great harvest of all who have died. Then after this, all who belong to Christ will rise when he comes again.

On Christ's second coming, His redeemed people - those who belong to Him; those who died in Christ will rise before others.

All those who belong to Christ will rise when he comes again.

There are two resurrections – the first resurrection and the second resurrection.

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.” *Revelation 20 : 5*

“Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” *Revelation 20 : 6*

The holy and righteous people will be resurrected on Christ's second coming. This is the first resurrection.

Our Lord speaks of the resurrection of the righteous in the Gospel of Luke.

“Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
Luke 14 : 14

There is the resurrection of the righteous and then there is the resurrection of the unrepentant.

The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous people. It is the resurrection of the blessed and holy. The second resurrection is of the unbelievers and those who did not repent.

The first resurrection is the rising of all believers. Those who have been made righteous by the most holy blood of Jesus Christ, those who experienced the remission of sins by His holy blood, those who attained the salvation brought about by the crucifixion of Christ,

those who have become a new creation in Christ – these are the people who are righteous. The first resurrection is the resurrection of these people.

“Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.” *Revelation 20 : 6*

In the book of Prophet Daniel (chapter 12, verse 2) it is written:

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”.

Daniel 12 : 2

In the first resurrection some will awake and rise to everlasting life.

Yet others will awake and rise to shame and everlasting contempt. This is the second resurrection.

In Psalm 17, King David says:

“As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness”. *Psalm 17 : 15*

The people are categorised into two groups. First off there are those who have not experienced the righteousness of God. Their sole aim is the pursuit of the desires of this world. They too have descendants as does the righteous people. Both the righteous men and worldly men have wealth on earth. However, the worldly men relies entirely on their worldly wealth and earthly possessions. They live on this earth to accumulate wealth. They live merely for the pleasures of the world.

They have not experienced the redemption of Christ nor the righteousness given by Him.

The psalmist has these people in mind when he writes;

“Rise up, LORD, confront them, bring them down; with your sword rescue me from the wicked. By your hand save me from such people, LORD, from those of this world whose reward is in this life.” *Psalm 17: 13- 14*

However just as there are worldly and earthly men, there are also spiritual and holy men.

The spiritual men also live in this world. They too have families, houses and children. They too possess wealth and all its amenities. They also have their needs and necessities in worldly life.

Despite all this, their dependence is not on things of this world. The righteous people rely solely on God. Their aim and target is not of this world, but beyond - the kingdom of heaven.

In the Gospel of St. John, it is written:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

John 15 : 18, 19

It is natural for people who are reliant on their earthly possessions, who pursue the worldly pleasures, who are

allured by the vanities and riches of this world - to hate saintly men who are free from impurity and who experience the holiness and spiritual redemption.

That is why David said;

“Rise up, O LORD, confront them, bring them down; rescue me from the wicked by your sword. O LORD, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life.” Psalms 17:13, 14

Materialistic people think of worldly things. They have no thought about a life after death nor do they pay any attention to it. Such people cannot grasp the concept of eternity. The mortal men of this world do not understand that this eternity is either Heaven or Hell. They are only concerned about satisfying the needs of the flesh – eat, drink, enjoy, make love and relax! Their desires and dependence revolve solely around the pursuit and indulgence of these materialistic things.

That is why King David said to God:

“By your hand save me from such people, Lord, from those of this world whose reward is in this life. May what you have stored up for the wicked fill their bellies; may their children gorge themselves on it, and may there be leftovers for their little ones. As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.” Psalms 17: 14

“But as for me, my contentment is not in wealth

but in seeing you and knowing all is well between us. And when I awake in Heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see You face to face.”
Psalms 17: 15 (TLB)

King David says that he does not find contentment in the money or wealth of this world. Despite having wealth, castles, palaces, royal mansions, a family life, wife and children he says his reward and inheritance are not in this life.

My fulfilment and contentment is in seeing you. I know that if things were not right between me and God, I would not be content. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)

My happiness is in knowing that I am at peace with you and things are right between us.

“My contentment is not in wealth but in seeing you and knowing all is well between us.”

All is well. We are in unity. There is no discord, we are in harmony with God. Sin does not stand between us and God. The desire for worldly pleasures, the lust of the flesh and earthly allurements must not act as a hindrance to distance us from God.

After death, on that day we will wake up in heaven. We may die on this earth, but will wake up in heaven!

Then one can gain absolute satisfaction, contentment and complete happiness. All of the outward blessings and prosperity in this world can only give partial happiness. But when we wake up in heaven we will attain

this fullness of joy!

“And when I awake in Heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see You face to face.”

Oh Lord, I will see you face to face on that day. When my short life on earth is over, I shall come forth there, Oh Lord please prepare me so that none of the thoughts of this world lingers in my mind so I can hear your sweet voice.

When I have completed my life on earth as a godly man, when I have finished my race on earth and come forth to heaven, I will hear your tender affectionate voice. I will listen to your warm voice which will inflame my mind.

What will this voice say?

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.” Matthew 25:21

What a fortune! “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection.” (Revelation 20:6)

We must be a part of the first resurrection. We must have a share in the resurrection of the righteous. Let our prayers be that, we too are also able to rise to the ranks of the risen Holy men.

We sing *“Nirthaname thaavaka poojakare parisudhanmarude nirayil”* (please recognise your worshippers among the ranks of Holy men). But have we attained the qualifications for this? Are we worthy?

We must accept that even today, there are sins in our lives. There is impurity in our lives. We may still have a

love for money. Our lives are still filled with selfishness and in our hearts we harbour quarrels, envy malice and strife. Satan still reigns in our hearts which accommodates an evil nature, a sinful character and harmful desires. If this is our current state – if we lead such a life, we will not stand among the ranks of Holy men.

O Lord, I am pleading for your mercy. I am beseeching your graciousness and compassion.

Please be merciful to me. I will see Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I will be satisfied with Your presence. When I awake, I will see you face to face and be satisfied.

I will see you face to face. Today, I am unable to see you with my human eyes. When I leave my earthly body and enter the spiritual world my spirit will behold the spirit of God. I will behold your face.

Have you renewed your lives in order to partake in the first resurrection? Does Christ reign in your hearts?

Those who belong to Christ will rise from the dead at his second coming. Those in union with the Christ, the righteous, the just and the Holy alone will have their share in the first resurrection and will rise from their graves.

As we do not know the time of Christ's second coming, let us be prepared now. Let us live our lives in the light of this reality and surrender our hearts to Him. Let us submit ourselves into the mighty hands of Jesus Christ. Let us begin a renewed life. Why hesitate? Why delay? The time for Christ's second coming is imminent. The call of the trumpet announcing Christ's return with great

power and glory will soon be heard.

The signs preceding the return of the Lord Jesus are evident everywhere. Even the nature is in awe and preparation for this event. Even the world around us is preparing for his second coming. We hear calls for war and rumours of wars.

Nations are at war. "Nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:7). Various signs depicting the times before Christ's second coming are all around us. Let us not fail to take heed of this coming reality and its implications. Let us make haste, wake up, be prepared and get ready.



CHAPTER 2

“I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.” Acts 24: 15

St. Paul speaks these words in Rome where his case and the charges against him were brought before the Governor. The audience were not Jews neither were they spiritual men. They were intellectuals who were totally ignorant of religion, spirituality and matters relating to God.

St. Paul was defending himself before the governor Felix and his wife Drusilla, against the accusations brought forward by a lawyer called Tertullus in collusion with the high priest Ananias and some of the elders.

St. Paul says: “I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

There will be a resurrection of the just and righteous. In the same way there will be a resurrection of the unrighteous. St. Paul gives a just account of himself and his only hope is to be a part of the resurrection of the righteous.

St. Paul, during his imprisonment at Rome, writes in

his epistle to the people of Philippi – members of the first church in Europe, by setting before them the greatness of their calling and of their destiny:

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” *Philippians 3:20-21*

Unsurpassed is the extent of hope expressed by Paul the Apostle! According to the Apostle, those who live in Christ, those who have faith in Christ and those who have experienced the salvation rendered by him, those who have experienced the redemption by the Holy Blood of Christ and those who live a new life in Christ will receive a magnificent and glorious experience at the second coming of Christ.

Our citizenship is in Heaven. Although we continue our lives here on earth, we are citizens of Heaven. We will have the honour and the privilege of being the citizens of Heaven.

We read in Isaiah chapter 26, verse 19 as follows:

“Yet we have this assurance. Those who belong to God shall live again. Those who dwell in the dust shall awake and sing for joy. For God’s light of life will fall like dew upon them. The earth will give birth to her dead.”

Isaiah 26:19 (TLB)

Those who dwell in the dust are those who have

died. The earth shall cast forth the dead. The earth will give birth to the dead. The dead will come back to life and arise.

“Yet we have this assurance. Those who belong to God shall live again.” Who gets to share in this first resurrection? Only those who belong to God. Those who are in the possession of God, those who are His inheritance and those who are His own. Those who belong to God shall live again. They will resurrect and will live again.

“Those who dwell in the dust shall awake and sing for joy”. The happiness of these servants of God will be evident in their songs.

“For God's light of life will fall like dew upon them”. The living light of God will shower on them like refreshing dew drops. The celestial beams of God's love will cover them like the dew drops at the dawn.

“The earth will give birth to the dead”. This means the earth shall cast out the dead whose bodies lie beneath the dust of the earth.

In verse five of chapter twenty of the Book of Revelation, we read about the resurrection of the wicked people who have not repented.

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.”

Revelation 20 : 5

However, at the first resurrection, the saints and angels of God will rise and live again, and reign with Christ

for a thousand years. This is the 'reign of millennial kingdom'!

Apostle Peter mentions this 'millennial kingdom' or 'the reign of thousand years' when he wrote his second Epistle.

*“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends:
With the Lord a day is like a thousand years,
and a thousand years are like a day.”*

2 Peter 3 : 8

It is not feasible to measure or quantify the extent or range of God's years by comparing with an average human life on earth. It is equally not possible to fully interpret whether this 'thousand years' is literally a thousand years in time.

Christ will come again, and will appear in person as promised by himself. He is ever-patiently waiting, prolonging and delaying this time as He wishes and strongly desires for you to join Him at His second coming. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but wishes for all to come to repentance.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people

ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”

2 Peter 3 : 9 - 12

How solemn and significant are the words of the Apostle! How earnestly should we lead a holy life! How careful and cautious should we lead this life! As we do not know the time, the day or the hour of Christ's coming we have to be prepared and ready at all times. The necessary preparation and watchfulness vital for the great day is set forth by Jesus Christ in the parable of ten virgins. (Matthew 25: 1-10).

The parable of ten virgins – five of them inside and five outside. The wise virgins who were ready went in with the bridegroom to the wedding banquet and the other five were left outside.

There comes a time when there will be a separation into two. Some will be taken inside and some will be left outside. Till then they are together – travelling together, working together, and even working in the same field! However, on that day those who have worked together in the same field will be divided into two separate lots.

Until then they may have slept on the same bed. Yet on that day, both will be separated. Two women may be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

In the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30) where the weeds grew among the good wheat seeds, we

read of the servants asking their master, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” “No,” he answered, “because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”

Weeds and wheat are allowed to grow in the same field. They continue to grow together for some time. But after that their fate will be different. Both will be separated. The weeds will be bundled and burned in fire. The wheat will be gathered and brought to the barn to be stored.

Contemplate seriously – am I yet worthy enough to be counted among those who would be gathered and brought to the barn?

Is Holy Spirit alive in my heart? Does the Holy Spirit reside in me?

Think! Let the world say anything about us. Let them misunderstand or misinterpret us. Irrespective of what the world says about us there should not be any iniquity in us. Not even a speck when the eternal God who sees our secret life looks into it. The one who sees our heart should not find even a crumb or a trace of sin in us. Our hearts should be pure and without any blemishes. Our hearts should be innocent and virtuous. When we are able to lead such a life we will stand among the ranks of the holy men. Then we will be gathered into the heavenly storehouse just as wheat is brought into the barn after harvest.

The world may mock and ridicule us. They may spread rumours about us. People around us may defame us with slanderous remarks and character assassinations. Never mind.

But, what matters is, the LORD who searches the heart and examines the mind should declare: "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

We should attain that fortune. A pure heart, a frank and open heart, a non-deceitful heart, a heart with no crookedness or corruptness, a truthful and honest heart, an innocent heart with malice or hatred towards none! A straight forward and upright heart. A heart brimming with integrity and virtuousness!

Let our hearts be sincere and straight forward. Let our attitudes and viewpoints be honest and transparent. Let there be a change in our deceitful and false nature. Let our proud and conceited hearts undergo a change.

Let us forgo our acts of piety and our good deeds and missions performed in order to be seen, thought well of and praised by others. Set aside our prayers said with the intention of being heard and praised by others. Let us give up our efforts to gain recognition, respect and appreciation from others.

Our actions should be governed by the intention to please our heavenly father. Our Lord Jesus Christ sees our heart and examines our conscience. Let us have the sincere desire and purity of intention so that Christ may be pleased with our lives and deeds.

John the Baptist preached:

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Luke 3 : 8

He continued;

“His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Luke 3: 17

Those who led a holy life will be gathered into his barn, but the chaff will be burned in the unquenchable fire.

We read about this in the Book of Revelation, chapter 20 verse 7 onwards:

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Revelation 20 : 7 - 10

To be tortured for ever and ever; day and night! Eternal torture! This should not be the fate awaiting any of us.

Do believe! The sole aim of gospel work should be to attain eternal life and to lead many towards eternal life. The aim of gospel work should be this alone. Not to make money or to acquire possessions on this earth.

Eternal torture should be avoided. The fierce judgement of eternal persecution should be avoided and escaped from. It should be possible to rise to the eternal heavens.

One day our worldly eyes will close for ever. We should attain an inheritance in the first resurrection along with the righteous. Oh Lord, there are many who follow the paths of destruction. There are many who travel through the broad wide gates. Many are reluctant to enter the small and narrow gate leading to salvation.

Let us strive for and decide to make every effort to travel the small and narrow path by forsaking the wide and broad paths. In doing so, we can reach the shores of eternal life.

Reaching the shores of eternity! Wouldn't that be fortunate!

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a masterpiece written by John Bunyan, the main character is 'Christian' who travels the long and treacherous journey to the Celestial City. The vivid descriptions of Christian provided towards the end of the book are noteworthy.

There is a skilful description of Christian and his friend Hopeful trying to cross the river Jordan – the 'River of Death'.

Christian met many obstacles to his faith along the way and yet God guided him through them all. There were many troubles to confront with and many issues to contend with during his journey to the Celestial City. He endured great hardships, agonizing troubles and many un-pleasantries at the Valley of the Shadow of Death, temptations at the town of Vanity Fair, and at the Giant Despair and at the Doubting Castle. After prevailing through the treacherous places and overcoming the dangers of a strenuous journey in spite of the wearisomeness, pains, despondence, hunger and other perils, he finally reaches the bank of river Jordan – which represents death.

When Christian and Hopeful started crossing the river Jordan, Christian began to sink and the waters reached over his head. For a time, he was in danger of fainting as anxiety and despair overwhelmed him.

Christian called out to Hopeful – *“You don't seem to have any difficulty and you are not sinking in Jordan. Alas my friend! I am sinking into the fathomless depths of this river.”* All memories of the previous wonderful experiences left him, and he feared he would not make it to the other side. He was afraid he would not enter the Celestial City.

Hopeful encouraged him with the words – *“Why are you looking at the rolling waves around you, instead look straight ahead to the other shore. Look and you will see a person – Jesus Christ waiting to receive us. I am swimming through this river looking at Him.”* Christian nearly drowns, but Hopeful reminds him of Christ's love

and to fix his eyes on Jesus Christ and eventually Christian emerges safely from the water.

Christian looked to the other side – He saw Jesus Christ with his arms open to welcome him. With that all his weariness and distress vanished. He continued swimming with a renewed strength and enthusiasm onto the other shore. Both Christian and hopeful reached the other shore together finally to the holy feet of Jesus Christ.

When wading through the deep waters towards the last realms of death, when crossing the rolling tides, the river Jordan of death is crossed by transfixing one's eyes on Him who awaits smiling with extended hands welcoming you to the celestial city.

On the other shore stands the king of kings; Jesus Christ - waiting to receive and welcome us. When we arrive, He is there waiting. He has gone before us, and He is waiting for us. Let us hasten to His presence. One day when we depart earth it should not be with a heavy heart full of remorse that we have not achieved what we should have. We should not leave the race unfinished.

Let us make the decision to receive Jesus Christ today itself. Let us accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Let us place our dependence today in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Let us experience the true remission of sins.



CHAPTER 3

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." Revelation 22 : 10 - 15

In the very last chapter of the last book in the Bible, our Lord who commanded that the reward is with Him, makes a definite promise about coming quickly with rewards.

We see the following in the last verse of the last

chapter:

One – the last promise; two – the last prayer, three – the last provision.

The last promise is – “He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

The last prayer is – “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

The last provision is – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

The last promise

The last prayer

The last provision

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” *Revelation 22 : 12*

Physical birth is born in flesh. But those who are born spiritually are those who have the born again experience. These are the people who were 'born again'. Only those who are born of spirit alone can become partakers in the first resurrection.

The inheritance of kingdom of God is for those who are partakers in the first resurrection. Those who have a share in the first resurrection are the ones who attain a fortunate and hopeful death. Such people are not disappointed or hopeless irrespective of when death comes. They are the ones who have experienced salvation and have acquired heavenly citizenship even while living on earth. They are those who experience the

heavenly grace and the fortunate state of being redeemed by the Holy blood of Christ.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1 : 18, 19

Redemption is with the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish or defect. The price paid for man's redemption was the precious blood of Christ.

Our ways were the futile ways inherited from our forefathers. We were leading vain lives observing and practicing religious rites and rituals, we were caught up in established customs and traditions set by our ancestors. However, we were redeemed from the deep chasm of sins. We were rescued and set free from the worldly pleasures and desires. Thus, we were restored to the joy of salvation.

Those who truly experience the joy of salvation are not scared of death because they have the assurance that they will resurrect at the second coming of Jesus Christ. They will get their rewards on that day.

On that day they will receive their rewards - heavenly crowns - from the hands of Jesus Christ.

Just as the forefathers sang, the most glorious occasion of their heads being adorned with the crown plaited by the Holy Spirit is imminent. Jesus Christ, the

master, will come again. On his arrival, those who are found awake and working tirelessly in the vineyards will be blessed.

Those who work in the vineyard that is Christ's church, in his glorious service, in association and fellowship with Christ, in unity and parity with Christ will be blessed in his second coming. They will be the most fortunate!

The almighty father would invite them to his heavenly banquet, the son will attend on them and the reassuring Holy Spirit will adorn them with crowns. This is what we sing in the hymn below.

*“Yajamanan varumannera
Thunarvullorai-than
Munthirithoppil paniyai
Kanmore-dhanyaram
Pakalellam than – Koodeppanitho
Ravarkavanara ketty-
Parikarmicheedum
Thathaniruthum mesackai
Parikarmikkum suthan
Ruhukudhisa-parakaleetha
Mudayunnoro-mudi
Haleluiah choodum makudathil”*

[Blessed are those servants good
Whom their Lord shall find
Wakeful, working when He comes
To His Vineyard good
Girding up His lions He serves them all

They who worked with Him from morn till eve,
 God the Father makes them sit,
 And the Son serves them
 Lo, the Holy Paraclete
 Plaits them victory's crowns
 Halleluiah setting on their head.]

This is told by prophet Daniel in the Old Testament. The last verse from the last chapter of Daniel is as follows:

“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

Daniel 12 : 13

The book closes with a word of consolation addressed to Daniel personally. He is to await the 'end' in the grave, from where, in the resurrection spoken of in Daniel 12:2, he will arise to take his appointed place, beside the other saints.

Daniel, who was beloved and chosen by God and received God's words and heavenly visions from Him, who fulfilled God's work and the mission entrusted to him and accomplished all that had been asked of him is told by God: "Go, Daniel, to the end, rest and arise at thy time at the end of days. I have reserved your share for that day already today."

This is the hope of a child of God. There is no hopelessness. There is no anxiety or fear about death or no discouragement in illness. There is strong faith and assurance that when death occurs, it will be an entry into

the kingdom of heaven and to God's presence. Firm confidence that irrespective of when death comes or when departure from this world happens, I will gain proximity to Christ. This is hopefulness. There is hope because there is assurance that Christ reigns in the heart.

When Christ rules in our hearts, deeds of the light will come from within us. Those who have Christ in their lives comes to the light, so that their deeds are manifested as having been brought about by Christ. If Christ is present in our lives we gain the nature and character of Christ.

If there is sin in our lives, then Christ is absent. If there is hostility, disagreements and quarrels and crooked ways in our hearts even today then Christ is not in our lives. Christ is not in our lives if there is cunningness, deceit, cheating, fraud and dishonesty in our life. Christ is not present if there is hatred, malice, dislikes, animosity, grudge and revenge, enmity and envy, selfishness and pride in our hearts.

If Christ reigns in our hearts, we are always hopeful.

Ernest Hemingway was an American author. He published seven novels including 'The Old Man and the Sea' and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. He was a genius and a literary giant. Hemingway is hailed as America's most celebrated writer and an intellectual titan. He was a very brave man of action.

A doctor who examined him for an illness gave him a shocking news. He was diagnosed with Cancer. He

became severely depressed and spent his last years suffering. He underwent treatments for liver, heart and kidney damage, diabetes, arthritis, and depression. He couldn't find a trace of hope in his life and his sadness increased. The thoughts that everything was lost disturbed him. All the accumulating factors contributed to his burden of illness and restlessness and the lack of peace upset him and agitated him and eventually led to his suicide.

Today there are many who commit suicide because of their debts. Being trapped in issues from which they cannot untangle themselves is the cause in others. Some commit suicide because they suffer from illness and hardships in life. Yet others resort to suicide when they have no peace and harmony in family life and because of the troubles in family life.

The tendency or inclination to think of suicide is because of the absence of Christ in their hearts. Even to think of suicide results from a lack of hope.

However, a child of God who firmly believes that there is life after death and that life is eternal, one who has confidence that Christ has reserved an inheritance for him is never disheartened.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”.

Daniel 12 : 2

In the end, the multitude that sleep in the dust will

wake up – some to eternal life, and many to eternal shame. Rising to eternal life is the first resurrection. And the second resurrection is rising to eternal shame and everlasting contempt.

St. Paul speaks of this in his second epistle to Thessalonians:

“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you”. 2 Thessalonians 1 : 6 - 10

God considers it just to grant relief to those who are afflicted. Those who are afflicted now will find relief at the second coming of Jesus Christ. They do not feel dejected or discouraged even when they are condemned and suffer miseries and adversities here on earth. They are not disheartened when people ridicule and insult them, show contempt and scorn them and leave them out. This is because they are aware that great joy and happiness awaits them.

That is why it is said that those who obey the scriptures will be granted relief by our Lord.

Meanwhile, what will happen to those who take part in the second resurrection? When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed again in heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the scriptures of our Lord Jesus Christ; they will be punished with everlasting destruction. They will receive the final sentence, banishment from the presence of God and eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

The scripture clearly warns about the dreadful judgement and the terrible punishment awaiting those who will be partaking in the second resurrection.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”. 2 Corinthians 5: 10

After the first resurrection, the holy men appear before a seat of judgement. That day is their coronation day when they will be presented with their crowns.

There are five heavenly crowns mentioned in the gospel - the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory and the crown of life.

Will I partake in the first resurrection? Today while I am alive on this earth, I should contemplate whether I will attain the legacy that Jesus Christ has prepared for me.

Has my life been cleansed of sins? Have I renounced the satanic forces who rule over me? Do undesirable and vile thoughts remain in me? What is my aim?

What is my desire in this momentary life? Is it to spend this life indulging in the luxuries of this world, exploring the worldly pleasures, delights and enjoyments? Or have I prepared myself for eternity?



CHAPTER 4

“Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” *Ephesians 6 : 8*

Jesus will hold each of us accountable for the deeds we performed in our earthly lives. Upon the second coming of Jesus Christ, our rewards will be in relation to the size and scope of the good deeds that we do on earth. Each of us will be repaid for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Irrespective of whether you are a servant or the master, you will gain impartial reward from Christ.

“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6 : 8 - 9

Those who sow goodness will reap a harvest of goodness. If you sow in spirit you will also reap rewards in spirit.

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh

will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Our heavenly king will reward us!

St. Paul talks about this in Colossians chapter three.

“Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism.” If you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. There is no partiality. This is depicted in Colossians 3:25. However in verse twenty-four it is mentioned:

“Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:24

Our Lord will reward us. What is the reward? Our reward will be an inheritance from the Lord!

Inheritance is a privilege to which an heir is entitled. Heavenly inheritance; inheritance of heavenly possessions! We partake a legacy entitled only to heirs of heavenly kingdom.

St. Paul the Apostle, in his epistle to the Romans wrote:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Romans 8:18

There is suffering and afflictions in this world. There are financial insecurities and debts and there is sickness and ailments. We would be misunderstood and looked

down on. There are many who oppose us and are against us and yet others ridicule us and contempt us.

We may not hear even a faint word of encouragement or support. Our ears may never be showered with any kind of consoling words. Yet in a short while all sufferings will end when the wonderful and enormous glory is revealed to us.

“For I know with certainty that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory which shall be manifested in us.”

Dear brothers and sisters, understand that a magnificent glory shall be revealed to us. All the suffering will sink into insignificance when compared to the heavenly glory awaiting us. As it is written;

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2 : 9

*“Unnatha rajyamathum
Sasvatha jeevithavum
Nirmalararjikkum
Sathama masiha bkathanmar
Arhikkunna mahabagyam
Jada nethram darsikkukayo
Sravanam kelkkukayo, hrudhayam
Therukayo, cheythillethum”.*

This is precisely what is written in the above song - God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or have crossed the mind

of any human being.

There are glorious things that God has prepared for those who love him and wait for him, which sense cannot discover, no teaching can convey to our ears, nor can it yet enter our hearts.

These will be revealed to us and we will receive them at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3: 3-4

Christ will be revealed. Then you also will be manifested along with Him in glory. There comes a time when the living Christ would be revealed. Now in spirit your old self has died – your old nature, your old bad habits, malpractices, your sinful behaviour, all the tendencies and inclinations that belonged to your old character has died. You died, but where will your life be then?

Then your life is hidden in Christ. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

But when Christ, who is your life, appears in His second coming, then you will also appear with him in glory.

St. Paul mentions about the remarkable rewards awaiting those who partake in the first resurrection in his first epistle to Corinthians.

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a

foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” 1 Corinthians 3: 10- 15

In our lives, everything must be based upon the foundation that is Christ Jesus. Christ is a firm, abiding, and immovable rock of ages on whom the foundation should be laid and upon which we build with gold, silver and costly stones. These would not then be harmed by fire.

These precious materials have attributes that can endure fire. When faced with the raging fires of the last days these materials will not perish in fire.

However, the other three – wood, hay or straw are exactly the opposite. They are highly combustible material. They represent something that is very temporary, merely a short-lived dedication emerging out of a sudden emotional surge, not an enduring or permanent dedication that lasts for long. There may be a change in some visible outward sins, but the inner sins

and the sins of the heart have not been eliminated. The sinful inclinations buried deep down inside the heart are still present. Hay, straw and wood can make impressive structures, but when beset by fire they do not last long in the blaze. Just like this everything will be incinerated. But you will be saved, like being refined through fire. A narrow escape.

If perishable like wood, straw or hay, they will not be rewarded before God. To be rewarded by God, one should build on the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones. What we do should be befitting the lasting and enduring glory. That which endures will be rewarded.

Have I done anything that lasts and has an impact for ever? When I have preached, was my goal solely to extol and glorify the name of Jesus Christ or was it rooted in my own self and ego? Was my sole ambition to please God, the heavenly king of kings or was it to satisfy my own self. Was my motive self-glory, my own pride and position, admiration from others, my own merit and superiority, my sermons and bible classes or my proficiency and knowledge of bible? If so they all will perish in the fire.

Each person's work will become evident; when it is revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. Fire will test and endorse the quality of each person's work. If a person's work and what they have built endures the test of fire, they will be rewarded. If you are to receive rewards upon the second coming of Lord Jesus when the blessed and holy arise to take part in the first resurrection, your deeds should last long and endure

long. Good deeds that are a reserve that leads to inheritance in eternity.

Look at the parable of the talents. The first one who was entrusted with five talents earned five more. The second person, who was entrusted with two talents gained two more. The third servant did not invest his master's money at all; he dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

When the master returned from his trip, he called them to settle their stewardship. The third one who got one talent did not think of the day of reckoning when accounts are settled. The first two eagerly met their master, delighted in the opportunity to multiply their master's money. The third one came with the talent intact and taking pride in the fact that he had not lost the master's money.

The one who had received five talents came forward, bringing five more, saying, "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.; His master was filled with happiness and said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" Matthew 25 : 20, 21 (ESV)

And then the servant who had two talents came forward, saying, "Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" Matthew 25:22,23 (ESV)

And then came forward the one who received one talent. He said “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” Matthew 25:25-30(ESV).

Although the one who received a talent is referred to as the wicked and lazy servant, there is no mention of him having performed any act of wickedness. Nor is there any mention of him having misused the money. But then what is his wickedness? He was neither satisfied with what he received nor faithful in utilising it.

Are you faithful in handling what the Lord has given you? Will your work withstand the fire and last long enough? God gave you a home, he gave you offspring, he gave you good parents, he prolonged your days on earth, he gave you education, and he gave means for food and clothing.

Didn't he give you a roof over your head? Think of

the multitudes who sleep in the streets. Didn't he open up ways for a peaceful life?

Think for a moment. Aren't you dissatisfied with many things in your life? Are you completely content with what you have at present? Aren't you spending your days in unhappiness and discontent with dejection and bitter feelings in your hearts?

The absence of contentment in your lives! There are women who are unhappy that they are married to such a husband. There are many who feel dejected and are not content with the wife they married. Why is my husband a drunkard? – Such questions spring from the mind of several women who are hopeless about their situation. Some have grievances and questions in their mind about their ill-health.

Are you happy and fully content with what you have received? Aren't many of you bogged down by inferiority complex and self-pity?

He was given five talents, the other was given two talents, but I was given only one – you think that the master is biased and shows favouritism. There is a feeling of offence and dissatisfaction deep down in your hearts.

If you need to develop and prosper in your Christian life, you should be content and happy in what you have. Complete contentment and full satisfaction – not a mere outward expression of satisfaction but an inward sense of contentment. A sense of great joy and deep gratitude stemming from the inmost heart recognising that I am unworthy of all these blessings.

In Genesis 32:10, Jacob admits his unworthiness and God's generosity and offers this prayer:

"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant".

Genesis 32 : 10

In Psalm 18, after the Lord rescued him from the clutches of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, David, the psalmist, sang:

*"The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called to the LORD;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears".*

Psalms 18 : 4 - 6

In psalm 116, the psalmist responds in thanksgiving as follows:

*"For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling."*

Psalm 116:8

*"How can I repay the LORD for all his
goodness to me?"*

Psalms 116 : 12

When you are satisfied and fully content with what you have you are thankful to God. If you are to be commended as "good and faithful servant", if you are to receive rewards when your master returns; then be

content with what you have received.

Looking back to my life, I had to discontinue my studies after tenth standard. I was not hopeful that I would ever continue my studies or that I will have a bright future.

My life continued as a farmer looking after the family farms. I often felt isolated and was like an orphan as my father died when I was one-year-old. My only brother also departed from this world when I was two years old.

However, when I was seventeen I heard the word of God. God gave me the grace to make a dedication. On that very day I surrendered my life to Christ.

Jesus took over my life. He brought me up and he uplifted me.

Be thankful. Be faithful and loyal. When Jesus Christ comes again be partakers in the first resurrection. Open up your hearts to welcome Jesus into your hearts right now. Make a promise to Him: Oh Lord from today I am yours. Oh Jesus from today I am your slave. Jesus, as you died for me on the cross, from today I will live for you.



CHAPTER 5

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Revelation 20 : 14 - 15

Eternal heaven as well as eternal hell exists and both are realities. Eternal heaven, where most Holy God and his holy saints and angels reign! Only holy and saintly people reach there. Those who led a righteous, virtuous and holy life alone will gain entry into the eternal heaven.

Eternal hell, the most frightful with an unquenchable lake of fire. The unrepentant will be cast into the lake of fire in the eternal hell. It is perpetual torture and eternal torment.

Revelation 20:13-14 is about the eternal punishment in the lake of fire, experienced by the unrepentant. “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

When alive on this earth one should have his name entered into the book of life. Whosoever with their name

not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”

Revelation 21 : 8

The experience of the lake of fire is the experience of the second death. This is for people who have only experienced one birth - the physical birth alone. With no spiritual birth, we die twice – physically and spiritually. Those who have experience the spiritual born again experience will be excluded from second death. Born once, we die twice. Born twice, we die once.

“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”

John 5 : 25

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

John 5 : 28 - 29

All of us were born into this world as sons or daughters of our parents. This is the physical birth or the birth by the will of the flesh. But each of us born once in the flesh to human parents must be born again in Holy Spirit.

We must gain the experience of being spiritually born – the born again experience!

We were born by the will of flesh. We were born with the traits passed on from our parents such as our likeness to them, some behavioural traits and characters, and several genetically inherited physical features. Yet each one of us must be born again in Christ and become a new creation.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

2 Corinthians 5 : 17

The second birth is to be born again in spirit.

What happens at the new birth? Physical appearance or physical condition does not change. Our circulatory system and cell structure stays the same. However, the inner self which existed in the unsaved man is transformed.

Christ enters and reigns in the human hearts. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the human heart. Our forefathers have sung of this as follows:

“Sudhamulla rooha, sudhamulla ninte kudiyrippinnu bhavanangalaayi njangale chamakkename.”

[Oh Holy Spirit, make us worthy temples of your holy habitation.]

Repentance or conversion in simple terms is the transformation of our hearts into dwelling places of the Holy Spirit. It means that the love of the Holy Spirit directs

and control everything. To attain this experience there is no need to change one's denomination or sect. There are no pre-requirements such as changing one's community or church. It is all about transformation happening inside; an inner transformation!

A repentant soul is a converted soul. It is marked by an inner change of attitude towards God. When the Holy Spirit renews your nature, there will be a change in our character, our behaviour, our thoughts, our outlook and approaches. Thereby our words and deeds start to change, the way we think and our emotions change. You begin to experience a new desire to know God. This will lead to total metamorphosis. To be able to experience this blessed state is the most fortunate situation a man can ever experience on this earth.

The Apostle Peter wrote about this:

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

1 Peter 1 : 23

Christ, who is the seed, is planted in you. The Holy Spirit starts sprouting in your heart. And then you are reborn as a new creation.

What would be the reason for this? You accept God's words wholeheartedly. Then the holy words which are alive and enduring, indestructible and imperishable seeds cause you to be reborn.

In his epistle St. James wrote,

“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.” James 1 : 18

In the Gospel of John, chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus a Pharisee:

“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3 : 3

When we are born again our character changes. Belligerent and furious men become amiable and cordial. A disastrous life spent in lust, adultery, alcoholism, bad habits and dreadful behaviour changes for the good.

Peace, joy, serenity and harmony in houses which in past were dwelling places of disagreements, dislike, grudges, constant grumbling, bickering and strife!

Those who experience a new birth are those who have experienced a second birth. They are the holy men who experienced the second birth and therefore will not experience the second death. For those who have experienced the second birth, there will never be a second death.

There are living proofs that one can attain the born again experience.

Let me introduce you to one such person now - Thomas from Archeparchy of Kottayam. Thomas himself will explain how he used to live in the past, how he was born again and what has changed after his born again experience.

“I belong to the parish of St Mary's Knanaya

Valiapalli at Kottayam. For forty-five years I lived a life of disharmony and conflict. I never used to go to church, even on Sundays. My family lost everything and we moved from rented house to rented house and finally settled at Kottayam when I was two.

I started drinking from the age of ten and spent everything on alcohol

At the age of forty-five my God gave me repentance. My God was kind enough to give me the grace to listen to a gospel message given by Prof. M.Y. Yohannan at Kottayam Kurishupally.

While I took part in that convention, the seeds of God's words were sown in my heart. I realised that I need to change everything within me that needs changing and I could do it by remaining within my church.

I was an alcoholic till the age of forty-five. If I had money with me I used to spend all my day at the bar drinking right from the time it opened till it closed. I never gave any peace to the people of my locality, my parents, my children or my wife.

I was so addicted that I once put up my wife as a guarantee to borrow money from a shop to spend on alcohol.

When the life-giving word of God entered my heart, I realised I could stay in my own church and felt a desire to go to my parish church. Since then I regularly started to go to church on Sundays.

With this change in myself, we started enjoying

peace at home – in place of never-ending discord and conflicts. God gave me the grace for everything. My children who used to starve and had to suffer hardships began to be looked after and fed well.

God opened up my eyes and made me realise that I would end up in hell with my family. I obeyed His wish to listen to his life-giving words and to repent.

My wife had planned many times to kill herself and our children by drowning in the rushing waters of the river Meenachil. I too had planned on killing myself by jumping in front of a train. Yes, we all would have ended up in hell.

Because our God lives even today, He changed our ways and showed my family the way to heaven.

Yes, we live in peace and harmony now. We are a wonder to many in my locality.”

Thomas who used to live in rented houses now has his own house, drives his own car, is earnest in God's work and lives peacefully now.

How was this change brought about? He gave up alcoholism. The same man who used to constantly make rows at home, he who used to get furious, shouting and raging regularly, who had a quarrelsome nature, who continued his drinking habit with a blind eye towards his starving children, now loves his wife and children! He is leading a peaceful and serene life in his harmonious family!

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

2 Corinthians 5 : 17

If we have only been born once we will go through death and through hellish torture. Those who are born twice will not enter the second death. The only way to avoid the second death is to be a partaker in the second birth.

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” Revelation 22 : 14 - 15

Those who have the right to the tree of life are the fortunate ones who have their names written in the book of life. There are some who return to their old ways just like dogs returning to their own vomits. Here, the dog is a loathsome representation of those sinners who return to their sinful ways; people who go back to the sins that they had given up once. The word of God mentions that the sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood will have no place in the glorious kingdom of Christ and will be left outside.

“If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Revelation 20 : 15

“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.”

Revelation 20 : 6

These words describe the state of those who have

part in the spiritual resurrection with Christ. Those whose sins have been pardoned and have a born again experience and who are sanctified by the Spirit of God; these, and these only, will be first raised, and will be called to inherit the kingdom prepared for them. The second resurrection is for the unsaved and unrepented - those who have no born again experience.

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

John 5 : 28 - 29

Some will rise to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace.

Let us attain a new life at this moment itself. Let us achieve a converted and born again experience.

Indeed, the time is coming when the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and those who hear the voice will rise again at the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, only those who have a spiritually born again experience alone will hear the voice of son of God!



CHAPTER 6

“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.” Revelation 20:6

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Three events mark the second coming of the Lord.

- One – The loud command of the Lord
- Two – The voice of the archangel
- Three – The trumpet call of God.

The loud voice of the Lord is the command that was heard during the time of Jesus on earth. It is the command that resounded outside the tomb of Lazarus and carried the power to raise Lazarus from the dead.

A reference to 'the archangel' can be seen in the epistle of Jude. Here Archangel Michael disputes with the devil for the body of Moses.

"But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" *Jude 9*

The devil laid claim over the body of Moses. Then Archangel Michael rebuked the devil.

This event is not recorded in Deuteronomy in the Old Testament where the death of Moses is mentioned. This incident is mentioned only in the New Testament, in the epistle of Jude.

The archangel Michael arrives in all his glory to contend with devil over the children of God, who are dead and gone, and over whom devil tries to assert his claim. This is the voice of the archangel.

The third event is the trumpet call of the God.

In the book of Numbers, there is a mention about two types of trumpets.

"The LORD said to Moses: "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. If only one is sounded, the leaders - the heads of the clans of Israel - are to assemble before you. When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the

south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal”.

Numbers 10 : 1 - 7

The first trumpet is the trumpet for summoning the congregation. This is meant for gathering the congregation at the doorway to the tent of meeting and depicts gospel work.

Through Gospel work, there will be the opportunity to bring others to hear the word of God and gain the born again experience and redemption in Christ. The second trumpet is blown for people to set out for Gospel work.

At the second coming of Christ, there will be a loud command, the resounding voice of the archangel and a mighty blast of the trumpet.

Only the holy and the chosen ones will hear and recognise it. Just as Lazarus was resurrected; these holy men also will resurrect on hearing the command. They will resurrect and be carried away in clouds to greet our Lord.

Our forefathers have sung about this:

*“Mruthare jeevipippan ezhunnellum raja-
mukilazhakinmelakoshithanaayidunnu
Nayavanmar than munkombin nadam ketti-
Ttankiyaninjethirelppanayi poyeedunnu”*

This translates as:

Borne aloft in state upon-clouds of glory,
Comes the prince who gives the life to the dead ones.
Righteous ones the trumpet hear-of His angels;
They proceed in glorious stoles-to His presence.

Just like vast swarms of winged termites emerge from earth after a heavy summer shower, holy men will rise from their graves from all corners of the world. Not every tomb will open. Only the tombs of the holy and righteous will open.

Only those who had repented and were released from the bondage of sins will rise from their tombs. They alone will rise swiftly to reach the most sacred presence of Jesus Christ.

This heavenly congregation will be a reunion of holy men who departed from the earth at different times. The Holy and righteous people who departed the earth over the centuries at different eras will meet in that heavenly congregation. They will recognise each other and collectively extol His Holy name. This congregation in the skies will be a heavenly assembly. To miss this congregation of saints would be most unfortunate.

You may preach the Gospel, teach Bible lessons, do the work of God, toil sleepless nights in God's work and spend your money for this. You can expend your money, time and resources in serving God. Irrespective of all these, if your life is not holy, all will be in vain and will be an irreplaceable loss.

You may have a dedicated prayer life, routine prayers and worships, prayer meetings and fellowships, gospel preaching, Sunday schools and bible classes, women's bible prayer groups and a clear visions and great plans for spiritual work. Yet what is the state of your heart? Is it pure and flawless? If not, it is an eternal loss!

Turn back and reflect on your life. Is my life

immaculate in the presence of Jesus Christ? Have I parted from my sins? Does my heart still have an inclination to worldly pleasures?

Get ready and prepare yourself to join the heavenly congregation of saints at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Blessed and holy are those who have a part in the first resurrection.

Whatever blemishes have happened in your life Jesus Christ has shed his blood on the cross as an atonement by which all sins are forgiven. The blood of Christ can cleanse our sins.

Knowingly or unknowingly many sinful and heinous events may have happened in your lives. Thefts, immoral liaisons, adultery, evil thoughts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness and bad friendships may have ruined your life.

Drunkenness and drug abuse, creating trouble and turbulence daily at home, being disobedient to parents, behaving in an undiscerning, and unloving way to one's wife, being unforgiving, unmerciful and disrespectful to your husband – the list is endless. But the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all these sins.

There was a murderer who was imprisoned for his crime and was sentenced to death by hanging. It was very certain that he would be hanged very soon. He yelled obscenities and screamed and often lost his temper at the warden who brought him food and water. His heart was full of hatred and he was depressed. He didn't utter even a

single decent word. He thought of the fate that awaited him in a few days and was totally pessimistic and despondent.

A few gospel workers came to visit him in the gallows. They stood outside the bars of the prison and spoke to him. 'You are nearing your death sentence. Surrender your life to Jesus. Use this opportunity to repent about the sins of your past and to pray to Christ. When you confess your sins to him, Jesus will grant you remission of sins. Jesus will pardon you and forgive all your sins.'

He became very disturbed when he heard that he should pray to God. He was angry and agitated and told them that he didn't want to hear any of their philosophies. He started shouting obscenities at them and asked them to leave him alone.

They extended a bible towards him through the iron bars of the prison. He grabbed the Bible and ripped it apart. The ripped pages fluttered around with some pages ending up inside his prison cell and some outside. The gospel workers prayed for him for a minute and then left the place quietly.

That night this prisoner was restless and he couldn't sleep. At some point he slipped into sleep. During his slumber he dreamt of his mother. His mother was in the middle of an incredibly beautiful place and beckoned him. She had a tender smile on her face. He dreamt that his mother who has passed away might be in heaven now.

He recollected what his mother used to tell him about the beauty of heaven and that he should never end

up in hell. He thought of the days when he scorned his mother and cursed her, the days when he spoke arrogantly and had even beat her once. Then he realized that his mother was in heaven and that his mother was summoning him to join her. Within this dream he dreamt of following his mother.

As he walked along, suddenly a wall started to rise in front of him obstructing his path. The height of the wall kept on increasing! He lost sight of heaven beyond the wall. He thought that if the wall wasn't there he could have joined his mother in the middle of that beautiful place. He stood there crestfallen and dejected looking up at the wall. Suddenly he saw a drop of blood from above landing on the top of the wall. Just a drop of blood! The wall started dissolving and vanishing wherever the drop of blood spread to. After a short while, the whole wall disappeared before his eyes. He was elated and jubilant and started walking ahead. At that point he woke up from his dream.

He opened his eyes and was perplexed when he thought about the dream he had. He was bewildered and contemplated whether his dream made any sense. He realized his mother who was now in heaven might have been calling him. But a barrier rose obstructing his way to join her. However, when a drop of blood fell on that wall, the wall vanished and the path before him was clear and free.

He felt guilty that he had not listened to the words of those gospel workers who visited him earlier in the day. He regretfully thought that he should have accepted and read the book that they tried to give him. He started going

through the bits of paper strewn all over the floor. His eyes caught a verse written on one such piece of paper which read – “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” As soon as he read that he fell to his knees on the floor. He kissed that piece of paper and put it down on the floor. He started sobbing uncontrollably lying on the floor. After a while he got up and said to himself, “From now on I will start living as a new better person.”

The next day when the warden came with his breakfast the prisoner greeted him with a smile. The warden was surprised and thought to himself that the prisoner doesn't seem to be the same person as the day before – what a change, what kindness and tenderness, what calmness and composure on his face! He was amazed and asked the prisoner what had happened to him.

The prisoner replied: “I accepted the word of God last night. The word of Jesus Christ has transformed me. I am a new creation now. Now I can die peacefully.”

“If I die, I will be entering the eternal life. All my sins and transgressions are cleansed by the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ. I am fully confident of that.”

But what about you? The most Holy blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you thoroughly. You will gain the born again experience and you will become pure and Holy. All your blemishes will be cleansed and you can lead a new life; a fresh start!



CHAPTER 7

“What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?”

Psalms 89 : 48

Who can live and not see death?

We see the same question in the Bible;

Who can escape the power of the grave?

The answer to this question is in the Gospel of John:

“Whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

John 11 : 26

In Revelation 1:18 we see a reply to the same question.

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

Revelation 1 : 18

We can comprehend the meaning of this from the epistle of Paul where he explains the meaning of this mystery.

“But I am telling you this strange and wonderful secret: we shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies! It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the

last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet blast from the sky, and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive, with new bodies that will never, never die; and then we who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too. For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever.”

1 Corinthians 15 : 51 - 53 (TLB)

The holy people who are alive on earth will not die. They will be transformed.

Before that those who have died will rise first.

Then when the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

We read about the return of the Lord in the letter of St Paul to Thessalonians.

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thessalonians 4 : 16 - 17

The Lord's commanding shout, the voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet of God – these three events will happen together. Then the saints and the holy of the past who died in Christ will arise. Following this,

those who are alive and in Christ, will be transformed. The dead who are in Christ will rise and the alive who are in Christ will be transformed.

Those who are namesake Christians will not be among those who are transformed or those who arise from death. They may follow all the rituals and rites on the outside and may act like Christians. However, only those who experience and follow the true example that Christ set before us through his crucifixion will have that fortune.

Our earthly bodies will be gone and we will attain heavenly bodies! Who among us will get transformed?

- One – Those who are in Christ
- Two – Those among us who are holy
- Three – Those who are waiting for the second coming of Christ
- Four – Those of us who are prepared
- Five – Those who are for Christ

However, no one knows the day nor the hour of the second coming of Jesus Christ. No one except the heavenly Father knows; not even the angels in heaven nor the Son himself.

If Christ were to come now, would I be counted as holy? Have I been cleansed by the Holy blood of Jesus? Have all the stains of my sins been washed away by the Holy blood of Jesus Christ? Have I taken the firm decision that I will not sin again?

Do I still have intolerance, harshness, quarrels, malice, rivalry, grudges, ill-will, animosity, anger or obstinacy in my conscious or sub-conscious mind?

Am I still enslaved by unholy thoughts and emotions? Am I leading a life fully immersed in the worldly pleasures while being oblivious and mindless about God?

The mouth utters words of worship and the lips pay service to God, but is there true worship to God in my heart? Ceremonies, rituals, traditions and vanities of the church are observed, but is my heart far from Him?

Does Christ live in me? Does my life reflect the character of Christ? Am I holy yet?

Have I changed enough for Christ to be pleased with my life? If not, I will be left behind.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

2 Peter 3 : 9

Unknown would be the time of the arrival of the Lord, like a thief in the night. The loud command of the Lord will be heard unexpectedly, accompanied by the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God.

St. Peter says:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its

coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”

2 Peter 3 : 10 - 12

When Jesus Christ comes again, the holy men who are alive on earth will attain spiritual bodies and rise up to the clouds to meet the Lord. The perishable bodies will become imperishable, and the mortal men will attain immortality.

“That night two men will be asleep in the same room, and one will be taken away, the other left. Two women will be working together at household tasks; one will be taken, the other left; and so it will be with men working side by side in the fields.” *Luke 17 : 34 - 36 (TLB)*

We should not be among those left behind.

When the great scientist Michael Faraday was on his death bed, he was asked about his speculations about soul and death. His answer showed how confident he was in Jesus. He quoted 2 Timothy 1:12 and said:

“Speculations? I have none. I am resting on certainties. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Which is that day? The second coming of Jesus!

Let us also attain the same certainty and confidence in our lives!



CHAPTER 8

“He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains.”

Psalms 107 : 14

“For he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.”

Psalms 107 : 16

“He spoke, and they were healed - snatched from the door of death.”

Psalms 107 : 20 (TLB)

“He rescued them from the grave.”

Psalms 107 : 20 (NIV)

He sent them an assuring word and healed them; he rescued them from the pits where they were trapped. He snatched them from the door of death and delivered them from their destruction. He rescued them from the grave.

Many are in spiritual darkness today. They are under the imprisonment of the Devil. Many are in the darkness and shadow of death – a state of spiritual death.

“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

1 Corinthians 15 : 54 - 55

St. Paul cites this from chapter 13 of the book of Prophet Hosea.

"I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?" *Hosea 13: 14*

Sin is a venomous sting of death! When sin enters the life of men, they died spiritually. A man who is spiritually dead is cast into eternal torture through eternal death. Jesus Christ suffered crucifixion and rose again on the third day to deliver this people from the power of the grave, the power of sin and to give them a spiritual redemption.

Our forefathers recited this hymn;

*"Modikka visudha sabhe
Nammude naathan
Moonnaam naalil jeevichaa
Kkabareennezhunnettaan
Paapathe kolayaal konnaan
Mruthiye mruthiyaal
Crobakal kuntham thaanetta
Kunthathe neekki
Than kabaraal theerthaan
Kabar naasam
Thannudhanaalinguyirekhi
Ettiva thaan pokki
Vazhithettellaam kjangalude."*

[Rejoice, holy church! rejoice;

Our Lord

On the third day
 came to life
 and arose from the tomb
 Sin, He killed – by His murder;
 death by His death
 Cherub's lance he effaced by
 lance that He suffered
 Tomb's perdition removed by His Tomb;
 gave life by Resurrection
 He suffered all – and effaced all our transgressions.]

Jesus Christ slayed death by His death on the cross.
 The death of Jesus Christ depicts the triumph of Christ's
 victory over death and the resurrection he granted us
 through that.

Don't we recite in our evening prayers “O Lord, your
 love for us made you come down to us from your high
 place, that by your death our death might be abolished;
 have mercy upon us.”

We also sing the same during the Holy Mass;
*“Krobesrappikal than savidham vittavatharanam
 Cheytha kanyaka-tha-nnudare vanone
 Aadamyare sathan-Mrithiyivathan nadimail ni-
 Nnettiduvan meyye-nthiya veera sthothram”*

[Highest praise to him, - Who left the presence of
 cherubim
 and the Seraphim - for reigning in the virgin's womb,
 Taking the form of flesh - The judgment to deter-
 Saving all who came forth from Adam - from Satan
 and death.]

Would it not be the most fortunate experience to attain the assurance that Jesus Christ washed away all my sins and released me from all the bondages of sin!

We read in Isaiah chapter 1, that everything is encased in sin. Sin is everywhere, in thoughts, in words and in actions. "Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness". (Isaiah 1:5, 6). Yet, Jesus Christ bore all our sins and rescued us.

This can be best illustrated through a story:

A boat overcrowded with people was sailing across the water. There were several children among the travellers on the boat and some of them were playing by extending their hands through the boat window and skimming the water. Suddenly, there was a loud scream from one of the boys and everyone's attention turned to him. The boy was trying to pull his hand out of the water but he couldn't!

To their horror, they saw an alligator pulling on the child's hand. The alligator had snapped its jaws around the boy's hand. The child tried to pull his hand out of the alligator's mouth, but couldn't. The alligator had latched its mouth firmly on to the boy's hand and was dragging him towards the water. This boy's dad frantically tried to wrench his son's hand out of the alligator's mouth by pulling him in the opposite direction. The more he tried, the more the alligator's jaws tightened on the boy's hand and he was being pulled strongly away from the boat. The boat became unstable and started swaying and tilting to

one side because of the alligators pull. The people started panicking whether the boat was going to sink. It was such a terrifying situation.

If the boy's dad let go of his son, his son would be mauled and eaten by the alligator. If he didn't the boat would capsize and the people on the boat would tumble into the water and drown. They would also be ripped apart and eaten by the group of alligators circling the boat. People on the boat started screaming as the boat was rocking violently and about to sink. One side of the boat started submerging and all the people shouted to let go of the boy for fear of their own lives. The boy's dad was helpless and finally let go of his son. The alligator swam away with the little boy and thus the people in the boat escaped.

This may not be a true story, nevertheless, our heavenly father gave up his son to be tossed about by Satan in order to save all of us.

“He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains...For he broke down their prison gates of bronze; he cut apart their bars of iron.... He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.”

Psalm 107:14, 16, 20

Did you not give away your body to sinful desires, shameful things and sexual impurity? Have you not degraded yourselves by the most abominable deeds and drunkenness? Haven't your lives become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and immorality? Are you

not full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice? Didn't you give space for gossips, arrogance, jealousy, pride and hatred? Haven't quarrels, fights and thefts happened in your lives?

Confess each of these sins with a contrite heart. Admit that because of these sins you were enslaved and shackled by Satan. Repent about how you yourself gave Satan a chain of your sins to bind you.

I myself created the chains of my bondage. No one else is responsible for that. Not my wife, not my husband, not my children or my parents or my colleagues at work. I myself am solely responsible for my bondages. If you realize and accept that you are accountable, then you can have a contrite heart, seek forgiveness and repent. And surrender your lives to Christ!

Most loving Christ is standing before you now and pleading with you. Surrender your lives to Jesus Christ now itself. Make a pledge to him: Oh Lord, from today onwards I will lead life as a new creation.



CHAPTER 9

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”

Romans 7 : 24

“O wretched man that I am” - St Paul cries out piteously about his inner conflict. His strength has failed him; he is sorely beaten in the battle.

He says that he has in him two distinct principles, two different natures—one holy, heavenly and spiritual and always seeking the good. Yet within the same man there is another nature striving against and opposing the holy principle within and its desire to do good. The opposing principle seeking nothing but evil at any cost and price. This is the internal conflict between the good and the evil; the right and the wrong.

St. Paul describes that conflict saying, “For I do not do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do.” (Romans 7:19).

The apostle found himself so very far short of perfection, that he seemed to be overwhelmed by the sins of the flesh. Even when there are no sinful deeds, he is aware of sinful tendencies and an inclination towards evil desires in his heart.

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.”

Romans 7 : 14 - 23

Before Apostle Paul attained the fullness in spirit, he went through a lonely period of three years in the desert. This period, spent in contemplation and meditation consisted of intense internal struggles, hardships and distress. He is beyond fatigue in his war against sins and cries out for deliverance.

According to the scripture there are three types of individuals:

- One - the natural man of flesh - portrayed in Romans chapter 6
- Two - the carnal or the worldly man – portrayed in Romans chapter 7
- Three - the spiritual man – portrayed in Romans chapter 8

Let us analyse these three characteristics based on the scriptures:

“But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.”

1 Corinthians 2 : 14 (NLT)

The natural man has no understanding or discernment of what is good or evil. He is not even conscious of the existence of God. He has no perception or fear that God is omnipresent and sees everything he does.

He is not conscious or aware of a life after death. He is concerned only about the worldly things.

The natural man does not accept the teachings from the Spirit of God. To him, the words of God are absurd, words that he does not want to listen to or acknowledge. They think of Gospel preachers as fools and spiritual work as a means for making money.

A carnal man is someone whose state has improved over the natural man. There are certain positive changes

in them. He is more cultured and refined with certain principles in life – not many outward deeds of sin such as drunkenness, adultery, theft or murder nor is there any yearning or motivation to acquire or retain anything belonging to others.

In short, there is some repentance. They have heard the Word of God. The word of God has had some influence over them. They have had some experiences. Because of the influence of gospel there had been some changes in their lives.

Yet they are mostly unchanged in heart. They have never grown in the Lord. There is still discord, quarrel and jealousy.

“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?”
1 Corinthians 3:3

Carnal men are still controlled by sinful nature. There is dislike and spite amongst them. Envy, resentment, hatred and anger rule their hearts. There is still selfishness, self-justification, greed, hypocrisy and the desire for vain glories and positions. These hidden iniquities reflect their nature.

Carnal people have no concern about their sinful state. They go on with the self-gratification and satisfaction that they have repented and are saved.

“For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?”
1 Corinthians 3:4

They are biased and predisposed towards certain groups and favour certain cliques. They do not realise the impartiality of Jesus Christ.

They set themselves apart from others, claiming goodness and charity and indeed they may have had some changes in their behaviour. Yet their character is unchanged.

“For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose.”

1 Corinthians 3 : 4 - 8

The spiritual man resembles Jesus Christ. His character is akin to that of Jesus Christ.

The scripture says:

“The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 2 : 15 - 16

It is worth reflecting: Right now am I a natural man?

Or am I a carnal man or a spiritual man?

The natural man's character can be likened to the Israelites enslaved by the Pharaoh. The Israelites suffered slavery under the Egyptians for four hundred and thirty years. This symbolises the enslavement of people by Satan.

But they set off from Egypt to worship their God, guided by Moses and believing the word of God spoken through Moses. They journeyed from Egypt witnessing the power of the Holy Spirit, guiding them through Moses. They crossed the Red Sea and entered the wilderness of Sinai. The forty years of wandering through the desert symbolises the carnal man.

The life in the desert was filled with suffering, grumbling, pique and discord, grumbling, dissent, contention and desire for positions of power. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. Korah, Dathan and Abiram became insolent and rose up against Moses. The Israelites turned to idolatry, the moment Moses left them to go up the mountain. They worshipped the golden calf as God, the God who brought them out of Egypt. The travails of the Israelites from Egypt through the deserts of Sinai, symbolises the escape from the enslavement of the natural man into the barrenness of the worldly man.

At last, after forty years, the Israelites crossed the river Jordan to enter Canaan, the beautiful promised land of honey and milk. The life in Canaan symbolises the life of the spiritual man.

At Canaan everything has been conquered, forging

ahead, defeating everything in their path. The splendour and bountiful riches of the land is in their grasp. The life in Canaan is one of joy and happiness.

We should aspire for the life of a spiritual man and never stoop to the levels of a natural or worldly men.

Pause and think for a moment about your life. Where am I now? Am I a natural man or a worldly man or a spiritual man?

Like the Israelites that were enslaved by the Pharaoh in Egypt, am I enslaved by Satan and bound to him by my sins?

Or am I like the Israelites who have set off from Egypt, crossed the Red Sea and entered the barren deserts of Sinai? After feeling a repentance, I gladly left my outward sins. I sang for joy that I am 'no longer a slave to the Pharaoh'. But are there sins bottled up inside me, concealed from everyone. Am I living like a worldly man?

Or am I advancing forward as a spiritual man, crossing the river Jordan of death; with my old self dying, my ego gone, my character changed and my old worldly nature dead? Am I leading a victorious life?

Christ has called us to be victorious. To make us victorious Jesus Christ died on the cross like a defeated man. He took up failure to make us triumphant.

Defeat before death; failure before the Jews; failure in front of Pontius Pilate, defeated in trials before the Caesar and his Roman empire; failure before Judas Iscariot and even failure before his dearest disciple Peter!

Who was there to assist Him? There was no one to help! Why did he have to be defeated before everyone? To make us triumphant. Do you wish for a victorious life? He will give you a victorious life. Christ will give you peace. Christ will bless you and he will give you a glorious future.

Let Christ come into you; let Christ reign in your hearts; let Christ rule you and have full authority over you, let the Holy Spirit make you victorious and grant you all the heavenly blessings and goodness.



CHAPTER 10

*“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free
in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”*

Romans 8 : 2 (ESV)

In Romans chapter seven verse twenty-four, the apostle St. Paul asks the question: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” The answer to this question is provided in the second verse of Romans chapter eight.

The answer to “Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” is that the Holy Spirit will set you free. The Holy Spirit will rescue you.

The law of sin exists in my body. However, the law of the Spirit of life will set me free from the law of sin. The desires of sin and sinful nature reign in me. Still, the Holy Spirit will give me victory over sin.

Where the laws of death reigned, now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus reigns. God in His mercy granted victory to me, to someone who has failed over and over, again and again!

I was a prisoner of the devil and was in his bondage through my sins. I was sold as slave to sin but He has set me free from the slavery of sin.

The liberating work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ has set me free. He redeemed me by his grace and through the power of Holy Spirit.

On January 6, 1941, the 32nd President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the American Congress, in a speech known as the Four Freedoms speech. In this speech he proposed four fundamental freedoms that all people everywhere in the world ought to enjoy:

- One - Freedom of speech
- Two - Freedom of worship
- Three - Freedom from want
- Four - Freedom from fear

Freedom of speech is the right to communicate and express one's opinions and ideas. No one's opinions should be forced upon others and at the same time we should not be offended by someone else's opinion.

The freedom of worship, gives the freedom for every person to worship his own God in his own way.

The freedom from want. Man has many needs and wants. There should be freedom from these wants. He sometimes falters when faced by his wants. Anxieties and troubles overwhelm him and causes concern. His basic daily needs are not being met. He doesn't have the freedom to even take care of his basic needs. Nobody else should be a hindrance or interfere in his attempts to meet his needs.

The fourth is freedom from fear. Fear is a gruesome

enemy which attacks man. He needs liberty from fear.

All these can be summarized into a single word - Freedom from failure!

The theme of the letter written by St. Paul to the Romans is freedom.

In chapter eight of the letter to Romans, St. Paul mentions the Spirit nineteen times. He says that even though he can't, the Holy Spirit can make it happen. Even though he fails, the Holy Spirit will make him victorious.

But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot succeed but Christ makes me triumphant. I cannot attain freedom on my own, but He sets me free and grants me freedom. The Holy Spirit gives me freedom. This is the law of Holy Spirit.

It is very fortunate to get freedom from sins. Isn't it very fortunate to be set free from the greed for money which was reigning in your hearts? Isn't it a remarkable experience to be liberated from the unholy desires and passions that had a hold over you?

“Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” *Romans 8 : 2*

I once heard about an incident. A sea link bridge was being built over the sea. Huge pylons were to be erected for the construction of the bridge. An enormous iron pillar was brought on barges and was erected by a large number of construction workers. The pillar was sunk deep into the sea and secured by sheer hard work.

When the engineer arrived, he realized that the pillar was out of position and needed to be shifted from its current location. The workers tried their best, but the pillar would not budge and could not be lifted. They tried attaching it to cranes and lifting it. Still the pillar would not rise. Then a clever engineer had an idea.

He recommended securely tying a very large barge to the pillar with iron ropes. During high tide when the water level rises, the barge would also rise along with the tide. The pillar being attached to the barge would then be pulled up.

There is nothing that cannot be lifted up by the Holy Spirit. One whose life is fully shattered, a life that is in ruins, a life that is in the most terrible and disastrous state – all these will become fine and well.

There was no hope that things will turn out any better. There were times when it was nearly over. Hopeless times. Even when there is no optimism and no expectations that anything good will happen, the Holy Spirit restores and redeems.

You might be sinking deeper and deeper into the realms of despair thinking that I have fallen into such a deep pit of sin, that there is no chance for me to rise anymore, that I am never going to gain victory, that I am going from failure to failure and from darkness to darkness; that I am never going to be freed from these sins. However, when the water level rises, we will also rise. When nothing else could help, the Holy Spirit can lift us up.

Some of us might think – I take good decisions every day. Sometimes they last for a day, sometimes a few months. Occasionally they have lasted for years. Yet ultimately I fail again and again.

When an opportunity arises, when some incidents happen, anger comes back to my life. In certain circumstances, my thoughts are just like that of any other worldly man. In some situations, I succumb and surrender to sinful desires.

Every now and then sin rushes back to my life. Things that I have given up and said no more, try to entice me and lure me back. The more I try hard to succeed, the more I end up in failure, over and over again. There are people who lament that they are sinking deep into the slimy pit, into the mud and mire.

Despite all this, trust in Jesus Christ and plead for His mercy. Then our living Christ will get hold of you and lift you through the power and miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit will blaze through your body as fire. The fire of Holy Spirit will circulate through your veins. The flames of the Holy fire will consume every cell of your body.

The fire of the Holy Spirit will transform you. You will be immersed in that fire. The baptism of fire is a magnificent and most glorious experience. This is baptism by the Holy Spirit.

It is not talking in strange languages or the gift of tongues. Neither is it seeing visions!

Anointing by the Holy Spirit is the fullness of being

holy. It is an abundance of Glory. It is the wholeness of the nature of Christ.

The very nature of Christ is channelled into us. The love of Christ, the Holiness of Christ and the mercy of Christ flows into us.

Thereby, you gain the grace to face any problem or challenge. People might make fun of you, they might mock and ridicule you. They might misunderstand and misjudge you. Even then you would have a smile in your heart as you know that the Lord knows everything. He sees and understands everything in the right way and in truth.

May the Holy Spirit grant His grace and blessings on you. Let His abundant and amazing grace flow through you. May the flames of the fire of Holy spirit shine on you and may you be engulfed by the fire of the Holy Spirit!

Let the flames of heavenly fire touch you. May you be anointed by the heavenly fire.



CHAPTER 11

“But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”

Romans 8 : 13

St. Paul's letter to Romans is often referred to as the 'Greatest Letter Ever Written'. Chapter six of the letter to the Romans describes the natural man of flesh; chapter seven describes the carnal or the worldly man and chapter eight describes the spiritual man. God's desires that each of us become a spiritual person and be in a spiritual condition that displays His glory and honours His name.

Lord Jesus Christ hopes and wishes that we attain the law of the Spirit with our entire personality being prepared and eager for the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us in all aspects of our spiritual work and our lives. He wishes that the experience of the power of the Spirit illuminates our minds, warms our hearts and the joy of being filled with Spirit overflows from within us. He also wishes that the exceeding joy resulting from the perpetual filling of the Holy Spirit leads to a radiant, powerful, dynamic and victorious life!

We don't have to toil and strive to gain it. We don't have to pay anything for it. It is a free gift from the Holy

Spirit.

Dr G. Campbell Morgan, an evangelist and scholar, was on one occasion trying to explain "free salvation" to some people. A coal miner was among the crowd, but the man was unable to understand it. The coal miner had a tough job working in the deep underground coal mines in cold, damp and dark surroundings. Morgan spoke to him about salvation and about Christ the redeemer and about the fearful consequences of the bondages of sin. The coal miner wanted to know what he should do to get salvation.

When Campbell Morgan replied that he didn't have to do anything or pay anything, the coal miner could not understand that. He asked sceptically "Are you saying that I don't have to do anything for it or spend anything to get it?" He could not understand the idea that God's unmerited favour is given freely to unworthy sinners through the Holy Spirit when they believe in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Although Campbell Morgan tried his best to explain this to him, the coal miner found it difficult to trust a God who offers salvation as a free gift.

He said: "I cannot believe that He will forgive them if I just ask Him. It is too cheap."

Morgan said, "My dear friend, have you been working today?"

"Yes, I was down in the coal mine."

Dr Morgan asked, "How did you get down into the mine this morning?"

"Why, it was easy," the man replied. "I just got on the

elevator and went down."

Then Morgan asked, "Wasn't that too easy? Didn't it cost you something?"

The man laughed. "No, it didn't cost me anything; but it must have cost the company plenty of money to sink the shaft and install that elevator. All I had to do was to just stand on it."

Morgan replied; "This is the salvation through Christ!" Suddenly the truth struck him. The man realized: "It doesn't cost me anything to be saved, but it cost God the life of His Son."

For your deliverance, for the redemption of the sinner and to give a victorious life to those who earnestly seek it, Jesus Christ died on the cross like a failure.

This miner had never thought of the great price Father in heaven paid to send His Son so He could rescue fallen humanity. Now he realized that all anyone had to do was to have faith. And when you have faith, you can experience what Christ said on the cross. Heaven has "finished" it all for him.

Jesus paid our debt of sin with His own precious, literal, physical blood. He paid for my salvation with His holy life. I did not do anything to deserve it! I did not work for it! I did not do anything to keep it! I have only received it!

Dear brothers all that is needed is to believe in the unfailing love of God. You need not do anything else. God's love for us is so great and so deep; one which always takes us by the hand and supports us, lifts us up

and leads us on. Stay close to those mighty hands with full faith and dependence. Let yourself be enveloped by His spirit.

“But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”

Romans 8 : 13

The deeds of the body can be mortified only through the Spirit; only by the aid of the Spirit. The body has its sinful inclinations and passions. The deeds of the body have their origin in fleshly nature and have a tendency for lust. These inclinations and tendencies must be put to death. This leads to the spirit being alive. By the Spirit, we must endeavour more and more to mortify the flesh. Reaching the heavenly kingdom can be accomplished only by those whose spirit is alive. Not everyone will reach the heavenly kingdom!

Think for a moment. Will I reach heaven if I die today? Is my spirit alive?

Is life brimming in my soul? Does the Holy Spirit dwell in me? Have I been converted into a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit? Have I changed to become a spiritual man yet? Do I still harbour the nature of the Israelites - who grumbled, questioned and rebelled - in my heart? Oh! Lord, have unity, love, joy and good nature disappeared from my life?

If so, pray to Christ who is the giver of life; Oh Lord, please rescue me from the bondages of sin.

Decide; I will never be the same. I will never again be the same sinful natured man.



CHAPTER 12

“For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Romans 8 : 29 - 30

Romans chapter eight, is about the brilliant radiance of freedom. In this chapter St. Paul makes a declaration of spiritual freedom through the Holy Spirit.

This is an elegant chapter about men living a delightful life in the fullness of spirit by attaining freedom from the bondages of sin and from death, the wage of sin.

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to be like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.

We find the following steps here:

- (1) Christ's eternal foreknowledge (or eternal purpose) about us
- (2) Preordination to fellowship with Christ

- (3) Christ's calling
- (4) Christ's justification
- (5) Christ's glorification.

Apart from the above mentioned five, we can see two more related points in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter one, verses one to fourteen.

Here we read that He chose us in Him before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to son-ship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. It can be seen here that we were marked in Christ with a seal - the promised Holy Spirit; who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I consecrated you and I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations." The eternal God tells prophet Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 1:5)

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last." John 15: 16

"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the

lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” 1 Corinthians 1 : 26 - 28

I was chosen. Not because I was strong, but because I was weak. Not because I was wise, but because I was a fool. I am a sinner. I have given space for Satan and his ways. I was a slave to Satan.

Yet, I was called, I was chosen.

When was I chosen?

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Ephesians 1 : 4

Before the selection, there was another step – he foreknew us.

He knew us before the creation of the world!

One – God foreknew us

Two – God chose us

Three – God pre-appointed us

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 1 : 5

Jeremiah was appointed to be a prophet, not only to the Jews, but to the heathen as well.

We are not here on earth as an accidental coincidence. It is part of the living God's glorious and

miraculous heavenly plan. The Lord who formed us, knows for what particular services and purposes he intended us. How precious and worthy we are!

This is something that I am unable to comprehend in my meagre mind.

What is the fourth step?

The Lord called us.

“Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name.”

Isaiah 49 : 1

While we were being formed in our mother's womb God called us.

“He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” *Ephesians 1 : 5*

Five: He adopted us. It is childless couples who usually adopt children.

All men are sinners.

“Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and

turned their backs on him.” Isaiah 1 : 2 - 4

Hi own children were of any use to the father. So he adopted.

Six: Justified.

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Romans 8 : 29 - 30

The eternal God predetermined or fore-appointed me to be in the same image as his firstborn, Jesus Christ, so that I might be among the many brothers and sisters and be considered as one of his brothers.

What a privilege! This is incomprehensible within the realms of human intellect or knowledge.

Who is man and what is human nature? Man is barbarically cunning, devious and dishonest. He is fraudulent, greedy and envious. He is selfish and power-hungry. Man who craves recognition and accolades. Man whose innate nature is sinful, who deserves nothing but wrath and condemnation, is actually fore-appointed to be like the image of just and holy God.

Seven: Glorified.

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is

freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3: 16 - 18

In St. Paul's sermon at Antioch, he mentions that “we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16). We attain a Christ like heart. God testified about David as a man after his own heart. “A man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22)

We were predestined to be conformed to image of a glorified Christ!

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929) a Sikh who is often known as India's most famous convert to Christianity left the wealth of his home at sixteen to live as a follower of Jesus Christ. When he went abroad thousands flocked to hear him preaching.

During a visit to Europe, he arrived in Denmark and spent three days in Copenhagen, speaking at several meetings. During that time, he received a call to visit the Queen of Denmark at the King's palace. The queen sent an important official to invite him to the palace. Although the official conveyed the message to Sundar Singh that Her Majesty wanted to see him, he did not take any notice of this. The officer went back and let the queen know about the lack of response from Sundar Singh.

The queen then sent even higher officials who informed Sundar Singh, that the Queen of Denmark wished to see him. He paid no attention to them. The officials reported this to the queen. Next the queen sent

yet another official asking him to let Sundar Singh know that a sinner wishes to see him. He hastily rose and went with the official to the palace. This is the very mind of Jesus Christ.

Are you fully aware, are you convinced that you are a sinner? That is our only worthiness, our only merit to approach Jesus Christ.

What is needed is an attitude that I cannot live without Jesus Christ. A firm conviction that I have no value on my own, that I have no power, no strength, no ability, no wisdom or the capability to stand alone.

“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: “Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?”

2 Samuel 7 : 18

We read in the book of Genesis that Jacob once prayed:

“I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.”

Genesis 32 : 10

Jesus Christ shed his holy blood on the cross so that we are conformed to the image of Christ, so that we attain Christ-like qualities.

Christ came into my heart when I repented. However, over time, worldliness and love of the ways of the world eventually crept into me without my knowledge. I had an inward desire for worldly honour and recognition; worldly esteem and positions; worldly appreciation and

accolades.

Occasionally vicious thoughts, bitterness, enmity and hateful feelings, grudge and revengeful thoughts towards others developed in my heart. I conveniently did not pay enough attention that this was not the nature of Christ!

Despite all these, I kept on preaching the Gospel whenever I could. I took great pride in it and thought that I am a repented person. And I justified myself that I had no crooked intentions or aims in preaching the Gospel.

I hadn't committed any outward sins during my life time. I never smoked, drank alcohol or watched movies. Neither did I have any bad friendships in my life. Nevertheless, when I was thirty-six years old, I had a huge realization; a revelation of truth that I was appointed to attain the image of Christ. To acquire the very nature of Jesus Christ!

One evening after preaching at my own parish church of St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Valamboor, I came back home with a heavy heart. I sat alone in my bedroom and burst into tears pouring out my heart before the Lord.

I couldn't control my tears and my thoughts were about my own state. I told the Lord, I came back after preaching Your word and about being born again, but there are still sins in my life. I admitted and confessed before the Lord that I still harboured malice and hatred towards some people in my heart. I wept with great remorse about my sins and deeply mourned over my sinful situation. I cried brokenheartedly.

I was so distraught over my sins to the very depths of my soul that I resolved to make a change in my life. There were several things in my life that needed correction. I decided to apologize and return the things that I needed to return. I decided to repay the money that I owed others.

There were some books in my possession which did not belong to me. I had distanced myself from a few people. I made a decision and determined that I will return anything that was in my possession wrongfully, to acknowledge my omissions and to beg pardon.

The very next day, on Friday the 11th of May, 1973 at 9am, heavenly God ascended into my head pouring out his unlimited grace and mercy on me. I experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the divine sense of the Holy Spirit flowing through my heart!

“The law of the Spirit of life has set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” Jesus Christ gave complete freedom from the sins.

Now I am being renewed and sanctified day by day. The result is that I am realise my nothingness day by day.

Now I have a recognition of the increasing need to be sanctified and renewed every day of my life - a strong awareness that many more changes are required, that progressive sanctification and further transformation should happen daily in the life ahead. Merciful Jesus is touching lives, he is sanctifying and leading to a state of holiness, he is justifying thereby leading towards glorification.

Are you eager and keen for the Holy Spirit to come

into your life? Are you interested in a deep cleansing? Are your eyes open to the reality that everything you have attained, everything you have achieved so far, everything you believe that you have gained through this life is futile and worthless?

Do you look at yourselves and find absolutely nothing, a recognition you have nothing, that you are nothing, that you have achieved nothing? Do you realize that everything you did so far; all your works of charity – all were in vain? If you do, then humble yourself before Christ now. Bid farewell to sin. Surrender yourself to the Holy Spirit who cleanses and purifies your heart. Dedicate yourself fully to the amazing grace and to the power of the life-giving Holy spirit who frees you from the law of sin and death.



CHAPTER 13

There are some crucial truths we need to grasp in order to be transformed into the very likeness of Jesus Christ. These can be viewed in St. Paul's Letter to Romans, chapter eight.

The theme of this chapter is the power of the redemption offered by Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter three is about the price paid by Jesus for redeeming us. St. Paul writes that all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Redemption is deliverance from bondage by the payment of a price, or ransom.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.”

Romans 3 : 23 - 25

There is no difference – all are slaves to sin. Whether you have sinned in your deeds or not, you are a slave to sin. Whether you have sinned in your words or not, you are a slave to sin. Whether you have sinned in

your thoughts or not, you are still a slave to sin.

For all have sinned - and consequently all are equally guilty; irrespective of whether one is educated or illiterate, scholarly or ignorant, wise or foolish, civilized or uncivilized, rich or poor. There is no difference whether you are male or female nor is there any difference between an adult and infant.

There is no difference; all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And all are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus, His endless mercy has embraced all.

What was the price paid by God? God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood--to be received by those who had faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

The experience when transgressions are forgiven and sins are covered is a most fortunate one. Christ transformed my sin-prone personality. Isn't it really wonderful to truly experience that the Lord changed my angry nature, my grudges, my hatred and vengeance and my stubborn and adamant nature. To perceive and sense Christ altering one's worldly nature! This is something that Jesus Christ alone can bring forth. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, when we receive the Holy Spirit we start having a victorious

Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is a river of life giving water.

Just as water always flows to and fills the lowest place, when we lower ourselves, when we humble ourselves before God, we will gain the Holy Spirit. For this we must recognise, accept and admit in our hearts that we are lowly, empty and there is no goodness in us.

Thus when we pray with a broken and contrite heart and humble spirit, then the glory and power of the Holy Spirit flows in to bless us and to turn what was impossible before into possible.

For this is what the high and exalted One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

St Paul humbled himself. He had a contrite and broken heart. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, declared that, of all sinners, "I am the worst!". This is not a negative approach. He is openly admitting his own state and he gives himself as an example admitting that he was a defeated man. He mentions about the struggle between what he wanted to do and what he actually does, as sin continues to assault our earthly nature. When I have the utmost desire to be victorious through Spirit, an equally strong evil force is fighting to exhaust, extinguish and destroy me.

This evil terrifying force is the law of sin that dwells within me. The owner of that evil force is the devil. He is

working within me to destroy me. He is constantly attacking me.

We will not win with our efforts. So we rely and lean on God's grace. We entrust him and plead to Him that he has to bless us and help us in our struggle. I want to lead a victorious life. A victory over my sinful nature and an attainment of Christ's very nature. This is what we must be praying for. The key to victory in our struggles with sin lies not in ourselves, but in God and His faithfulness to us.

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Let us hear the testimony of a person whom God lead through this experience.

“My name is Thomas. I reside at Oliyappuram in Koothattukulam District of Kerala. I am a member of the Jacobite Syrian Church, Vadakara.

From my early childhood, I used to attend church and studied in Sunday school. However, I never knew who Jesus was or that Jesus is the Saviour. After my studies I got a job at a young age. I had to go to Chennai where I started my first job. Once I had a job which was very well paid, I started spending my money on bad habits. Drinking, gambling and cinemas became a part of my life. My heart was filled with indecent and filthy longings and dirty desires rushed forth into my life. I was a slave of anger.

Later I went abroad to take up a job there and when I came back on leave I got married. The only day I didn't

drink alcohol was the day of my marriage.

My wife never liked my drinking. Once I was drunk I used to lose my temper and was angry and bitter, which caused problems at home. This made her to loath me even more. We did not have any harmony in our life.

My wife also had a fiery and angry nature. Thus we were annoyed and angry with each other and our family life was hellish.

Constant disagreement, conflicts, dislike and discontent. There were days in our life when we couldn't even eat anything peacefully. A life full of despair and hopelessness!

I realized that there was no meaning in living such a life and even thought of taking my own life. God, by His grace saved me from such suicidal thoughts.

Around that time, I heard of a Gospel meeting at the residence of M.Y. Yohannan sir. However, I had also heard that this Gospel meeting was against the church and assumed that this was a separate congregation.

Nevertheless, I noticed that the people taking part in these Gospel messages were changed. Their behaviour and way of talking had a distinctness and there seemed to be something different about them. I also observed that these people led a peaceful and happy family life.

Thus one day I came to this fellowship with a heavy heart filled with despair. On that day when Yohannan sir was speaking the word of God, the Lord intervened with me. I burst into tears. My weeping was so loud that people

around me noticed me. I experienced an immense and unknown peace that night. I dedicated my life to the Lord the same night. That night I returned home with much peace and joy.

I decided to make amendments in my life. There were a few things that I had stolen from others. I asked for forgiveness and made amends by giving equivalent money back. God gave me the grace to apologize to some families for having wronged them.

Since that day, God blessed me to continuously attend the prayer meetings at Yohannan sir's house. I then invited my wife to attend the prayer meetings with me. She was totally against this fellowship at that time. But eventually she too came. When she heard and received the word of God, her character also started changing. Now we lead a life of peace, happiness and unity. God granted us his blessing to start a heavenly life in our own home!

My wife was working at Kolenchery Medical Mission Hospital. After our marriage we had no children for nearly eight years. After a long eight years a child was born to us. When my daughter was three years old, she developed an illness called Perthes disease. Doctors told me that there was no cure for that disease. One of her legs was longer than the other and she walked with a limp.

Six months later, after an X-ray diagnosis doctors told me that the situation will never improve. The only remedy was a surgery later in life to extend the length of the shorter leg. There wasn't anything else to be done at

that stage.

Another X-ray was taken after another six months and during that check-up the doctor was amazed and he told my wife that God heard your prayer. Not only did she not have the disease, but there was not even a symptom that she had ever had it at all.

Today my daughter leads a healed and peaceful life.

God transformed my family life from one full of constant disagreements and discord, hatred and daily quarrels to one where now there is family prayer two times a day. We now lead a peaceful life praising and worshipping the Lord with joy and peace in our family.

We still are members of our parish church and diligently follow the rites of our church.”

Human nature can be transformed only by the intervention of Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit dwelling in us we have power over our old angry nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which gets rid of our sins. The Holy Spirit works in our life to change our quarrelsome nature.

A family where husband and wife fought constantly; where there was daily confrontation and arguments. A family where the members left dining tables with empty stomachs, leaving the dishes untouched. An unhappy family where husband and wife slept in separate rooms. Today they live in unity and harmony, in happiness and peace praising and glorifying almighty God!

God is the one who performs miracles. Do you yearn for these miracles to happen in your life as well? Do you

want to experience this in your lives?

Don't you wish to lead a happy and secure heavenly family life? Should we continue to go through unnecessary suffering and turmoil? Should you continue creating hell on earth? Do you not wish - to grow in love? To be entirely holy? To develop unity and harmony in our homes? To exalt and glorify the Lord?

Jesus Christ will give you peace. He will perform miracles in your life. He will transform you and your personality. The amazing love of Jesus Christ will come forth into your family. Your home will be a small heaven.



CHAPTER 14

“Prison to Praise” is a motivational book written by Merlin Carothers. It is an inspiring account of the grace of God working in a human life.

Carothers in this small book, tells of his own very tough start in life including trying to run away from God at a young age and of the transformation he found in coming to faith – and of the various stages of his journey after that.

He was someone who waited in fervent prayer and fasting to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He waited prayerfully in anticipation for the grace of the Holy Spirit. He longed to acquire the Holy Spirit; to lead a victorious life; to undertake the vocation of working for God; to perform his mission in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and to lead a life that is useful to God. His quest was to pursue a meaningful life.

On one occasion he prayed to God; *“Oh God use me, Lord use me”*. After a while he heard a gentle voice speaking to him – *“No I am not going to use you; I want you to use me”*. God did not want to use us; but instead God wished for us to use him!

God is not using us. On the contrary we are using Him. Because everything is performed by Him!

The love and grace of God is displayed in the free

justification of a sinner. Man who is by nature son of the devil, who has the very nature of Satan, was adopted by God as His son. Because of his love he predestined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ. God's desire about us is to use Him.

God justifies us. Justification is God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin while at the same time declaring a sinner righteous through Christ's atoning sacrifice. It is making an unjust person to be just or righteous. Justification is solely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). Yet I who was sinful right from my birth is considered as righteous by God – this is justification!

We have Satan's poisonous thorn; his venomous sting in us. The sting of Satan is sin and we have been stung by this.

This can be made clear through a small example.

One day, two little brothers were taking a stroll in a wooded area near their house. This wooded area had plenty of trees, shrubs and climbers and the children started playing there.

Suddenly, the older boy was stung by a wasp. The attack left him in great pain and the area was swollen in minutes. The boy started crying out loud in agonising pain.

Hearing the cry both mum and dad rushed to them. They found out what happened, saw the swollen area stung by the wasp and started comforting the boy.

While they were busy trying to take care of the older boy, the younger one started screaming. The wasp was hovering over the younger one who was horrified seeing the wasp. The younger boy started to cry; “the wasp is going to attack me”. Having witnessed his older brother being attacked by the wasp and the great pain his brother was in, the young boy was extremely frightened.

His dad rushed to him and told him not to worry because even if it bites nothing will happen. He explained to the little boy that when a wasp stings a person, it cannot pull the stinger back out. It leaves behind the stinger in that person's body. The stinger of the wasp is already in his older brother's body and so the wasp cannot sting anymore. The stinger is broken and lost, so there is no need to be afraid.

The first born was stung by the devil so as to save his brothers. This is justification through crucifixion.

Jesus had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But He suffered the pain and the penalty for our sins. He accepted the poisonous sting of sin from Satan.

While he had never committed a sin, he suffered the penalty for sin and paid the full price on the cross. He was afflicted, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and was crucified along with criminals and thieves; one on his right and one on his left.

The first born himself bore the deadly thorn to redeem the forthcoming sons from the deadly sting of sin. He was delivered to death for our offences. When we realize that we received justification because he took our sin upon him and paid a penalty for us, our hearts will fill

with gratitude.

Jesus Christ, the son of God, who was innocent, who never did anything evil, bore the sins of this most dreadful sinner, in His own body on the cross, and by dying in my place, he took the penalty for my sins upon himself and died on cross. He got stung by devil and suffered the most painful torture from Satan!

I submit myself wholly before you my saviour, who bore all the sins of a sinner like me and endured on the cross all the punishment that I should have received, so as to grant me redemption. I surrender my entire life at your most Holy feet wounded by nails on the cross.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3: 18

Having given justification, we grow in His glory. Whom He justified, He also glorified. This leads to being sanctified inwardly. God's justification of us brings about the process of inner renewal and transformation!

We start carrying everything to God in constant prayer when we begin to realize our sins in the most common and seemingly insignificant situations. We begin to incessantly seek God's help to get rid ourselves of these minor sins which we previously considered as harmless.

We become determined that we should not be touched by sin down to our last cells. The spirit of God dwells in us, granting us the nature of Christ, so that we

can respect, honour and love everyone bearing no malice to others or hatred in our hearts and with no prejudice, strife or discrimination towards our fellow beings.

We are being transformed into the image of the Lord and becoming more like him with ever-increasing glory.

He also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Let us have an earnest desire in this insignificant life of ours - to emulate the character of Christ; to attain the likeness of Christ; to achieve a personality like Christ, to have a heart and mind like that of Jesus Christ! A true reproduction of Christ's character!

The consuming fire of the Holy Spirit flowing through me and engulfing my entire old character should lead to the total destruction of my sinful nature, such that the person called 'me' must transform into a wholly spiritual being who advances progressively in the ever increasing glory. To accomplish this, we need to imitate Christ and our character should resemble that of Christ.

So forth, we should have just two goals:

One – To complete my dedication to holiness

Two – To complete my dedication in the service of Lord Jesus

St. Paul describes his own desire to finish his ministry as below;

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and - the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.”

Acts 20:24



CHAPTER 15

“Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you? Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?” Psalms 88: 10 - 12

In the Living Bible the above verse is as follows:

“Soon it will be too late! Of what use are your miracles when I am in the grave? How can I praise you then? Can those in the grave declare your loving kindness? Can they proclaim your faithfulness? Can the darkness speak of your miracles? Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness talk about your help?”

We see a series of questions in Psalm 88:

Will You perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise You? Shall Your loving kindness be declared in the grave, your faithfulness in destruction? Shall Your wonders be made known in the darkness? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Great philosophers and theologians, poets and

artists and great thinkers have attempted stringing together ideas and concepts about death and eternity after death.

Poonthanam Namboodiri was a 16th century Malayalam poet who wrote 'a devotional poem 'Jnanappana' which is revered for its poetic merit.

*“kandu kandangirikkum janangale
kandiillennu varuthunnathum bhavan
randu nalu dinam kondoruthane
thandiletti nadathunnathum bhavan
malika mukaleriya mannante tholil
marappu kettunnathum bhavan”*

[The people who is seen by all of us now,
You are the one who makes them,
Not to be seen in this world.
In a matter of a day or two
You are He, who makes them ride on the royal chair.
On the shoulder of the king who climbs to the top of
palace.
You are He, who places the tattered heap.]

The poet brings out how our life is “God controlled” and how temporary are the happiness and sorrow that we go through.

If God (Bhagavan) wishes, those people whom we see (kandu kandangirikkum janangalae) today may disappear (kandillaennu varuthunnathum – may be dead) by tomorrow. Again if God decides, in two to four days (randu naalu dinam kondoruthanae) a healthy man's dead body may be carried to the funeral pyre. In the same

way, by God's wish, a king sitting in a palace (maalika) can become a beggar with a dirty bag (maaraappu) hanging from his shoulders (thoilil). Life is explained to be mortal, everything that we see, feel and enjoy - wealth, poverty and sorrows are but momentary. A man walking and having fun this moment can embrace death the very next moment.

A healthy and fit person, someone we saw almost every day - How abruptly did he pass away! How swiftly and briskly did he depart into the land of oblivion!

How many of the affluent and prosperous rich people; those who basked in the glories of wealth and the highest ranks of society became impoverished and penniless in a fleeting moment of time and vice versa

Human life on this earth is mortal. Everything is so momentary and fleeting. After living on this earth for a while we pass away. Thereafter; will we be able to praise God? Will there be any possibility to praise him?

“It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence.”

Psalms 115 : 17

The psalmist asks whether the departed spirits will rise and praise God? The answer for this can be seen in psalm 115 verse 17.

“The dead cannot sing praises to the LORD, for they have gone into the silence of the grave.” (NLT)

However, in the very next verse (psalm 115: 18) we

read:

“it is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore. Praise the Lord.”

Psalms 115 : 18

The dead cannot praise God: the souls of departed saints can and do praise the Lord. Thus some of those who have departed from this world will praise God for ever. But we will praise the Lord from this time forth and for evermore.

Those who have gone into silence, the dead in Spirit, they don't praise God. They don't worship or praise God.

Even when alive on earth, there is the state where the spirit is dead. For, the wages of sin is death.

“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”
James 1 : 15

Sin stemming forth from the desire, and death – death of the spirit – evolving from the sin.

The spiritually dead do not give honour, praise and worship to God. If there is sin in the heart, if there is sin in your life, in your deeds or in your nature or personality then there is no true praise there.

Words of praise might be there on your lips. There might be choruses of hallelujah, but there won't be the experience of the sweetness of praise that naturally arises from the depths of the heart. Lack of true praising!

That is why Psalmist says in the last verse of Psalm

150 *“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord”*. Where there is life, there is praise. Be of life in your spirit and praise the Lord.

In Psalm 51, we see King David praying;

“Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.” *Psalms 51 : 15*

As a result of my sins my lips are sealed - on account of my sins my mouth stopped pouring forth your praise. When I sinned my worship stopped. O Lord, please open my lips. When my lips are opened my tongue shall sing forth the praise of my redeemer. Then I will sing your praises and exalt your name.

Think for a moment; in your life, do you worship in purity? Do you worship in truth? Is there worship in spirit?

Do the dead praise God? Those who are spiritually dead do not praise God. Neither the dead nor those who have gone down into the silence of death can praise the Lord.

Some of you who are reading this have escaped from the bondages of sin. As a result, you have gained the experience of praising in spirit. Your mouth was opened and tongue was released, your eyes were opened as was your heart. You have experienced all your senses being opened and then praise burst forth from you!

Let me introduce a young man to you. He was spiritually dead. However, fortunately he regained life. Death, the wage of sin had reigned in him! Jose is an engineer from Valakam near Muvattupuzha. His wife is

also an engineer. Let us read about Jose's account about the joyous experience of attaining life and glorifying God in his own words

“I belong to the parish of Valakam Marthoma Church. In my childhood, I used to attend the church and the Sunday school. However, during my adolescent years sin entered my life. My life became engulfed by sins of youth including watching movies, TV serials, smoking, drinking, gambling and immorality. Outwardly I was a good man, however, inwardly my mind was full of immorality.

My heart was full of sins. I lived as a proud and arrogant person. I got married when I was twenty-seven years old. My wife was also an engineer. She was a student of Yohannan sir at Kolenchery college.

Previously my wife was a teacher at an engineering college at Kottayam and now she is working as an assistant engineer at the Muvattupuzha Public Works Department (P.W.D).

I have my own business and we were financially well off. However, we never had peace in our lives. There were daily confrontations and clashes in our home. Both me and my wife were very angry people. I did not regard or respect anyone at home. I could not accept or give due recognition to my parents, my wife, my siblings or children. I led a life bowing to no one.

At that time, work related dispute happened at my business place. This created political enmity and hatred towards me and I was involved in court cases and legal

actions against others.

I used to drink regularly and come home very late at night. One night when I was coming home some people followed me, threw chilli powder into my eyes and viciously attacked me. They inflicted severe wounds on my head, hands and legs with a metal rod. I was defenceless and fell down powerless. They left me lying there for dead.

Lying there I cried out aloud to God to save me. That day I escaped but these people continued to threaten me. They warned and intimidated me several times. I lived in constant fear, anxiety and worry. I kept a hand gun under my bed and was not able to sleep at night. Sleepless nights!

It was during this troubled times that I heard about Christian Revival Fellowship. I was fortunate enough to come and attend a meeting at Yohannan sir's house.

I heard the word of God there. When I heard the word of God I realized that I was a very grave sinner. I discovered that my mind was full of filth and sins. I continued to attend the gospel messages.

One day I went to see Yohannan sir with my wife and got a chance to talk with him openly about all our problems. He advised us about the right way to move forward. He asked us to settle all the court cases and legal disputes and to forgive our enemies. He told us clearly about the need for a tremendous change in our lives. He prayed for us.

We obeyed everything he said. We withdrew all the

cases that we had filed in the court. We reconciled with those with whom we had enmity. All the cases were resolved peacefully. Those who were our foes are now our friends.

I went and apologised to people with whom I had grudges and thus alienated myself. God gave me the grace to go and apologise to my relatives, friends and neighbours and to restore harmony with them. I was estranged from my father for nearly fourteen years. Hearing the word of the God at the fellowship, I felt remorse in my heart and reconciled with my father. God gave me the grace to reconcile with all my siblings.

I had some health issues which used to bother me constantly. I had recurring tonsillitis infections which distressed me at that time. In addition to this, I had a very painful and debilitating back pain. I had tried different treatments for these ailments but never found relief.

But, when I came to this fellowship and listened to the Word of God, Jesus Christ removed my bondage of diseases. Without any medical treatment and without any medicines, He healed my tonsillitis and back pain completely. Jesus is helping me to lead a peaceful life.

Once my son once got seriously ill and was diagnosed with acute meningitis. He was admitted to the Kolenchery Medical Mission hospital. We were very anxious and concerned about him. At that distressing time, we telephoned Yohannan sir and informed him of the situation. He visited us at the hospital. He spoke to both of us and asked us to reflect into our past lives and to find

each and every sin, to forsake them and to repent and confess everything before God. He told us about the need for a significant change in our lives and then prayed for our son.

We both were people who quarrelled frequently. We had no harmony in any aspects of our lives and totally disagreed in everything. We held our hands before God, looked back on our lives and found our forgotten sins. God gave us the grace to confess those sins and to give up those sins.

From that day both of us who quarrelled with each other became one at heart. We had unity in our minds. With that our son's illness was cured and our children's educational life started improving. They started studying well and attained very good marks. Today, we lead a very peaceful life.

Jesus Christ laid the stepping stones for a heavenly life in our home. He instilled in us a desire to live for him. My sole wish now is to gain sanctification and holiness and to stand for God for the rest of my life on earth.

The more I listen to the Word of God, the more I realise my nothingness and about the need for much more sanctification. I have decided to do whatever I can and to spend whatever I can for God.”

When life came forth to the Spirit, spiritual praise began.

The dead cannot sing praises to the LORD, for they have gone into the silence of the grave. But we will praise God from today and forever, we will glorify Him!

It is irrelevant whether we belong to the Jacobite Church, Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Pentecost Church, Marthomite Church or the C.S.I Church. The true church is a congregation of Christians who have united themselves to work for, to praise and worship God together in love and thankfulness.

To worship God in purity, standing together as a congregation, church or denomination are not barriers. We must be able to worship God in spirit and in truth. For that there is no need to change one's church or denomination.

You must first have your sins absolved. When your heart is free of sins, your life will become peaceful. From a heart free from sin, spiritual praise will arise.

Our spirit should not lie in the silence of death. The spirit should attain life. For that let us gladly receive Jesus Christ who came so that we may have life and have it to the full. Accept Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour!



CHAPTER 16

“By his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

Hebrews 2 : 14 - 15

The spiritually dead do not praise the Lord. Spiritual death comes as a result of our own sins. For, the wage of sin is death. The soul who sins shall die.

If a person dies unrepentant, he will end up in the place of eternal torture. There will be no sounds of praise there. There will only be sounds of weeping and the gnashing of teeth. A place filled with suffering and despair, a place of torment and tears, a place of pain and peril in the furnace of fire!

Satan is a very wicked, vile and destructive being who has but one goal - to destroy mankind. His plan is to bring about as much destruction, and suffering as he can possibly bestow upon humanity. We cannot see him with our naked eyes. But he and his army are all around us in the atmosphere. They roam around attempting to lure people into sins and to bring them under Satan's control. Many are ensnared into his traps.

He influences many and turns them into murderers.

He incites them into violence, jealousy, envy, hatred, war and so forth. We are living through a time of terror. Protests, riots, shootings and uprisings take place all over the world, and the cities have become hotbeds of violence. Terrible bombings and fiery explosions are happening around the world. There is distress and troubles all around the world.

Even as a murderer was getting ready to kill his next victim, an explosion dismembered both his hands! Satan on a destruction spree!

I have heard about a man who used to commute to work daily by train. His wife would pack his lunch every morning in his suitcase. About three-quarters of the way into the journey the train would cross a bridge over a large river.

Even if he was sitting comfortably in the train, when the train neared the river, he would go and stand by the door. He would get a strange feeling; a temptation to throw his suitcase into the water. Luckily he did not throw it. He was confused why this thought kept on recurring in his mind. He had his lunch, files from his work, his season ticket and some money in this suitcase. As time went on, he started to develop another thought – he himself wanted to jump from the train into the river down below. He had no clue why and how such a thought entered his mind. Why did he get such a thought? A villain had decided to destroy this young man. He was not anyone external. It was the devil - Satan. The mastermind behind this is Satan. Satan decided to destroy this young man's life. It was a crooked plan and project of Satan.

Another man spoke to me about his dilemma. "I don't have any disagreements or discontent with my boss. But at times, while in my office, I feel like getting up and beating him up". I explained to him that this is the work of devil. Satan who is on his mission to bring destruction to his life!

I brought the following verse to his attention: "By His Death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

This is what Christ did. He delivered them, who through fear of death were subject to bondage and were Satan's captives all their lifetime. If we gain the experience of release from bondage brought about by Christ, and the glorious liberty as a result of it, it is possible to reach the heavenly summits of praise and glory after death. To reach the heavenly realms of incessant praise, adoration, purity and love, all the bondages of sins should be broken while on earth.

By His death, He destroyed him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and freed those who were held in slavery, all their lives, by their fear of death. Some are slaves of anger, some are stubborn, obstinate and adamant and yet others slaves of hate and prejudice – everything that upsets and disturbs the whole family

There was a family, a husband and wife who had arguments and disputes almost every single day. There was lack of harmony and no way in which they could be in unison about anything. But if someone asked them

whether they love each other - yes, they do! Have they got children? Yes, they have children! However, if the husband said something, it was very certain that the wife would retaliate and talk back. She would definitely counter argue and would never be in acceptance with her husband.

Let me introduce you to Aleyamma, who is an assistant engineer at Kerala State Public Works Department. Aleyamma herself will narrate how her family was like a hell on earth.

“I am Aleyamma. I work as an engineer at Valakom near Muvattupuzha. I was born and brought up in a Jacobite family. When I was young, I used to attend church and Sunday School. However, I did not have Christ in my life. I never knew or thought about the state of my spirit – whether it was dead or imprisoned?

I wasn't able to come to this fellowship previously. The main reason was some misunderstanding and misconceptions I had about the fellowship. Yohannan sir was my teacher when I was a student at St Peter's College Kolenchery.

One day my husband had an accident. He was attacked by some people who had enmity against him. When his assaulters were certain they he would die, they left him and fled the scene. My husband cried out to God – 'Oh Lord please save me'. He was taken to a nearby hospital by some people.

I would have become a widow in my early days of married life. But God saved me from that disaster. He

rescued my husband from the hands of death. Following that incident my husband happened to attend a Christian Revival Fellowship prayer meeting. When he heard the living word of God through this fellowship, he came into a true repentance.

Subsequently, I also started coming to this fellowship. When I started to regularly attend the prayer meetings of this fellowship where Holy Spirit's works within the people, rays of light started illuminating my life. My life was filled with darkness. I never obeyed my husband. I was not submissive to my husband, nor did I love my husband properly. My home was a home of quarrels and this happened every single day of my married life. Whatever my husband said, I always used to retaliate with something else. I used to justify myself and argue to support my perspective. Our life was like hell on earth. Even our children fought with each other.

I came to this fellowship at a time when I had absolutely no peace in my life. However, when I started listening to the living word of God, I had a chance to reminisce and reflect on my own life. My heart was full of jealousy, enmity, dislikes, bitterness, quarrels and ego. I was of the opinion that whatever I said was always right.”

By listening to the Holy word of God, I was able to probe into my heart, search for my sins and examine them. I came to realise that if I continued the same life I was leading, there was no way that I would reach the eternal heaven. I recognised that my journey was to the eternal hell.

I understood that my soul was imprisoned. I desired for my soul to be released and set free from this prison. One day both my husband and I got an opportunity to see Yohannan sir and discuss all our problems with him. He gave us advice on them and then prayed for us. God gave me immense grace on that day to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord.”

I renounced Satan and accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I gave up my sinful life and my name was written in the book of life. From that day onwards God gave me a victorious life.

God gave me a deep desire to lead a life free of sin. I started loving my husband unconditionally. There on, I became submissive and stopped talking back to him. Today we lead a peaceful life.

Once an attempted robbery happened at our house. One night we woke up hearing some sounds. Although we switched on the lights and had a look around, we couldn't see anything. We switched off the lights and went back to sleep. We were woken up in the middle of the night again by some sounds and when we looked out of the window we saw a man getting out of our car and running away. That was an attempt to steal our car. When this incident happened Yohannan sir was in America. He had called John Kuriakose from Dentcare Dental Lab and enquired about us. He asked “How is Valakom Jose and his family doing? Tell them that I am praying specially for them”. God prompted Yohannan sir to pray for us at that time. Next day when John saw us he told us about this and then we described all that happened at our house to him!

Almost a month before this incident happened, Yohannan sir had told us: “There seems to be a robbery attempt that will take place at your house”. God cares about us! He has given us a desire to lead a sinless life!

I know that the life on earth is vain and meaningless. My heart longs to reach eternity after spending the meaningless days of life here on earth.

Today we are leading a heavenly life. God is bringing forth a change in the characters of our children as well. He has taken care of our children's education.

Jesus Christ will come again. When he comes again, He will take me unto Himself. Not just me, but everyone who has kept their hopes in Him. For that I have to make sure that I lead a Holy life for the rest of the days of my life. I want to lead a life without any sins. My desire is to lead as holy a life as is possible.”

Jesus Christ sets each one of us free from the bondages of sin.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.” *1 John 3: 8*

God is omnipotent. It is often asked why there is so much suffering and illness in the world if God is all powerful and loving. Some people question why doesn't He stop it or prevent such calamities from happening?

Death, disease, old age, natural calamities such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and fires – why do they occur? Can't the sovereign God prevent all these? Why do people get cancer? God is powerful, so can't he

prevent these from happening? Why do some people get bitten by snakes? Isn't it because God created snakes that they bite humans? There are some who ask these kind of questions.

It is a common practice that if you are sick or ill you go for treatment. If bitten by a snake, no one waits to check why this happened, but instead the priority would be to seek a remedy as soon as possible.

Anti-venom used for the treatment of venomous snake bites are made by milking venom from a live snake. This venom is then diluted and injected into a horse. The horse will undergo an immune response to the venom, producing antibodies against the venom which are then harvested from the horse's blood and is used to treat snake bites.

The horse when injected with snake venom, takes on the venom in its own body. Because of this we get anti-venom which is used to treat and save the life of a man on earth who would otherwise have died.

Just like that our merciful Jesus Christ, because of His love for us, took the venom of Satan - sin - upon Himself and accepted it in His own body. This is manifested in what Christ did. When we grasp this truth, our spirit will be enlightened or illuminated; and the bondages of Satan will be loosened. Jesus Christ Himself bore my sins. The burden and bondages of our sins, He Himself carried in His own body – to envisage this and to apprehend this fully is a very fortunate experience.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,

so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Christ had not committed any sin. Yet He bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might not die to sins. Jesus died on the cross by shedding His holy blood for our sins, so that we might be forgiven.

That is why St. John says: “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Just believe that the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ is able to cleanse you. The Holy Blood shed by Jesus Christ on cross is capable of cleansing you and absolving all your sins. That it is sufficient to purify you and forgive all your sins that happened in the past. Surrender your life into the mighty hands of Jesus. Make a promise to Him, “Oh Lord, I will lead a new life as a new creation in you, from today onwards”.



CHAPTER 17

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” *Psalms 90 : 12*

Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses; the man of God. This is the prayer which he recited at the funeral of his older brother Aaron. In this Psalm, Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God. The Psalm begins as follows:

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn people back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”

Psalms 90 : 1 - 3

Moses pours out his painful thoughts and memories to God, at the time when Aaron's fleeting life on earth is over and as he is moving into the eternal world.

“All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your

anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Psalms 90 : 9 - 12

As we mentioned previously "What happens after death?" is a question which people of all ages and races have sought an answer for.

The first question about the state after death is:

"But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?" Job 14 : 10 (ESV)

Second question:

"If a man dies, shall he live again?"

Job 14 : 14 (ESV)

Third question:

"Who can escape the power of the grave?"

Psalms 89 : 48

Fourth question:

"Who can live and not see death?"

Psalms 89 : 48

Fifth question:

"Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" Romans 7 : 24

Sixth question:

"Do you show your wonders to the dead?"

Psalms 88 : 10

Seventh question:

“Do the departed rise up to praise you?”

Psalms 88 : 10 (ESV)

Praise and adoration starts when you are set free from bondages. Bondages of Satan, bondages of sins, bondages of diseases - when the yokes of all these are destroyed, when the snare is broken, and we are released from the traps of Satan, then true worship starts!

One day, all of us will depart from this world. Our life has an ending, just as it had a beginning. When we die, it is not the end. We understand very clearly from the scriptures that once we depart from this physical world, there is an eternity. The Bible teaches us that death is but a door leading to eternity. Jesus Christ himself has proclaimed that this eternity is either in heaven or in the hell.

Sister Mary Beninja (1899 - 1985) was a nun as well as a Malayalam and Sanskrit scholar. A few lines from one of her poems is as below.

*“Oru saswatha suprabhathamundathu
Kandethukilo jayichu naam,
Athinappuramilla thengalum
Neduniswasavum onnumarkkume”*

[You are victorious if you manage to successfully find the eternal dawn. Beyond that day, no one will have neither sighs or sobbing.]

After death man moves into an eternal dawn. If we are able to find that dawn, we are victorious. There are no tears there, no sighing or weeping! Just the glorious and

illuminating dawn and the golden rays of early light. It will be the beginning of a new day filled with delight and pleasantness. There is no melancholy, no sorrows, no diseases or despondency, no difference of opinions or disagreements. The sublime heavenly shores are magnificent.

Changampuzha Krishna Pillai was a famous Malayalam poet. He may have been unable to comprehend the fullness of beauty and radiance of the heavenly shores as he wrote the below verses in his poem “Spandikkunna Asthimaadam” (The Throbbing Tomb):

*“Maranappuzhayile veliyettam
oru dinam nammeyum kondu pokaam
priyadhamam sarvavum verpirinju
oru verum soonyatha baakkiyaavam
niyathiyum nammalum thammilulla
nikila bandhangalum attu pokaam.”*

[Tidal waves in the river of death
Might take us also away one day,
Departing from everything so dear to us,
And leaving behind a void that cannot be filled.
The intimate relationship between nature and man
Might become severed for ever one day]

Human life will vanish just like the ebbs and flows of currents in the ocean of life. Here the poet speaks about the fleeting nature of human life and death through the metaphor of tides in the ocean. In the voyage of life at some point all the relationships that are held dear and every cord of attachment with nature will be severed as

life fades into oblivion. The poet is mourning that, all that would be left behind is emptiness!

However, the scripture says that there is no need for despair. There is a life after death. However not everyone will manage to reach there. Not all of us will reach the heavenly shores. While living on this earth, we should lead a life good enough to be able to reach Heaven when we die. This is freedom from the “yokes of Satan.” We must be set free from the bondages of sin to reach the heavenly shores where we can join the ranks of saints and holy men in their eternal praise of our Lord.

If we are caught by death at a very short notice, would we be leaving with a heavy heart full of despair? Would we be departing earth with thoughts that we have not been able to do what we wanted to do? That we have many things left undone?

I read about a great man called Cecil Rhodes. He died at the age of forty-nine. He went to South Africa from England. An ardent believer in British imperialism, he sought to bring the many different states in the African continent under British rule. As young as the age of thirty-four, Cecil invested in diamond mining in Kimberley and monopolised the control of the entire Kimberley diamond fields. He made a vast fortune through gold and diamond mining. As one of the richest men on earth, he devoted much of this personal wealth to acquiring territory and mining concessions for the advancement of the British Empire. Towards his last days, he felt that there was so much more to do. The last days of Cecil Rhodes were marked by grave disappointment and he murmured the

words "So little done, so much to do."

Once a traveller was travelling on a horse by some woods. The traveller enters a remote area where the weather is soothing, the lovely scenery is captivating and where he wants to stay for a while. However, he needs to continue this journey to fulfil his promises. Although the traveller takes in the lovely scene in near-silence and is tempted to stay longer, he acknowledges the pull of obligations and the considerable distance yet to be travelled. He lingers there for a while and was woken from his reverie by his horse which shakes its harness bells.

These lines followed;

*"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."*

These are the verses from a poem written by Robert frost, a famous American poet. After the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a note with the above four lines written in his own hand was found on Nehru's office table. These lines of Robert Frost served as an inspiration to one of the greatest men of India, and reminded him of the service to humanity and to his people for whom he had dedicated himself.

William Carey was an English missionary who came to India and was actively involved in many missionary projects. Carey showed incredible perseverance and unswerving devotion to the Lord and to his work. While in India, he learned many Indian languages and became

proficient and competent in most of them. He went on to produce many books and translated the Bible into forty Indian languages.

“I have finished my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, everything I hoped for and wished. Now I can rest, Lord please receive me now. Glory to God.”

Carey prayed and gave himself into the hands of God. He closed his eyes for ever with a glowing face and his ever-cheerful heart full of gratitude to God for His goodness.

Nothing be left undone! St. Paul, in his last epistle, the Letter to Timothy, who is his disciple and spiritual son, instructs Timothy to fully discharge his obligations to the ministry and to leave nothing undone or unfinished.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

2 Timothy 4 : 7 - 8

Through his words – 'not only to me, but also to all the Apostle foresaw us who are still alive in this generation. 'Fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness' – are we able to repeat these words of St. Paul with competence and confidence? Are you among those who await longingly and yearn for the second

coming of Jesus Christ? Is your life holy and pure enough for that? Heaven is fire. Heavenly fire is a perpetual fire. Only those who survive God's refining fire will be worthy enough to enter the blazing fire of heavenly realms. If I am not bright enough to match the heavenly fire, then I will be burned in the heavenly fire.

God does not want to abandon anyone to hell. He graciously and mercifully calls us to Him. We are like pieces of black charcoal. But when we are kept in contact with the heavenly fire that is Jesus Christ and the wind that is Holy Spirit blows over us, the black charcoal is rekindled. The enlivened black dead charcoal turns red and starts burning! The wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing now!

The price paid for turning us into a glowing and burning charcoal is the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed His Holy life on the Cross for us.



CHAPTER 18

“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.”

Revelation 14: 13

John Milton, the famous English poet and author of the two epic poems “Paradise Lost” and “Paradise Regained” spoke of the heavenly joy after death by describing death as “the golden key that opens the eternal ivory tower”. Entry into this heavenly ivory tower requires opening the doors using the golden key of death! Using this golden key, let us open the mansion of eternity - the magnificent heavenly palace and make it our dwelling.

Walter Scott said of death:

“Is death the last sleep? No, it is the last and final awakening.”

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two.”

Philippians 1 : 21 - 23

In the Epistle to the Philippians, St Paul mentions his

desire to depart from his human body and his longing to 'go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me'.

To be with Christ is much preferred and far better than remaining on earth. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21). Apostle Paul considers that for him it is a gain to die! To be with Christ is a most magnificent experience. Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi while under Roman imprisonment. During his first imprisonment in the Roman jail, he wrote four epistles. They are collectively known as the prison epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philippi was the base for the first Christian congregation in Europe. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul writes; "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."

What is heaven? Heaven is essentially life with Christ. Heaven is a state of being united with Christ – a life spent merged with Christ! A life with and among the saints and Holy people. A life spent with joy amongst those who love and adore Christ; a life among the ranks of Holy men who glorify and worship Christ!

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants." *Psalms 116: 15*

The death of His faithful ones is valuable in the LORD's sight and the LORD cares deeply when his loved ones die. Why? A devout man departs with great optimism and hope. He will resurrect. He will resurrect and see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory with His saints. He will reach the ranks of Holy men. He will glorify God in the congregation of righteous men - where the shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous. Let us live a devout and pious life. Live a life according to God's will and following his precepts.

The Lord knows the secrets of the heart and examines its motives. He weighs the hearts! Let us live a holy and pure life by being obedient to God in all areas of life. God has called us to be blameless and innocent; to be children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

This generation in which we live is a crooked and perverse generation – We live among those with perverted sentiments and habits; those who will take every occasion to pervert what you do and say, and who seek every opportunity to distort the cause of truth and righteousness. In his epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul urges them to become blameless and harmless children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

The whole of human society is flowing with the tide. It is difficult to swim against the tide. Many are stung by the venom of sin and flow along with the poisonous sin. The

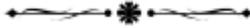
venom of Satan, the venom of bad habits, the venom of bad attitudes and perspectives, the venom of jealousy and anger, the venom of drunkenness and adultery, venom of pornography, adultery, ragging, drugs and movies, the venom of debauchery. They are just floating along in the flow of sinful life.

There are some who commit big robberies and thefts. There are those who lead a most disgraceful, heinous and immoral lives. It is a highly fortunate to be able to swim against the tide, instead of floating along, to rise above and to swim without being tainted by any poison. Are you willing to stay firm and not go along with the flow? Do you want to float with the tide, or to swim against it? This is the challenge. This is the challenge of the era. This is the very challenge that confronts today's society. Are you willing to take on this challenge? Irrespective of whoever goes down the path of sins, can you make a decision that you will be blameless and holy before the God who sees you?

The hands of Jesus became motionless two thousand years ago. They were pierced with nails that ripped through His flesh. Two thousand years ago His feet were also nailed and crushed. Both of His eyes closed. His tongue became silent two thousand years ago. Yet even today, He continues to speak through the tongues of holy men. He walks through the legs of holy men across all the five continents of the earth. He still works through the hands of holy men.

You need not be highly educated or knowledgeable.

You need not be a literate person or be of high intellect. Just one and only one essential thing is required – pray for Jesus to come into your heart and to reign in your heart. When Jesus enters your heart, He will bring gladness, He will bring peace. He will care for you irrespective of your education, health, intelligence, beauty, ability, skill and your influence or position in the society you live in. He will lift you up in His loving hands which can deliver you. He will work through you and perform wonders in this generation.



CHAPTER 19

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.”

Acts 7 : 55 - 58

It is possible to look up steadfastly up to heaven, while still alive on earth. It is possible to get a clear vision of the state after death while still living on earth. It is possible to get experiences and glimpses of the most glorious and fortunate heavenly experience that follows death, while on this earth. But just one and only one thing alone is needed for that – be filled with the Holy Spirit! In the Holy Spirit, we can see the transcendent divine glory of Heaven.

The above passage from the scripture narrates Stephen's trial after his first sermon. Ironically it also happened to be the last Sermon of Stephen! Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin - the powerful Jewish high council constituting of high priests, scholars, Pharisees

and the leaders of Israel, for having taught Jesus' teachings. Though he stood before the members of Sanhedrin on the charge of blasphemy and heresy; his countenance appeared almost heavenly. Why? Because he was filled with the Spirit of Christ. He was a man *“full of faith and the Holy Spirit”*. His sermon in front of the Sanhedrin was a demonstration of his spiritual fullness.

The words below describe the furious reaction of the Sanhedrin members when they heard Stephen's answer to their false accusations.

“When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.”
Acts 7:54

Not just on this occasion alone, but on many other occasions before and after this incident, the members of the high council have expressed their anger and fury. When the Apostles stood up as witnesses of Jesus Christ, the dignified members of the high council were enraged and wanted to put the apostles to death. We read about this in the Acts of the Apostles.

“When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.”
Acts 5:33

On another occasion when Peter and John performed miracles they were infuriated. When they healed and forgave the sins of a lame man he leapt up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them – praising God. When this happened the priests, captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, enraged.

“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.”

Acts 4 : 1, 2

“The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family.”

Acts 4 : 5, 6

“But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

Acts 4 : 17

“Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.”

Acts 4 : 18

Historical accounts of those times record the suffering of early Christians in the 1st century under a society that vehemently tried to oppress the followers of Christ and control any work in the name of Christ. The sufferings and persecution of the believers for their faith are recorded for posterity in the Acts of Apostles. It was during this time that Stephen emerged as a remarkable witness of Jesus Christ. He preached about Jesus with power and conviction. When Stephen was questioned under trial, he spoke boldly about Jesus Christ. He

courageously and fearlessly addressed them and rebuked them about their hard-heartedness and stubborn nature. However they could not tolerate these accusations and condemnations.

““You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him - you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.” Acts 7: 51 - 54

“Looked up to heaven” - Fixed his eyes intently on heaven. When filled with the Holy Spirit Stephen gazed up intently to heaven. When filled with Holy Spirit, one's gaze rises up to the heaven and does not rest on his opponents. They do not reply to their accusers nor take revenge on them! “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”

“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”
Acts 7 : 56

Stephen saw the glory of God. He saw Jesus standing in the place of honour at God's right hand. The

majestic radiance of heaven filled with God's glory! The divine and vivid vision of heaven brimming with luminous angels!

Let me quote an extract from a book written by Samuel Mena:

In pages 306 to 407 of the book “Nikshepam Niraykkappetta Manpatrangal” (Clay vessels filled with treasure) he describes the beauty and splendour of Heaven. The streets are of pure gold and there are splendid mansions; the bright dawns have no sun nor shadows, no darkness or night prevails there, flowers never wither, nothing ever decays or degenerates there, nothing ever changes there! It is a place where divine music fills the courts of heaven and skilled heavenly musicians praise our Lord and Creator, choir of angels playing their harps and stringed instruments in perfect harmony, musicians who never get weary or tired, a congregation of saints wearing golden crowns, a golden sovereign throne embedded with diamonds - and the lamb, the Saviour who reigns there surrounded by the most noble and everlasting holy people. Encompassing glory and holiness, encircling radiance!

Heaven is a place of unspeakable greatness. Heaven is filled with the glory of God, filled with the beauty of his holiness. God is calling us to that heavenly experience – to enter that glorious and most magnificent place! It is to take us to that heavenly abode that Christ came down from heaven to earth and suffered a cursed death on the cross. Christ tasted hellish pains to make us heirs of heaven, so that we could inherit the heavenly

kingdom.

Christ so loved us – we, who by no means would have reached the heavenly shores! He rescued us from the bondages of Satan when we were being dragged to the raging fires of eternal hell. He rescued us from the dominion of darkness and enabled us to share in the inheritance of his Holy people.

Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven. Then he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Stephen has a vision of the glorified Christ through the opened heaven. He beholds the sight of the one who departed from earth wearing a crown of thorns, now wearing a crown of kings in all glory and honour.

“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

Acts 7 : 56

“The Robe” a book written by the popular American author Lloyd Cassel Douglas, describes the martyrdom of Stephen. (The book has been translated into Malayalam and is called “Melanki”.)

Stephen, as a martyr, is presented before us through this book. Stones are pelted on him from all sides. He stands in the midst of a raging multitude of high priests, Pharisees, elders, scholars and officials who encouraged his attackers. The stones struck him from all sides, and his body was left bruised and mangled. He fell to the ground in severe pain. His elbows and knees were shattered and he could not stand anymore. Their noise and vehemence roared around him like the raging waves of the sea.

Despite this his gaze was steadfastly up into heaven and nowhere else! He did not cast his eyes around to observe his cruel persecutors. He looks up to heaven and he beholds through its opened doors the Son of man standing at the right hand of the Father. The blissful sight of Jesus Christ waiting to welcome him! What a sight this was for the dying Stephen!

To see Christ while writhing with pain, when the body is crushed, while the sufferings are unbearable and the pain unutterable. The vision of Christ reigning in heaven – the triumphant Saviour, standing at the right hand of God. Anguish in the body, mind and heart! The agony that no one realises Christ's love, the ache that no one is willing to understand the truth, the pain that churches which are meant to be a places of true worship are against true worship! The anguish in Stephen's heart grows and torments him. In the midst of such pain, he tries to lift himself up on his knees leaning on his broken elbow and gazes up to heaven. And then Stephen saw heaven open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

We should be filled with Holy Spirit while we are alive on earth itself. Being anointed by the Holy Spirit! A life of no complaints or discontent! A life with no protest or malice towards none. Even when we are accused of things we have not done, even when belittled, scorned and insulted by others for no reason, even when we are singled out and have to undergo character assassination - to stand and continue praising Christ with a heart throbbing with love – leading such a life! Isn't this a fortunate experience?

If so, then we have become true believers! Then, we have become Christians. At present, we are called Christians. But there is no Christianity in our lives. We are not followers of Christ. We don't have the nature of Christ. We have hatred in our hearts, hostility, grudges towards others, contempt, ego, a longing for power and social standing, pride, inclinations towards immorality, wickedness and evil, deceit, dishonesty and corruption, prejudice, fraud and hypocrisy, cruelty and sadism, false piety and an eagerness to shine before people. There is no lack of customs, prayers and worship on the outside. But is there an inner radiance? An inner holiness? An inner love? Take a new dedication!



CHAPTER 20

“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it”. 2 Corinthians 5: 1 - 9

Our ultimate aim should be to be with Christ in our life after death. To live on forever with Christ in eternity!

The earthly tent we live in will be destroyed. The movements of our physical body will cease. However, the apostle is very certain that there is a permanent eternal home in heaven that is not built by human hands, even if our earthly tent is destroyed.

This is precisely what Apostle Paul writes in his letter to Timothy, his last letter, the glorious words revealing his serene courage, talking about his confidence in a crowned and immortal life that awaits him.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

2 Timothy 4 : 7 - 8

As a Christian, it must be our earnest desire to have the same confidence to acknowledge the above like St. Paul. For that, we should set an example by making a sincere effort to walk in truth and reality with Jesus Christ and living the life of a true believer! A total transformation of life will begin with that. Our character and our views of life will change! Our attitudes and outlook will become different. Even our dreams will change! Calmness, serenity and peace will reign in you both day and night. You will continually experience the sweet and divine presence of Christ in your life. What a fortunate and blessed experience!

Towards the west end of the Spanish coast, by the Atlantic Ocean and near the Strait of Gibraltar, there is a

pillar bearing the Spanish coat of arms that was erected by the Spanish King. The banner round the pillars bears the motto "*Ne plus ultra*" meaning 'nothing more beyond', because the pillars marked the limit of the known world at that time. The Spaniards at that time thought that their country was the last point of solid land on the earth towards west. Beyond it, they thought, there was nothing but a vast expanse of water -- a shoreless ocean and no land at all.

However, Columbus wanted to know if there was a land beyond Spain and he conceived the idea of another world west of Spain. After long years of discouragement that threatened to crush his spirit and enthusiasm, he was finally permitted by the King and Queen of Spain to sail westward on an adventurous journey with a small crew of sailors.

The trip was long; much longer than anticipated by either Columbus or his crew. Days went past and the ships continued its journey through the vast expanse of the sea without any sight of the land. But Columbus was not in any mood to give up.

His crew was getting more and more apprehensive and tired. The food supply was diminishing. They tried to persuade Columbus to go back so as to spare their lives. But Columbus was determined to go ahead till he found land.

The crew's apprehension had increased to the point of near mutiny. One day, all of the crew members confronted Columbus and told him that they wanted to go back. Columbus implored his crew to try to go on for a bit

longer and he promised his crew that if land was not sighted in one more day, they would return home. He offered them his food without having any himself and asked them to be patient for another day.

As they advanced, they saw leaves and husks of fruits floating on the water. The crew also saw berries and a small branch covered with berries. This was a sign of nearby land for them. The glimpses of leaves and fruits, gave them a glimmer of hope that there would be land somewhere in the vicinity for the trees to be growing. They sailed forward with renewed enthusiasm at these signs and finally reached the shores of America. Thus America was discovered.

Columbus had originally set sail from Spain to find an all-water route to Asia. His objective was to reach India. But he ended up on the American coast, leading to the discovery of America.

Columbus discovered “the new world” whose existence was not known before. On his return, when the Spaniards became convinced that a great continent lay to the west of them, they were compelled to change the inscription encircling the pillars to “*plus ultra*” - more beyond.

There are things beyond what we see with our naked eyes. That is eternity. And this eternity is either heaven or hell. After death, everyone is forever in either heaven or hell.

There is eternal life as well as eternal torture. There is eternal heaven and eternal hell. We read about this in the book of Revelation as follows:

“Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Revelation 20 : 15

There will be a day when the “Book of Life” is opened. There will be a day of judgement. On that day of judgement, the “Book of life” will be opened. Only those who have their names written in the Book of Life will be received into the eternal life. All others will be thrown into the lake of fire.

“Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Matthew 25 : 41

Jesus Christ himself has mentioned in the scriptures 9 times that eternal hell awaits those without Christ.

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25 : 46

One group of people will be cast into eternal torture. But the other category will be welcomed into eternal life. The wicked and the unbelievers will be cast into eternal punishment and the righteous people will go on to inherit the eternal life.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’”.

Matthew 25 : 34

The righteous will be welcomed into the inheritance

of the Kingdom which has been prepared for them since the creation of the world.

However, the unbelievers will reach the eternal hell of everlasting burning fire. This is depicted as “the consuming fire” in Isaiah Chapter 33 verse 14. The description in Jude verse 13 for this is the blackest darkness. “...blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”

“They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”

Jude 13

In the Gospel of Mark, hell is described as a place where the worms never die and the fire never goes out.

“Hell where the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” *Mark 9: 48*

In Isaiah chapter 66, verse 24, we read that, “they will be loathsome” to all humanity.

“And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.” *Isaiah 66: 24*

Revelation chapter 20, verse 14 refers to the lake of fire as second death.

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.” *Revelation 20: 14*

'Hades' and the 'place of torment' is mentioned in Luke chapter 16, verse 23. Isaiah chapter 33 verse 11, talks about a place where 'breath is a fire that consumes you' and in chapter 30, verse 33 it is written that 'a stream of burning sulphur, setting it ablaze.' In the book of Revelation chapter 21, verse 8 we read about fiery lake of burning sulphur.

Till the crucifixion of Jesus, all the souls of the dead ended up in Sheol, referring to the abode of the dead, or the place in which departed spirits were supposed to dwell. Christ, after he was put to death in the body, but before his resurrection, went and rescued the righteous who were in Sheol. He delivered the spirits of the righteous from captivity. We read that 'he took many captives'. He delivered the spirits of those who were tied up in death.

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

Ephesians 4 : 8

We read about this in Paul's first epistle as below;

“After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits — to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.”

1 Peter 3 : 19, 20

Crucified Jesus went down to the Sheol before his resurrection. He lifted the lost spirits confined there and took them to on high. Henceforth, all those who die as

righteous will be saved and they will go to the Heaven.
The gift of heavenly paradise!

Heaven is where Jesus Christ is! Our desire and ultimate aim should be to reach there. Jesus said:

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” *John 14 : 3*

When we think about those we love who have died, there are several questions that cross our mind - where are they now? Where is their soul? Are they able to see me? Will they be able to recognise me? Are they able to comprehend what is happening to me? What is their state after death? We will also pass away from this world one day. Before we depart from this world, we must gain the readiness for eternal life.

All the sins in one's life must be washed away in order to get ready for eternal life.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to give me that preparedness and that readiness. In order to attain the remission of sins and eternal life through the cross, wearing a cross on your chain or erecting a cross in your house or having the mark of a cross on your wedding pendant (thali) will not do. The cross should be erected in your heart! Christ should reign in your heart! Jesus Christ who died on the cross should come into your heart!



CHAPTER 21

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Revelation 20 : 11 - 15

The book of Revelation, the last book in the Holy Bible, is about the final Judgement. The scripture clearly tells us that there is indeed a day of final judgement. The most detailed and uniform account of the final Judgment is given in the Book of Revelation. When we read the Holy Bible, we can see clear predictions, prophesies and forewarnings about the forthcoming judgement not just in

the book of Revelation, but several other places.

The first thing to understand about the final judgment is that it cannot be avoided. Regardless of how we may choose to interpret prophecy in the end times, we are told that *“it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment”*.

The last verse in Hebrews chapter 9 is about this: “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Die once, then judgment!

Our holy forefathers talked and taught about 'death, judgement after death, heaven and hell' – the four things that humans should always remember.

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne” *Revelation 20: 12*

The dead – this includes the young and old alike. Standing in front of the throne of Glory! The dead must appear before the throne of judgment. This great throne is the majestic judgment-seat of eternal God. All the dead from the great and small to the old and young to the rich and poor will have to stand before the throne of judgement. The dead will be judged according to their works.

Dear brothers and sisters, before we think about this final judgement after death, we have to comprehend that there is judgement even while we are alive on this earth! We face judgement while we are still in the body. The world we live in will face a great judgement. The earth will have to go through considerable penalties and suffering.

The scripture says that the earth became cursed as a result of man's actions – people having committed sins and followed the directions of the devil, by deviating from the ways of God, brought about curse on earth!

*Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous."
Genesis 18:20*

The land cries out! Why? The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, as Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be destroyed for their sins. Awful doom was destined for the two cities because of the enormous wickedness of their inhabitants. The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great because of the sins of the people who lived there. Their sins were atrocious, awful and heinous. Punishment was inflicted on those cities because of their sins.

We read in the Book of Job, chapter 31, verse 38; “If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain”. The very furrows in the field are personified as weeping on account of the injustice of people and of the burdens which would be laid on them by people. Land cries out because of the misdeeds and sins of the person who cultivates that land.

Because of our sins, the land that we own, the land that we have acquired will be punished. We would have to see and face the appalling judgement not after death, but here on earth!

In Hosea chapter 4, verse 3 the prophet talks about the land mourning. Why would the land mourn and

grieve? Because of the sins of its inhabitants! The prophet highlights the enormity of the sins of the people.

“Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.” *Hosea 4: 3*

The land and everything that dwell on it are destroyed, because of the sins of the people. Devastation to the animals of the land, to the birds of the sky and to the creatures of the sea – all due to the sins of the people.

“Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.”” *Hosea 4: 1 - 3*

The sins of the inhabitants bring calamity on the land. There is neither faithfulness nor loyalty in the land, no kindness nor compassion, nor do they acknowledge God. They swear and take oaths yet they lie and cheat. They kill, plunder and ravage. And so the land weeps and mourns. The inhabitants will perish. The wild animals, the birds of the sky, and even the fish in the sea will perish. The retribution caused by the sins of the people!

The prophet Habakkuk says that where sin occurs in a house the walls of the house will cry out.

“The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it.”

Habakkuk 2 : 11

The walls of our houses, even the stones of the walls are witnesses of our sins. We can cleverly and shrewdly hide many things from other people. And we can very shrewdly hide many things. However, in reality nothing that a person does, thinks or says can be covered up or concealed for ever. All of the hidden deeds we do will follow us to the judgement day.

Even inanimate things shall raise their voice to denounce the wickedness of man. For the stones will cry out of the walls, and the beams of the woodwork will echo them.

In Chapter two of the book of Habakkuk, the prophet talks about the doom and disaster that is going to come upon people.

“Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil you; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.”

Habakkuk 2 : 8

When we continue reading the chapter, we read many more injustices; amassing unjust gains, plotting the ruin of many people and forfeiting their own lives. People have committed great evil and sins. As a result of these sins, the walls, the joints, the roof, the woodworks and

even the objects in a house bear witness and cry out.

The prophet Isaiah forewarns that earth will suffer from natural disasters as a result of the wicked ways and sins of the mankind.

“I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”
Isaiah 13: 11

“The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”
Isaiah 13: 10

“Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: “Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?””
Isaiah 14: 16, 17

The earth made into a wasteland and turned into wilderness! Earth shaking and kingdoms trembling! Natural disasters such as earthquakes, and other calamities have sometimes been a consequence of sins of mankind.

We read about this in the book of Isaiah, chapter 24, verses 17-20.

“Terror and pit and snare await you, people of the earth. Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the

heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is violently shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls--never to rise again."

Isaiah 24 : 17 – 20

We hear about earthquakes, natural disasters and calamities. There are earthquakes and destruction in various places; there are famines. We have read and seen on TV about the devastating effects of tsunami causing extensive damage and loss of life in various places. Huge tsunami waves destroy just about everything in their path - not only on the shores, but they continue to travel for several miles inland, sweeping away lives at totally unexpected times. How many families suffer from grief and are in never ending tears because of the impact of such disasters occurring suddenly with no warnings! There are descriptions about such events in the scriptures as we read below:

"The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back; the mountains leaped like rams, the hills like lambs."

Psalms 114 : 3, 4

Judgement for our future generations - this might happen after we have departed from this world by death or it might be while we are still alive. The gospel clearly teaches us that in case the second coming of Jesus is delayed, then our future generations who are likely to be alive will suffer the consequences and punishment for the sins we committed. The consequences of sins and curses

are passed down to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

“For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

Exodus 20 : 5

Sin always has consequences. Judgement being passed on to future generations! Punishment for the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and the fourth generations. The sins you commit today can directly impact your children, your grand-children, and even your great-grandchildren.

“Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” Exodus 34 : 7

Those who unlawfully take ownership of others' possessions, those who lead an immoral life, those who impart suffering and losses to other people's life and destroy them, those who steal, harm or kill others, those who commit adultery – the penalties and consequences of all these will be passed on to future generations who will suffer. Descendants inherit the consequences of their fathers' sins. Children and grandchildren suffering for the sins of their forefathers!

“Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Numbers 14 : 18

We can see the same interpretation in Deuteronomy 5:9 and Jeremiah 32:18.

“For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” Deuteronomy 5:9

“Who shows loving kindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them.” Jeremiah 32:18

There is a penalty for the sins committed when we are alive on earth. We ourselves will face the punishment for those sins. However, if we repent, look back, acknowledge and confess the sins of the past with a contrite heart and seek the sanctification by the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ, then those sins will be forgiven. The wages and punishment of sin will be removed, and the consequences of our sins will be alleviated without passing them on to the next generations. All the penalties will be removed and we will receive forgiveness. Being entirely freed from the law of sin and from the condemnation that it entails! Freedom from the effects of our sins and curses bestowed upon us as a result of our sins! Jesus Christ can break the bonds of sin in our own lives and those of our future generations. The Gospel says of such people as below;

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1



CHAPTER 22

“For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”
1 Peter 4: 17

There is a judgement after death. This judgement of sins after death passes down through generations. There is punishment for the sins that happened in our lives. Due to our sins future generations may also suffer. We will suffer for our own sins, but our descendants will also inherit the consequences of our sins! Furthermore, because of our sins, even our dwelling places and homes will undergo judgement and punishment.

“For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News?”
1 Peter 4: 17

“And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?””
1 Peter 4: 18

Even the righteous are saved with difficulty - even those who endeavour to walk uprightly in the ways of God. Yet, even among those who claim to have repented, some

live a life without the true experience of repentance. They will have to face a fierce judgement. If your heart is impure before the Almighty God, who knows and sees all hidden things, you will have to confront judgement. So you must make sure to lead a holy life!

As a person you might have gained the experience of repentance after listening to the Word of God. You may continue to listen to the Word of God. You may be passionate about and attentive to the word of God. On various occasions you may have borne witness to Christ, stood up to give testimony, gave advice and counsel to others and preached the word of God. Nevertheless, the scripture says it is hard for even such a person to gain salvation! Why? Life should be completely and fully transformed so as to attain the likeness and fullness of Christ's image.

“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

1 John 2 : 17

We should pray '*See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting*'. We should search for our sins and once we identify them plead for God's forgiveness and atone for our sins and undergo sanctification. It is God's will that we are sanctified.

A famous scientist awoke one morning and opened the newspaper to read. He was shocked to read of his own death and find his photo in the obituary column! It was actually the scientist's older brother who had died, but the newspaper had mistakenly run an obituary for this

scientist, believing that it was he who had passed away. What he read horrified him. The newspaper described him as a man who made it possible to kill more people quicker than anyone else who had ever lived – assigning him the title of “The Merchant of Death”. He was a man who had amassed his fortune in the production of explosives. Among other things, he invented dynamite. As a result, of his inventions he grew immensely wealthy.

Even though it was seemingly by chance that he read his own obituary, it had a profound effect on him. He saw the way the world would remember him. He had a rare glimpse of the legacy he would leave behind. He was reportedly stunned by what he read, and consequently was determined to do something to improve his legacy.

Do you know who this scientist was? None other than Alfred Nobel! By inventing dynamite, he single-handedly changed the nature of war. One year before he died in 1896, Nobel signed his last will and testament, which set aside the majority of his vast estate to establish the five Nobel Prizes. Thus the fortune he made was to be used for Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and Peace. Nobel had an opportunity granted to very few people: to read his obituary while alive. More importantly, he had the opportunity to change his legacy, his life and his priorities. He is now remembered as a man of charity and peace.

What about us? Before we face the final judgement we should become agreeable to God and be in harmony with Him. We should personally experience the salvation that was granted to us by Jesus Christ on the cross.

Several passages in the Bible caution and clearly warns us about the day of judgement. These include:

"It is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9 : 27

"And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favourites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as "foreigners in the land.""

1 Peter 1 : 17

"But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

1 Peter 4 : 5

"God "will repay each person according to what they have done."" Romans 2 : 6

"For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." Romans 14 : 10

"So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God." Romans 14 : 12

There comes a time when we will be asked to give account. Each one of us will have to give account of himself - of his character and conduct, his words and actions, his plans and purposes! The great and solemn time when Jesus would be seated on the judgment seat and all have to give an account of their lives to Christ.

Each man should give an account of himself. There would be judgement for our deeds. There would be judgement for our words and there would be judgement

for our thoughts.

Men shall be judged, not by rank, or success, or achievement, but according to their works, according to what they have done. Judgement for things we did!

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”.

2 Corinthians 5 : 10

Judgement for our words!

“But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every empty word they have spoken.”

Matthew 12 : 36

This includes harsh and bitter words against others, accusing others, words that are profane, malicious, false and slanderous. Words spoken with wicked, evil, and direct or indirect hurtful intent. Words condemning and mocking others. Thoughtless, useless and vain words. All these will be held accountable on the day of Judgement.

Words used to slander others and words of disrespect to others and words of judgement against others! Man will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless and idle word they have spoken. Keep constant watch of every word that comes out of your mouth. “Let your statement 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and 'No,' be 'No.' Anything more than these comes from evil.”

Do not say half-truths and do not exaggerate.

Remember that all of our words will be reckoned on the day of judgement. Be very careful with your words and in all your conversations.

That is why St. John says; “..the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.” (1 John 5 : 18)

The counsels of the hearts will be revealed at judgement, including the feelings, secret thoughts and intentions of men.

“Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”

1 Corinthians 4 : 5

God will bring into light all the things presently hidden in the darkness, and will show forth the inner motives of each heart. There is a day coming, that will bring secret sins up into open light and reveal our private motives!

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

Revelation 20 : 11 - 12

Everything is recorded in these books! Yet, there is a way forward for the atonement of sins. The bonds of the accusations and sins against us were torn apart by Jesus Christ. When did this happen?

When wounds were inflicted on His body, when His side was pierced open, when His most holy heart was wounded, when His hand and feet were pierced, when He was lying on the cross, physically bruised and battered, bearing not only anguish, and mental sorrows, but also humiliation – He bore the punishment of our sins. It was for our sins, and in our stead, that our Lord Jesus suffered all this torment. He was pierced through for our transgressions and was crushed for our iniquities. The burden of our sins He Himself carried in His own body to the Cross. He bore our sins and the judgement of our sins and the punishment for them.

That is why the Holy Gospel says:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”. Romans 8: 1

Are there immortal men who will never die? Yes.

At the second coming of Jesus Christ, those who have died in Christ will be raised. Holy men who are alive at the time of this event will not die, but will undergo a transformation. Those holy men who are alive, shall rise up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus they shall always be with the Lord.

We read in 2 Kings 2:11 that a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared to carry Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven. He did not die but was taken up to heaven.

Genesis 5:24 tells us that "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away".

This most fortunate experience is felt by only those who lead a pure and holy life. The most blessed state of experiencing daily the cleansing power of the most Holy Blood of Jesus Christ and the sanctification granted by the Holy Spirit! I sincerely hope that every reader of this book gains that exalted state. May God grant us the incredible opportunity to meet each other and our Lord in mid-air at His second coming.



OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. അമൃതയാര 2. ആന്തരികശാന്തി 3. ശുഭോദി 4. ശാന്തിതീരം 5. മധുമൊഴി 6. മുക്തിമാർഗ്ഗം 7. നിത്യവിശ്രാന്തി 8. നിറപ്പ 9. ജയജീവിതം 10. വിശ്വാസജീവിതം 11. വാടാമലർ 12. ദിവ്യാരാധന 13. എനിക്ക് കുടിപ്പാൻ തരുമോ? 14. നീതിമാനാകുന്നതെങ്ങനെ? 15. തുറന്നവാതിൽ 16. വരവും ചിലവും 17. ദൈവരാജ്യം 18. AMRUTHADHARA 19. ഓർത്തുകൊൾവിൻ 20. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ 21. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് 22. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മ വ്യാപാരം 23. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മ ശക്തി 24. ഉത്തമഗീതം 25. സങ്കേത നഗരങ്ങൾ 26. മരുഭൂമിയിലെ നീർപ്പൊയ്ക 27. യോന 28. പച്ചവെള്ളം വീഞ്ഞാക്കി 29. കെരീത്തിന്റെ വക്കിൽ 30. എത്രത്തോളം രണ്ടുതോണിയിൽ? 31. ഏലിയാവിന്റെ ദൈവം എവിടെ? 32. പ്രവാചകനല്ല പ്രവാചകശിഷ്യനുമല്ല 33. മൂദ്രാമോതിരമാക്കും 34. എനിക്ക് കാഴ്ച പ്രാപിക്കേണം 35. എനിക്ക് ആശയ്ക്ക് വകയുണ്ടോ? 36. INNER PEACE (English) 37. അവർക്ക് ഭക്ഷിപ്പാൻ കൊടുപ്പിൻ 38. GLITTERING FUTURE (English) 39. ഏകാന്തതയുടെ അന്ധത 40. STREAMS IN THE DESERT 41. WAY TO LIBERATION 42. നിന്റെ മൃതന്മാർ ജീവിക്കും 43. വന്നു പ്രാതൽ കഴിച്ചുകൊൾവിൻ 44. എന്നെ തൊട്ടതാർ? 45. സൗഖ്യമാകുവാൻ മനസ്സുണ്ടോ? 46. അത് സഹിക്കാകുന്നവൻ ആർ? 47. എന്നെ ആർ വിടുവിക്കും? 48. നന്മയുടെ പാനപാത്രം 49. പ്രത്യംഗയുടെ പ്രഭാതം 50. ഇനിയും വൈകണമോ? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 51. ARE YOU WILLING TO BE HEALED? 52. കണ്ണീർപ്പാടം - ഭാഗം ഒന്ന് 53. കണ്ണീർപ്പാടം - ഭാഗം രണ്ട് 54. BESIDE CHERITH 55. യഹോവയുടെ ഭൂജങ്ങൾ 56. കണ്ണീർ തോരുമോ? 57. കണ്ണീർക്കണങ്ങൾ 58. എല്ലാം നന്മയ്ക്ക് 59. ആശയിൻ പ്രകാശം 60. കഷ്ടങ്ങൾ സാരമില്ല 61. നിന്റെ ഗൃഹകാര്യം ക്രമത്തിലാക്കുക 62. ഞാൻ എങ്ങനെ കണ്ടു സഹിക്കും? 63. ഉത്സവം 64. അത്യുന്നതന്റെ മറവിൽ 65. ഇനിയും തോൽക്കണമോ? 66. മരണാനന്തരാവസ്ഥ 67. മരിക്കാത്ത മനുഷ്യനുണ്ടോ? 68. ചുളപോലെ കത്തുന്ന ദിവസം 69. ഗിരിനിരകൾ 70. THE CITIES OF REFUGE 71. ഗിരിശൃംഗങ്ങൾ 72. THE BLINDNESS OF LONELINESS 73. യുദായുടെ ലേഖനം 74. കാറ്റിന്റെ വഴിയേ 75. കയ്പിന്റെ മധുരം 76. തളിരണിയും കാലം 77. ജീവജലത്തിനരികെ 78. BEYOND DEATH 79. ദാഹജലം 80. ആശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ഉറവ 81. പുനേനരുവി 82. കെണിയും കൂടുകൂടും 83. അഴിയാക്കുരുക്കുകൾ 84. ഭയപ്പെടേണ്ട 85. ഭീരുത്വം മാറണമോ? 86. പ്രതിസന്ധികളിൽ തളരാതെ 87. നെല്ലും പതിരും 88. ശാപമോക്ഷം 89. അനുഗ്രഹത്തിലേയ്ക്ക് 90. HOW LONG IN TWO BOATS? 91. കണ്ണീരിലെ മഴവില്ല് 92. കിതപ്പും കുതിപ്പും 93. നഷ്ടസൗഭാഗ്യങ്ങൾ തിരികെ കിട്ടുമോ? 94. ശക്തിയെ പുതുകണമോ ? 95. ചെറുകുറുക്കന്മാർ 96. കൃപയുടെ ഉറവ 97. കൃപയുടെ നീർച്ചാലുകൾ 98. മടങ്ങി വരുവിൻ 99. കാലേബ്: ധീരനായ വിശ്വാസവീരൻ |
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Prof. M.Y. Yohannan

gives Gospel Message

ATHMEEYA YATHRA T.V. FRIDAY 9.30 PM	SURYA T.V. SATURDAY - 6.30AM
JEEVAN T.V. SUNDAY - 6.30AM	JAIHIND T.V. MONDAY - 6.30AM
JAIHIND T.V. TUESDAY - 6.30AM	ATHMEEYA YATHRA T.V. TUESDAY - 2.00PM

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KADAYIRUPPU:

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Valethupady Bus Stop, Kolenchery - Perumbavoor Road.**

2nd Saturday	: 9.00 am - 2.00 p.m
2nd Sunday (Followed by 2nd Saturday)	: 12.30 pm - 5.00 pm
3rd Sunday	: 12.30 pm - 5.00 pm
Mondays	: 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm
Fridays (Bible Class)	: 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm
1st Tuesday (Ladies Meeting)	: 9.00 am - 12.45 pm
1st & 3rd Wednesdays (Young Men Meet)	: 6.30 pm - 9.00 pm