

Beyond Death

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Foreword

There were five deaths in my family during a very short period of time. I have heard my mother saying that three of the children she had before my birth had all died. My father also died, not much long after my birth, when I was merely one year and eleven days old. And when I was two years old, my elder brother also died.

A home which had the odour of death! A household engulfed in silence! The atmosphere was always gloomy. I grew up watching the unceasing tears of my mother, who was widowed at the young age of thirty. I too was often exhausted from weeping and my life was drenched in tears. I was forlorn and encircled by inferiority complex, grief and melancholy.

But, when I was seventeen years old, something happened that lit up my face and my mind. Jesus Christ took pity on me. He walked into my heart and conquered me.

I wanted to know more about death and was eager to understand what is written in the Holy Scripture about death, the cruel enemy. That is how I started reading several eminent books on this topic including:

Death and the Life After - Billy Graham

Beyond Death's Door - Dr. Maurice Rawlings

Life After Life - Dr. Raymond Moody Jr

What Comes After Death? - Basilea M. Schlink

The Christian After Death - Robert Ervin Hough

Life After Death - Spiros Zodhiates

After Death – Alec Motyer

THE END - and other Crusade Messages on the
Second Coming of Christ - Orion T. Rhodes

Before Death Comes – Dr. Maurice Rawlings

To Hell and Back– Dr. Maurice Rawlings

Death and the Life to Come - Ian Barclay

A Divine Revelation of Hell - Mary Baxter

What Happens After Death - David Winter

Manushyan Marichal. - Rev.T.K.George

Maranavaathilinappuram – Achankunju Elanthoor

Mruthyorma – Dr. Joseph Padinjarekkara

The knowledge and perspectives I gained by reading these books instilled in me a deep desire to author a book on the state beyond death based on the Holy Scripture. This is the inspiration behind the writing of this book.

Most people are ignorant and unconcerned about the reality of an eternal life. Many are unaware that this eternity could be either joyful heavenly glories or perpetual torture in the hell. People are oblivious and hesitant to believe that there is an eternal torture as they fail to comprehend the truth that every man has a soul. The aim of writing this book is to enlighten and instruct people to believe in the immortality of souls and to emphasise the need to prepare for the eternal heavenly glory. I would be most gratified if my readers benefit from this and attain the vision behind the writing of this book.

I express my gratitude to my wife and partner Alice, for her untiring effort in composing, proof reading and editing of this book.

I am most thankful and acknowledge my indebtedness to my loving mother and my dearest sister Aleyamma Baby, who are on the other shore with Jesus. They were instrumental in guiding and encouraging me in

my habit of reading, during my childhood days. I sincerely hope to meet with them again at the holy feet of Jesus at His second coming.

I also express my sincere regards and deep gratitude to Dr. Gilu George, who undertook the translation of this book, “Marananantharavastha” in Malayalam to English. She was ably assisted in this work by her husband Joe Augustine. They have done this glorious work in the midst of their busy official duties in UK.

I am also indebted to Gilu's father Prof. T. George Sebastian, former Head of the Department of English, K.E. College Mannanam and Retd. Principal Ettumanoorappan College, Ettumanoor, who rendered a tremendous service by going through the whole book and in giving adequate corrections and suggestions.

I would also like to express my love and greetings to my spiritual brothers who helped me through different walks of life. I hope to receive their love and co-operation in all my future endeavours and humbly entrust this book to all my readers.

Yours sincerely
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

GW - GOD'S WORD Translation

KJV - Kings James Version

NLT - New Living Translation

TLB - The Living Bible

Chapter 1

Dr. Sukumar Azhikode, an outstanding academic and also my reverent teacher, once said in one of his lectures - "Life is not a mere process that starts at birth and ends with death. Life is to be lived, not to be wasted." If life is to be meaningful and not to be wasted, one should attain everlasting values.

Death is a definite reality for each and every man. Once dead, the soul is transferred to eternity. When life departs from the body, the soul returns to eternity. Eternity could either be in heaven or in hell. Once a human life span of ninety or hundred years is completed on earth, then there would be an entry into eternity. If human life span could be compared to a drop of water in the ocean, then eternity would be the equivalent to a vast ocean. The water in the ocean never runs out, irrespective of how many drops of water are taken out of the ocean. Eternity is comparable to that.

Every human being can decide for himself whether to spend his eternity in heaven or hell. No one else has a role in it, nor can they do anything about it. A person's eternity is in heaven if he has been redeemed by the holy blood Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Entry into God's kingdom is only for those who attain the 'born again' experience and sanctification through the spirit of God. Everyone else will be cast into the eternal torture in hell. Hence it is essential that we strive to attain eternal life during our life

on this earth. Or else it would be an irreplaceable loss! An immitigable tragedy!

Many people do not believe that there is a soul or that there is an eternal heaven and an eternal hell. Dr Maurice Rawlings, an eminent specialist cardiologist belonged to this category. In his book 'Beyond Death's Door' he spells out a conspicuous idea.

"I was resuscitating a terrified patient who told me he was actually in hell. He begged me to get him out of hell and not to let him die. When I fully realized how genuinely and extremely frightened he was, I too became frightened. Now I feel assured that there is life after death and not all of it good."

Resuscitation is often a procedure followed in an attempt to recover patients who die of heart attacks or brain damage. Some patients recover and come back to life through this procedure. One such patient who was brought back to life was seen to be extremely agitated and scared. He pleaded desperately not to let him die. The doctor realised that the patient's fear and pleading arose from experiencing a terrorising, horrific and unbearable torture in the state beyond death. This consequently led the doctor to believe that there is indeed life after death.

John Knox (1514-1572), a Scottish clergyman said "Live in Christ, Live in Christ and the flesh need not fear death." If you are not to fear death then you should live in Christ. Those who live in Christ are those who have become new creations on being born again. That's why St. Paul says:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"
2 Corinthians 5: 17

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8 : 1

When they die, they enter eternal life. There is a mention about such people in the book of Revelation:

“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

Raymond A Moody Jr., a psychologist and a medical doctor who had done in-depth studies and detailed research into experiences after death wrote in his bestselling book 'Life after Death':

“A man is dying and as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing, and at the same time feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel. After this he suddenly finds himself, outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment and he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.”

“After a while, he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he still has a “body” but one of a very different nature and with very different powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon other things begin to happen. Others come to meet and to help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died, and a loving, warm spirit of a kind he has never encountered before - a

beam of light - appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally, to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life. At some point he finds himself approaching some sort of barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life and the next life. Yet, he finds that he must go back to the earth, that the time for this death has not yet come. At this point he resists, for by now he is taken up with experiences in the afterlife and does not want to return. He is overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love and peace. Despite his attitude, though, he somehow reunites with his physical body and lives.”

“Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people. Still, the experience affects his life profoundly, especially, his views about death and its relationships to life.”

The above account gives us the experience of a fortunate believer who had died and was brought back to life following resuscitation. However, Dr. Maurice Rawlings, in his books 'Beyond Death's Door' and 'Before Death Comes' mentions that, in majority of the cases he had come across, people experienced very traumatic, negative and terrifying encounters, while clinically dead.

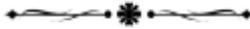
In his book "To Hell and Back", Dr. Maurice Rawlings notes that man is the only being who can think of the truth that death exists. Despite that, he is reluctant and evades thinking about inevitable death since he is not prepared to face death.

Today is the day to prepare. Now is the time to make a

choice. Open your hearts to Jesus and invite Him into your heart.

Let us say to Him: "Oh Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the only son of God. I have been hiding from you. I am coming to you just as I am. Before your most Holy presence I acknowledge that I am dirty, evil and unholy. I confess my sins before you and I am giving them up. I believe your words that if I confess my sins, you will forgive them. I believe that you are knocking right now at my heart's door. I hereby unreservedly open my heart to you and surrender my whole being in front of your Holy presence".

While you are reading these words, be willing to pray and surrender your life to Jesus. Continue reading the true word of God which can give you clear and concise notions about life after death. May God bless you.



Chapter 2

Man, in his heart had always been curious about his plight after death. What is the current state of people who are dead and gone? Would we ever be able to see them again? Would they ever live again? What is their future? These are a few questions that come to one's mind when thinking of life after death. We can see similar questions in the Holy Bible as well.

“But when people die, they lose all strength. They breathe their last, and then where are they?”

Job 14 : 10 (NLT)

“If a man dies, will he live again?” *Job 14 : 14*

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

Psalm 89 : 48

“Will you perform miracles for those who are dead? Will the spirits of the dead rise and give thanks to you?”

Psalm 88 : 10

“Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Romans 7 : 24

What happens after man breathes his last? Where does he go after death? How is one's life after his death?

Job asks again: “If a man dies, will he live again?”

The same question would likely have crossed many of our minds on numerous occasions; not just Job's mind.

The question about what happens to a person after death. Where do we go after death? Is there a life after death?

If there is a soul inside our mortal physical bodies what happens to this soul once we are dead and the physical body returns to soil? The soul's journey after death is an unknown plight. The question of where we are going is an enigma to anyone who looks at existence after death.

Science does not have a satisfactory answer to this significant question of life. Neither philosophies or scientific observations nor human power or wisdom is able to give a clear answer to this question. But the answers to all these questions are with God in the Holy Scripture.

The reply to all these questions can be found in God the omnipotent and Supreme Being, infinitely perfect, who made all things and keep them in existence.

The Sacred Scripture, or The Holy Bible, the word of almighty God is a medium through which God reveals such truths to us.

The mystery of what happens after death, is strictly beyond the power of the human mind. We can never know such truths unless God reveals them to us. These great mysteries can be grasped with greater ease and certainty, when revealed to us through reading of the Holy Bible.

Imagine a hatchling developing gradually inside a hen's egg. The mother hen incubates and broods over the eggs to maintain a constant temperature and humidity for its growth. While brooding the mother hen has a conversation with her chick as follows:

Mother hen says: "In a few days time the egg will

hatch and you will emerge into a new world.”

The chick replies, “You don't mean that mum! This egg shell is my world; is there any proof that there is a world beyond this? What foolishness are you talking about?”

Mum continues, “Dear chick, the egg shell is going to crack soon, you will start moving about and you are going to come out as a tiny bird.”

“Mum, you are speaking absurd things! How can I move about? I am comfortably nestled inside in this egg. This is my world.”

“Dear chick, you are not just going to move about you can even fly.”

“Mum, I can't believe what you say.” The chick replies.

Mum says; “I shall explain to you: Can you see the tiny sprouts forming on your body? When you hatch, you will come out covered with tiny, soft, fluffy feathers which will keep you warm. As you grow, your feathers will grow bigger and you will get long, strong feathers on your wings and tail. Now your wings are folded and cramped inside the egg.”

“When a baby chick like you hatches, you are going to come out into the big wide world from your tiny world within the egg shell. There's a big, wide, beautiful world out there, and there you can see things you have never seen before - beautiful flowers and plants swaying in the wind, wonderful gardens and evergreen trees, marvellous buildings and delicious food!”

“Mum, you are just trying to entice me with all this conversation.”

“No dear chick, wait a few more days and you will

personally experience all this yourself!"

By now you would have assumed what this story is about. When we are freed from this outer shell of human body, the soul inside is liberated into perpetual eternity.

Boundless eternity! Entry into a spiritual world; beyond our wildest imagination! A world that is inapprehensible and unfathomable.

When we reach there we will understand that we already had small sprouts to enable us to reach there. An insight to utter 'Oh my God'. An awareness to call upon the Lord's name when in trouble; having a desire to pray, a budding urge to think about God- all these were tiny sprouts to come into the eternal world.

The prayer meetings and fellowships we attended while physically on earth, hearing God's gospel and preaching's; all were tiny sprouts preparing us for the eternity.

We all have seen beautiful multi-coloured butterflies fluttering around flowers.

Butterflies are not born as such, they are born as colourful insects that can fly around. A butterfly starts its life as a very small egg. When the egg finally hatches, the larva comes out as a caterpillar. Caterpillars do not stay as such for long. At that stage all they do is to crawl around eating leaves. When a caterpillar reaches its full length and weight, it forms itself into a pupa, also known as a chrysalis. Within the chrysalis the caterpillar undergoes a remarkable transformation, called 'metamorphosis,' to become a butterfly that will emerge out of the pupa. After a while from the almost lifeless pupa emerges a beautiful butterfly gracefully spreading and fluttering its wings in the air! We can see the wonderful sight of the little beauty

gliding and dancing in the blue skies.

Will the small caterpillar crawling amongst the leaves understand, that one day it would spread its wings and fly as a beautiful butterfly? Can it imagine such a day or even dream that it will ever fly?

Human life is like that. Our souls are entrapped in a constricted space namely our physical bodies now.

We have a body, mind and soul. When life is gone from the body, the soul is released and starts its flight into eternity.

Where is this eternity? What is this eternity? How do we know about this eternity? By believing the Holy Scripture we would be able to know about this. Eternity and its attributes, exist in a dimension that cannot be quantified or depicted by human intelligence. It is beyond the framework of human logic and analytical thinking! An understanding about eternity does not confine within the limitations of man's intellect.

There are those who do not believe in things till they see it with their own eyes. They think: "How is it possible to blindly have faith in something that I cannot see, I have to witness it with my own eyes." We read in history that the Battle of Plassey was a decisive victory for the British East India Company over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies and that it happened on 23 June 1757. This is a historic fact which we believe. But, were you existent at that time?

In history we learn that India got her independence from the British rule and became a sovereign nation on 15th August 1947. We believe it to be true. But were you alive then to witness it?

Again history tells us that European traders came to India in the 17th and 18th centuries. The British East India Company established themselves as a dominant force and started ruling India. Did any of us see these events ourselves?

Were any of us there when the kings ruled over our country? We believe it as historians have written about it.

What is electricity? Where does it come from? How does it work? You can't see electricity in any form. Isn't it absurd and stubborn to say "I will believe only if I see it? " We cannot see electricity but we do experience its effects. We believe what knowledgeable and scholarly people describe about the phenomenon called electricity.

Even the well informed, intelligent and knowledgeable people have made mistakes in their books and writings. However, there is a perfect soul; a miraculous man without any blemish or any mistakes. His name is Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ is never wrong. Jesus Christ who is still alive deciphers the divine truth to us through His scriptures.

There are three worlds or 'lokams'.

One – Suralokam - Heaven

Two – Asuralokam - Hell

Three – Bhoolokam – Earth

Man can live either a heavenly life or a hellish life.

Eternal God does not desire anyone to live a hellish life on earth and end up in the perpetual darkness and the dreadfulness of hell. That is why God sent his only begotten son from heaven to earth to live as a mere mortal man. He lived as one among us but was a perfect man, a

man of no sins. He died for our sins on the cross. This is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Hindu philosophy teaches about four Vedas which are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. The four Vedas are:

- One – Rig Veda
- Two – Sama Veda
- Three – Yajur Veda
- Four – Atharva Veda

Each Veda consists of four parts – the Samhitas (hymns), the Brahmanas (rituals), the Aranyakas (theologies) and the Upanishads (philosophies). It is believed the Vedas were revealed to Rishis. Rishis or sages in the early Indian mythology were considered as divine human beings with profound spiritual insight. Rishis never cared for creature comforts, for they had controlled their senses and felt no need for worldly pleasures. Vallathol Narayana Menon the great Malayalam poet sang about Rishis in one of his poems. He says that they might have lived in thatched huts but their words were like gold studded with precious jewels, unobtainable elsewhere.

Among the Vedas there is an upanishad referred to as the Kathopanishad (Death as teacher). Vajasravasan is a character in the Kathopanishad. He is an honoured and pious sage. He wished to attain moksha or liberation. What is moksha? Moksha has four stages:

- Salokyam - oneness with universe
 - Sameepyam - close communion with God
 - Saropyam - spiritual likeness to God
 - Sayoojyam - complete identity with God
- Vajasravasan desired to attain moksha which is

salokyam, sameepyam, saropyam and sayoojyam. He performed a Vishwajit Yagna (a religious offering) for this. Later on in the upanishad it is written that his son Nachiketa was granted three boons.

One of the boons he asked was to understand the secrets of life after death.

Rishis used to chant during their morning ablutions: "O Lord, grant me salvation. I am a sinner. My actions are sinful. I was born a sinner. But Lord save me."

Why do they want to be saved? They want to be saved to attain 'moksha'. Bharatham (India) is the land of holy sages who prayed and constantly yearned to achieve moksha.

Conceptions and thoughts about eternity were always in the minds of prodigies and intellectuals throughout the history of mankind. Many went on with such thoughts and dreams about eternity from time to time. Jesus Christ came down to earth to make man worthy enough to reach where he should be reaching; his final destination.

Divine God himself took on human nature in his incarnation as Christ and became man. He took on a human body and nature and lived on earth like us. But he did not commit any sins unlike us. He came to die for the sins of mankind, yet did not know what sin was and lived an unblemished life on earth. He died in our place so that all of us could attain eternal blessing and do not have to suffer eternally for our sins.

Jesus Christ was crucified in between two men - two men who were thieves and murderers. He lay there like a cursed man. He gave up His life; He sacrificed Himself on the cross at Calvary.

What for? To save and redeem me, a sinner, a man born in sin and who has done only sinful deeds. Dear friend, He died on the cross at Calvary to redeem such a sinner as you and to grant you the inheritance of heaven. Experiencing this Christ is the essence of Christian life. To worship and love Him wholeheartedly would be the most fortunate experience.

For that you do not have to change your denomination or congregation. All you need to do is to dedicate your life to Jesus who can change your heart.

Lord, I am surrendering my life to you. I understand that everything in this world is a fantasy and illusion. I realize that everything is momentary. Jesus, my owner I want to reach the eternal shores of heavenly blessing. One day I will die. To reach the eternal heaven then, my Lord please extent your holy hands. Please hold me with your wounded hands. Your holy hands which shed unblemished blood must hold me and lift me up from this dirt-pit of sin.

Oh Lord, you came down to earth to lift me up. You died on the cross to redeem me from this sinful state and lead me to the true light of the heavenly shores. I believe this and submit myself into your hands.

When you surrender yourself to Christ, your life will become meaningful and useful.

Please do not pretend that you have not seen Christ standing before you with open arms, nor should you ignore Him. Kindly do not forsake Christ who is calling you by your name.



Chapter 3

“But a human dies and is powerless. A person breathes his last breath, and where is he?”

Job 14 : 10 (GW)

I read a real incident some time ago about a man who was on his sick bed. He developed a disease all of a sudden and his health deteriorated rapidly. His condition got worse very quickly to a stage where he could not be transferred to a hospital. The doctor was called to his house and he came to visit the man at his home. The doctor entered the sick man's room, closed the door and started talking to the patient. He asked the patient detailed questions about his condition, as the patient was still able to talk.

The sick man told the doctor, “I think I don't have any hope, I might die.” He asked, “Could you tell me what would happen to my soul once I die?”

The doctor was perplexed as he didn't know the answer. As a doctor he knew to treat patients, but he did not know to explain or clarify what happens to the soul or where it goes after death. The doctor contemplated for a while about what to answer.

He mulled over how he could explain in a way that patient would comprehend the situation!

While he was thinking he heard some noises at the door to the room. It sounded like something was knocking,

thumping or scratching at the door. The doctor figured out that it was his dog. His pet dog usually accompanied him wherever he went. When he came to visit the patient, the dog got out of the car with him. However, the doctor had left the dog outside the door when he closed the door to the patient's room. When the doctor had not come out for a while, the dog became impatient and was attempting to get in.

Swiftly, a thought came into the doctor's mind. He asked the patient, "Can you hear some noise?" "Yes", the patient replied, "I can hear some noises at the door like something is scratching and knocking". The doctor replied, "That is my dog knocking and banging on the door. The dog knows that his master is inside this room".

The dog did not know what else would be there in this room, whether there would be a chair or a table or if there was a container for medicines in this room. But the dog was sure of one thing – that his owner was in this room; that his master was definitely in this room!

The doctor told his patient – "You need to have just one assurance. The guarantee that you are going to your owner's place; the abode of your master. You need to be certain that you are going to a place where Christ is. You must obtain that guarantee right here on earth and now."

He continued, "I have given my life to Christ. I am not a scholar of the Bible. But I am certain that if I pass away today I would be with Christ. I have that assurance. Do you have that assurance?" The patient replied, "Doctor, I do not have any such guarantee. I never had an opportunity to understand or comprehend any such things. No one ever told me about these".

"I am not knowledgeable about these matters to tell

you more about these”, said the doctor. “However, I know one thing, you must realize and admit that you are a sinner. That you cannot escape from the sins by your own efforts. But there is someone capable of rescuing you from your sins. That person is Jesus Christ!”

“If you trust and depend on Jesus Christ, if you call upon Him, Christ will redeem you from sins. He will welcome you into his kingdom”.

“There are two things that you should believe. One - I am a sinner. Two – Christ died on the cross to absolve me of my sins. Upon believing this you must tell in your heart faithfully: 'Jesus, I will live as a new creation, as a new man for the rest of my life'. Is it possible for you to make such a decision?”

“If so, you can reach God's kingdom. The heavenly kingdom of Christ. You can reach where your master is”.

We should earn this assurance that I want to reach where Christ is, during our life time. What would heaven look like? What would be there in heaven? We don't know. Yet, we know that Christ is there. Jesus Christ who sacrificed His own life for me is there. We must be certain of this, certain that we are going to His dwelling place.

Christianity is a religion of the heart. It changes human hearts. Christ the invisible person will come and dwell within our hearts. Such a heart would always be contrite and humble.

That is why holy forefathers sang in the soothara namaskaram (bedtime prayer) – Oh Lord, if I die this night, there are sins in my life which will prevent me from reaching the eternal heavenly shores where God and his Holy saints reign. I am terrified when I think of my transgressions.

Holy forefathers sang;
 Njananchunnen papathal
 Shudharkekum – moda poonkavil
 Veli - kothenne nadha
 En pa – pam – rodhikalle
 Rekshichenne narakathi-
 Nnekuka vasam – thiru hithamam sthane.

Njananchunnu – I am scared. I am frightened, will I die in my sleep tonight? If I pass away tonight while I sleep, my sins are obstructing my way like a barrier. My sins are preventing me from entering the heavenly paradise prepared for the holy. In the Kyamtha namaskaram (evening prayer) it is sung: “Velikkoppam nerkkunnen kadam orthundu bhayam naatha” (Oh Lord, my sins which stand up like a barrier make me scared).

All of us ought to reach there. Louis Pasteur, the great scientist who discovered the vaccine for rabies, knew of this eternity. When Louis Pasteur's daughter Jeanne died of typhoid fever at the age of nine, he said; “I am only familiar with truths that are scientifically proven. But now I am believing something which I have to believe; something there is no other way other than believing. I hope that I would see my dear daughter in another world.”

Rowland Taylor was a chaplain for Archbishop Cranmer and a rector of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, who lived during the reign of Queen Mary. Rowland was an English martyr who was burned to death in the market streets of Hadleigh. He was led down a hill to the place where he was to be burned at the stake. Looking down towards the valley where he knew he would suffer, he thanked God and told the soldiers leading him, “I have just two more miles to walk until I reach my home.” He was hopeful and was governed by the faith that he would reach the palace

of the ever reigning King.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a young pastor and a theologian, who had deep faith in God. During the Second World War he stood against and actively opposed the policies of Hitler and urged people to revolt against Hitler. He even got involved in a plot to take Hitler's life. Bonhoeffer was eventually condemned to death in 1945.

While being led to his execution by soldiers Bonhoeffer said "In your view this is the end. But for me, the beginning of life" The beginning of a journey to reach the shores of eternal peaceful heaven!

Lucian of Samosata was a well-known Greek satirist. He was not a believer nor did he have faith in life after death. He mocked and ridiculed the followers of Christ while writing about Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians. In one of his works, *Passing of Peregrinus*, he wrote of the early Christians as follows:

"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains their contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws."

There is an ultimate truth. After death there is endless eternity. It will be either Heaven or Hell.

God calls us to reach Heaven. Our Lord wishes us to live for ever in Heaven where Jesus Christ reigns. You

might have heard about Joseph Stalin the tyrannical Russian ruler. He was one of the most feared and murderous dictators in history, responsible for the execution and exile of millions of Russians to slave labour camps. His only daughter Svetlana wrote an autobiographical book "Twenty Letters to a Friend" denouncing her father's regime and the Communist way of life. In this book she has given an account of the last moments before the terrible death of her father Stalin. The horrid experiences he went through on his death bed, his petrified face, his terror stricken words, his gestures paralysed with fear are all described in her autobiography.

According to Svetlana, Stalin's daughter, "Father's death was slow and difficult. His face became dark and different. His features were becoming unrecognizable. The death agony was terrible. It choked him slowly as we watched. At the last moment he suddenly opened his eyes and cast a glance over everyone in the room. It was a horrible look — either mad, or angry and full of fear of death. Suddenly he raised his left hand and either pointed up somewhere, or shook his finger at us all. The gesture was incomprehensible and full of menace. The next moment his soul, after one last effort, broke away from his body."

To experience peace at the time of death, Jesus Christ should be in one's heart.

We must depart peacefully at the time of death. The most essential achievement we must strive for is to have Jesus Christ as an eternal asset in our hearts. Everything else is pointless at that time – whatever we accomplished, all the belongings we have accumulated, the high educational qualifications we have attained and official positions we achieved – everything becomes irrelevant.

What else would be more fortunate than having Jesus Christ in your hearts? Do you have a longing in your heart, a yearning to follow the way of Jesus, the path of the cross? If so you can say a few words to Jesus: Lord, please wash away the stains of my sins so that I can reach eternal Heaven. It is a great blessing to be absolved of sins.

We read in Revelation 22:11-15:

“Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy. Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have 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.”

Some are inside and some are outside. To be inside our robes must be washed. How do we wash our robes? We must attain purification. We must lead a new life, renouncing sin and constantly waging war and winning against sin and Satan.

“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.”

Those who continue to live in sin will have to stand outside and weep. Only at that point comes the realization that I have not reached where I should have reached!

Dear friends, right now while you are reading these words, invite and receive Jesus Christ, who is knocking at your heart's door, into your hearts before you reach that stage of irreparable loss. Open your heart to Jesus. Pledge to Him, 'Oh Lord, till now I have lived a life fit only to inherit Hell. Up to this day I lived as a slave to sin. Until today I was a slave of Satan, the master of sin. My God, from today I am surrendering myself at your Holy feet to live a life with Christ.

My master, I am submitting my insignificant and short life into your mighty Holy hands. Lord, I am offering my body, mind and soul wholly into your hands. From today I shall be a new creation.

Oh Lord, please wash everything unto this day with your Holy Blood. Please cleanse me and purify me. I am not capable of doing any atonement for my sins. Please have mercy on me.



Chapter 4

“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 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: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.” *Philippians 1 : 20 - 25*

These verses proclaim the core outlook and viewpoints of the life of St Paul, the most eminent apostle of Jesus Christ.

To live in Christ, live for Christ's sake, to glorify the name of Christ - Christ alone! Jesus was his very breath, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart, the life of his life. Whether he lived or died, Paul was confident that Christ would be magnified.

For me, to die is a gain. If I die, my soul would be with Christ. His desire was to be with Christ in heaven, he yearned to be with Christ in heaven rather than be in a human body. Apostle Paul longed to be with Christ, for

that would be "far better."

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

There might be suffering, sickness, confinement, pain, imprisonment, dangers, various crisis, troublesome situations, oppositions and competitions. No matter what Paul might have to suffer, no matter what hardships he might undergo, he was determined that his life would be a means of magnifying Jesus. And without flinching, he says: "These are all momentary, these are all insignificant. All these sufferings in this worldly life are transient."

Apostle Paul is confident of one thing. "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

The sufferings at the present time, the losses and afflictions, the pains and persecutions, sickness, the miserable experiences are nothing. They are all insignificant.

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." The apostle says, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." The most glorious experience of being with Christ! The eternal glory of being with Christ far outweighs the momentary troubles here.

In his letter to Corinthians, St. Paul has written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love him!" (1 Corinthians 2:9)

God has prepared blessings for those who love him, blessings which human eyes cannot see, nor can convey to our ears, nor can it be conceived or thought of by

hearts.

These visionary perceptions of Paul fills and overflows in his missionary work and are revealed in his epistles. He did the Lord's work with a great pride, a passionate commitment and a remarkable reverence to God.

This worldly life is momentary. Our ambition should be to spend the eternity, which comes after this worldly life, with Jesus. Currently we live for this world. Living for the sake of living!

Once a devoted man, a servant of God saw a group of children walking to school. He walked along with them and started talking to them.

He asked, "Dear children, where are you going?"

The children were amused and replied, "Can't you see that we are going to school?"

He continued, "What are you going to do at the school?"

They replied, "We are going to study"

The conversation continued....

Q: What will you do after studying?

A: We will study even more.

Q: After that what will you do?

A: After finishing studies in this school, we will go to college for higher education.

Q: And then?

A: We will go to a University and get a degree.

He asked one of the boys; "After finishing your studies what is your aim?"

The boy replied, "I will try to get a job."

The man continued his questions. "What will you do after getting a job?"

The boy hesitated for a moment and then replied "I will get married."

Q: And after that?

A: I will go on living.

Q: What after that?

A: I will get older.

Q: And then?

A: After that I will die.

Q: What will happen after you die?

The boy could answer all the questions till then. But he was stuck for words now! He could not give a definite answer to this question.

Then what will you do after death? - What is the purpose of living? Living for the sake of living! What is the meaning of life? What is life all about? Just existing! Beyond that it is an unknown.

For many, the purpose of this transitory life is living it somehow! Living a life of contentment. Live happily. Living peacefully. That is all.

There is nothing wrong in that attitude. Definitely one should have these. One should have a peaceful life, a happy life, one must attain a contented and fulfilling life.

But what after this? We do not think often of this. The scripture says,

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25 : 46

One category of people would go into everlasting life and another category into everlasting punishment.

Is there something termed as 'Eternal Torture'?

Would the loving God ever punish man? The scripture says that God is love. How can the loving God bestow eternal Hell to man? Is there an eternal Hell?

There are even people among biblical scholars who claim that eternal Hell does not exist and is not a reality.

However, Jesus Christ himself has disclosed: "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Eternal torture and eternal life are both realities.

Eternal life is a never ending life. It is celestial peace!

And Hell is eternal torture. Never ending suffering for ever and ever!

It is written repeatedly in the Bible about this – 'there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'.

In Matthew chapter 25, verse 23 it is written:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

And when we read further we see:

"And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matthew 25: 30*

The endless tears of suffering and gnashing of teeth in desolation, upon realizing that there is no way of escaping from the doom of outer darkness! The utter despair while remembering the lost opportunities and

wasted graces. Meanwhile there would be one group of people who would hear, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things'.

The perpetual Lord in Heaven commands and calls them 'good and faithful servant'. On the contrary He refers to the other servant as a wicked and lazy servant; the useless unprofitable servant. (Matthew 25 : 26)

He calls the servant wicked and lazy and continues; "throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25 : 30)

What comes after death? Where is man, once he dies? – The answer to these questions can be found in the Holy Scripture.

Either in eternal life or in eternal torture! Either in eternal heaven or in eternal hell! Either in everlasting happiness or in everlasting suffering!

Prophet Daniel said:

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12 : 2

Man will be separated from this world; he shall be laid to sleep in the dust of the earth. The body of man was created from dust, and it would return to the dust. Eventually man who returned to dust by death will rise again one day.

And many that sleep in the dust of the earth will arise, some to eternal life, and some to reproach and eternal shame. Our Lord told about this in the Gospel of Luke as follows; "He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are

from; depart from me, all you evil doers'. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out".
 Luke 13 : 27 - 28

It would be the joy of eternal life for one category of people and despair and sorrowful lamentation for yet another category.

Those who are writhing in pain, misery and suffering would see the holy people rejoicing in eternal life. While they are dejected and desperate and laden with the heavy burden of severe anguish and misery and squirming in their suffering, their eyes would see that they have been abandoned for ever. That is when there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out."

Luke 13 : 28

This part continues as follows:

"People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

Luke 13 : 29 - 30

They were the last, but by the grace of God they repented and experienced the redemption by the Holy Blood of Christ. They would take their seats at the feast in Heaven.

Yet another group of people would be weeping and

gnashing their teeth and would be undergoing torture and never ending suffering.

“And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able”. Luke 13:22 -24

One person came and asked – “Christ, what we have comprehended from the teachings of Jewish priests is that we would be saved if we offer sacrifices.”

The person said, “We have understood that if we give offerings to the church we would get salvation. We have understood that if we attend three of the most important festivals at the temple of Jerusalem we would be saved. This is what we presume and believe.”

He continued, “However, it seems that you are bringing in a new advice? It looks like it would not be that easy to reach the heavenly kingdom.”

“What are you trying to tell us? That only very few will be saved?”

“We assumed that by declaring that we believe in God and by making a pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem, by taking part in the festivities and rituals at the church and by making offerings there we could enter the kingdom of heaven. We presumed that by making sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem and by gratifying the chief priests there we would escape the eternal hell.”

“But now we understand your words better. Many would not be saved. Now we have grasped what you mean. Many would not reach heaven.”

When asked if those who are saved are just a few, He did not answer them that they are few. Instead He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able”.

Many people have the desire to enter. Many wish to enter God's kingdom. Many would try. And many would strive for that. Many people would try their maximum and work really hard for that. Yet they would not succeed.

He said that they would not be able to. He did not say that only a few would be saved. It would be impossible even if they tried. On the question about whether only a very few would be saved he said:

“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from me, all you evildoers.’”

Luke 13 : 24 - 27

There has been no change in your unrighteousness. Yet you come as if you were acquainted. You say; “Oh Lord haven't you taught in our streets? We knew each other. But why do you tell now that you don't know me?”

“Haven't we dined together? Haven't we shared our food and drinks? Haven't we travelled together? Then why do you say now that you don't know me?”

Our Lord would reply; “Your evildoing has not changed. Your life has not changed.” He would firmly say to them: “Depart from me all you evil doers”

Today while you are reading this, please realize this clearly. Unless you change and discard sin from your life, you will not enter the heavenly garden of paradise prepared for the holy.

How would this barrier of iniquity be discarded? It is for this that the son of righteousness, Jesus Christ should rise in our hearts. The scholars of the yesteryears sang: 'Oh Lord please lead us towards light!'

Today while you are reading these words please have a strong desire for the true light. There is one and only one true light and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. Hasten and come towards that life giving light. Bid farewell to the powers of darkness. Bid adieu to the demonic forces. Depart from sins and depend on the Holy blood of the cross capable of blotting away your sins.

Rely upon the miraculous power of the Holy blood shed on Golgotha. Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord.

Jesus Christ is standing next to you right now. Contemplate that Jesus has arrived near you just while you are reading this.

Jesus is telling you, "Dear son, you don't have to end up in eternal hell." Jesus is talking to you, "Dear daughter, you don't have to wind up in the horrendous fire of never ending hell." He is promising you eternal life.



Chapter 5

“My spirit must not for ever be disgraced in man. Wholly evil as he is. I will give him one twenty years to mend his ways.” Genesis 6 : 3 (TLB)

The Lord declares that His Spirit would not always implore with men – 'My Spirit shall not always plead with Man'. Why does he plead or for what does he strive with man for? His aspiration about us is that we should enter into the heavenly glory.

In Malayalam translation it only says 'for he indeed is flesh'. A more apt translation would be as given in some other translations of the Bible (such as Darby Translation) - And Jehovah said, “My Spirit shall not always plead with Man; for he indeed is flesh; but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years” (Genesis 6 : 3). God does not want his spirit to return in vain on being rejected by men, even after begging or pleading with him. For man is incurably corrupt, carnal and evil that there are chances for God's spirit to return in disgrace. Man is wholly evil!

Man is fully evil. Yet, God says that He is granting a life time to man to mend his evil ways. “I will give him one twenty years to mend his ways.”

I am giving him a set period of time to let him rectify and bring his ways to order. God gave mankind 120 years for that.

Each one of us is granted a finite period of time and within that specific time period we are to acquire the right

to eternal life. As we are unaware of when this specific period comes to an end, we must inherit the right to eternal life today itself.

Asuranamatheloka:
 Andhena thamasavrutha
 Thamsthe prathyabigachanthe
 Ekochathmahatho jana:

Those people who even after getting the most noble illumination offered by human life and having not realised or strived for the emancipation of souls after death, eventually get shrouded in blinding darkness of ignorance and depart into demonic worlds. They end up in the miseries of hellish torture.

If man forfeits the opportunities he gets in this worldly life to attain emancipation, he ends up in eternal suffering in Hell. Hence the following verses are written in Bruhadaranyakopanishad;

Asato ma sadgamaya
 Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya
 Mrtyorma amrtam gamaya

Lead me from falsehood and evil to truth and goodness, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality.

The renowned poet Thomas Gray who lived in the eighteenth century wrote a splendid poem – An Elegy Written In a Country Church Yard.

The following verses are from that impressive work.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
 Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

In this elegy, a poem which laments the dead, the

poet suggests that death is a leveller or an equaliser which levels every one.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power

'Boast of heraldry' refers to the pride and aristocracy associated with the family lineage of the noble persons. 'Pomp of power' refers to the extravagant ceremonies and rituals of the nobles and royals and their power and rank.

And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave

This verse refers to the most beautiful men or women with abundance of wealth, glory and riches!

Awaits alike th' inevitable hour

Despite all the richness, pomp, power, beauty and wealth all persons are destined to die one day. The inevitable hour denotes the unavoidable hour of death!

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

All paths of worldly glory have a common destination, and that is the grave. All paths lead to the grave!

Whatever we have gained in our life - wealth, glory, prestige – everything will end at grave. Nothing lasts for ever.

Nevertheless, there is a never ending glory; a light that shines and never fades, the beacon that never goes out. Jesus is the light that never goes out!

The only true light is Jesus Christ, who said "I am the Light of the World" (John 8 : 12). At that time society was engulfed by darkness; immersed in superstitions and entrapped in false customs and traditions.

People were being led through wicked ways and suffocated by futile customs, conventional rituals and vain traditions. It was the plight of these people that had Jesus say "I am the light of the world". Jesus Christ, who lived a life without assets of even half a penny, who had nowhere

to lay his head to sleep, still seeing the plight of such people said: 'I am the Light of the World'.

The society of those times did not fully grasp or comprehend this. Irrespective of that throughout the ages there were people who fully embraced the truth that Jesus Christ is the true light and thus got rid of the darkness in their lives. Those people are the determinants and cause for enlightening and blessing this world.

Dear Lord, will you grant me the fortune to shine as a tiny lamp in this world encompassed in darkness. Will you give me grace to burn as a tiny lamp in my own house which is filled with darkness?

Let us pray:

My Lord, can you bless me with the grace to stand as a beacon of light in this sinful worldly life?

I am unable to wash away the darkness in my life, nor can I rub it off. I cannot blow away or pump away the darkness. The rising of true light alone can remove the pitch darkness of my heart'. A lamp has to be lighted! Jesus Christ, the true light has to come into my heart!

We must end up possessing this lamp in this world itself.

The great Malayalam poet Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer in his famous poetic work 'Premasangeetham' wrote:

Vilakku kaivasam ullavanennum

Visvam deepamayam

For the one who has a lamp in his hand, the whole world is bright. To make this world brighter we must have lighted lamps in our hands.

Jesus Christ is the only true light. In an age when rites and rituals reigned, Jesus Christ travelled through the land of Galilee. It was the era that Jewish religion shifted

its focus towards religious rituals and principles. At the same time the Romans had started tormenting and persecuting the Jews. The common man was bent over by the burden of the hard life. At that time Jesus Christ stood up and said:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11 : 28

The society of that time could not understand how a person who did not own even half a shekel could comfort those who toiled and are burdened. Yet a minority understood - the poor, the orphans and the ignorant in the eyes of the world were able to understand.

Some of them were poor fishermen; some were outcasts in the society. Yet they were inspired by the words of Jesus. They started flocking together in increasing numbers. A large crowd of five thousand followed him to the hill sides of Bethesda.

The chief priests and Pharisees of those days saw Jesus as a threat to their religion and their self-proclaimed authority. They assumed that he would damage the Jewish religion. They spread rumours about Jesus that he was stirring up unrest in the society, encouraging rebellion and was a threat to the Jewish religion and the Temple of Jerusalem.

So they turned to the Roman authorities of the time for help. They plotted to crucify Jesus with the permission of the Roman authorities.

They had a notion that once crucified, Jesus' influence would end. There would be no more trouble from the Nazarene. They felt relieved that His story was over!

Jesus gave up his life on the cross. But that was not

the end; he rose again on the third day.

Are you someone labouring and toiling? Are you someone with a distraught mind? Are you someone who is perturbed and stressed by the troubles in your life? Are you suffering and saddened by your illness? Are you overcome by the burden of your debts?

Jesus Christ is coming to comfort you. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." *Matthew 11 : 28*

His call was not to join a particular religion. His invitation was not to attend any particular fellowship. He did not summon anyone to a caste or denomination. Jesus said; "Come to me" He called everyone to come to Him; the true manifestation of God. He calls us toward himself, Christ the saviour who was crucified for mankind.

Imagine a man all tied up. If called on to come anywhere, would he be able to come on his own? For such a person in bondage to move, he should be released from the bonds that tie him up. He cannot come unless his bonds are removed.

'Oru Simhaprasavam' (A Lioness' Delivery) is a poem written by the great Malayalam poet Kumaran Asan. This poem is a beautiful and imaginative narration.

It begins with the description of a pregnant wild lioness caught from the forest and confined to a cage. Nobody knew the lioness was pregnant. Later on, the lioness gave birth to a cub inside the cage. In a few days the cub started running around the cage. All the cub could do was to run, jump and play with the lioness in the confined space of the cage.

The lioness was anguished and unhappy because of the imprisonment. She would pace around restlessly. One day she took her son close to the bars of the cage and

spoke to him. "Son, you are not someone who should live in this cage. Far away there is a vast forest where your mother used to roam around. Your father was the king of that jungle. All the other animals were in awe of your father and me and they fled to safety when they spotted us."

"Alas! One day I was caught by these wicked people and brought to this cage where I gave birth to you. However, you must keep in mind that someday you must escape from this confinement and flee to the vast jungle. You must reign as a king there."

"Dear son, this is not your home. This should not be your home for ever. This cage must be shattered. The bars of this cage must be destroyed and one day you should run away from this cage to the outside world. I am looking forward hopefully to that day. Your father is still the king of the jungle. These people were not able to get hold of your father."

She continued; "Son, you should be living there. You ought to be ruling the forest as a majestic lion."

None of us are to spend our days in the confinement of our sins. We are not meant to be living a miserable life engulfed in the fantasies of sins. We are destined to spread our wings and fly to the shores of eternal glory. To the endless horizons of heavenly glory!

One day our eyes will be shut for ever. Then we must reach the shores of eternal glory and celestial joy.

In his most famous book 'The Pilgrim's Progress' John Bunyan writes about the Land of Beulah, where the beloved waits. Beyond the river Jordan, beyond the sea of death, the prince of the celestial city awaits. Crossing of the sea of death will eventually lead to the celestial city.

Far far away, Jesus Christ, the king waits with

outstretched arms to welcome us. We must have that vision. We must have a deep longing to reach there. All our endeavours should solely be aimed at reaching there.

England's great poet laureate Lord Tennyson had such a vision. In exquisite and simple words he said;

Death, be not proud!
 A short sleep,
 And I will wake again, eternally.
 A short voyage,
 And I will meet my maker face to face.

He tells Death, not to be proud! In a deeply moving and triumphant expression of faith he depicts death as a brief sleep from which he would wake up for eternity.

Death is a short voyage on a ship, across the sea. After that he would reach the shining glorious shore where he would see his creator, God, face to face.

Let us hope that this turns into a reality in each and everyone's lives.

A well-known anonymous quote is as follows;
 Yesterday is a history,
 Tomorrow is a mystery,
 and today is a gift.

Yesterday, is gone and is now history. We don't know what tomorrow holds for us, it is a mystery, a secret. We have today – which was given to us as a boon, a blessing. Today will also become a history from tomorrow.

God has given us one more day in the form of today. Tomorrow and what it holds is not for me. Neither you nor me are not sure how tomorrow would be.

Would I be alive on this earth, I am not sure. Would this mortal body of mine be above the ground or below the ground, I don't know. The Creator alone knows these.

But, before we pass away from this world, let Jesus Christ - the only true light and the eternal God come into our hearts. Jesus Christ, the most merciful was crucified for that.

Is it not to gain entry into the sinners' heart that He laid his head on the cross? You could tell Christ right now; 'Oh Lord, you laid your head on the cross two thousand years ago. You should not be leaning your head against two hard wooden pieces. You should be recessing in human hearts. You must be resting in my heart.

You gave up your life on the wooden cross made of lumber pieces provided by the Roman Government.

I humbly beseech you; Jesus Christ ever living God, you gave me this life. You gave me good health. You bestowed upon me all the blessings that I have had till now. I live on this earth because of your grace.

Jesus, please come into my heart today. Please rest your head on my chest. Please enter and dwell in my heart. Change me wholly and radically, change my nature, my attitudes and my outlooks. Please fill me with the very nature of Jesus.

Please wash me with the Holy Blood of Jesus. Forgive all my transgressions and sins of the past. Absolve all the sins that I have committed knowingly and unknowingly. Blot out the stains of my sins, and cleanse me of my offences with your precious blood, restore the grace lost by my sin and grant me full forgiveness. Bless me to embark on a new life from today.

Offer yourselves wholly to God and Pray. Plead for His mercy.



Chapter 6

“But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.” Job 14: 10

“If someone dies, will they live again?” Job 14: 14

Here Job raises two crucial points. Thoughts that fill righteous Job's heart are pouring out in the form of words.

Will man ever live after his death? What happens to man once his life is gone?

What is the state of a man once he is dead? His body will be laid in soil. The body will merge with soil. It will turn into mere dust. Even the bones will degrade. But what happens to his soul residing inside the body?

Is it ever possible to see a man again once he is dead and gone? Can anyone see that person ever again? Will a dead man live again?

Intelligent people have pondered over this. Not just the learned but the ignorant have also thought about this. Where will I be when I am dead? What would happen to me once I am dead?

Once I am dead, would the people on earth be able to see me? Would I ever see my dear and near ones who were separated from me by death? It is perfectly natural for such thoughts to arise in our minds occasionally.

It would be most appropriate to think what would happen after death, as it is an absolute certainty that one day we all would face the reality of death. The most authoritative reply for this is based on the Holy Scripture.

In his poem 'We Are Seven' Wordsworth narrates the story of an innocent child.

“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
 How many may you be?”
 “How many? Seven in all,” she said,
 And wondering looked at me.
 “And where are they? I pray you tell.”
 She answered, “Seven are we;
 And two of us at Conway dwell,
 And two are gone to sea.
 “Two of us in the church-yard lie,
 My sister and my brother;
 And, in the church-yard cottage, I
 Dwell near them with my mother.”

The child replies to the poet's question with utmost innocence that her sister and brother lie in the churchyard.

Wordsworth knew life after death was a reality. He had realised that.

In his 'The Last Will and Testament' the famous poet, playwright and dramatist Shakespeare wrote: “I commend my soul into the hands of God, my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting, and my body to the earth whereof it is made.”

In his famous book, 'The Pilgrim's Progress', John Bunyan described death as a door that let one through from the midst of foes to the company of friends and from ridicule to eternal glory. He envisioned death as a door through which he could pass from the midst of enemies to a group of allies.

Benjamin Franklin was a famous American statesman. He was well known as a leading author, printer, politician, inventor, satirist, civic activist, and diplomat. He was one of the Founding Fathers of the

United States.

His brother John Franklin died when Benjamin was 50 years old. In his condolence note to his grieving relatives Benjamin wrote,

”Why, then, should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals? A new member added to their happy society?”

He mentions immortals to denote a place where there are no mortal men. Here he talks about death as the birth of a child in afterlife.

At the age of twenty-two, he wrote his own epitaph, which is often referred to as 'the most famous of American epitaphs.'

“The Body of B. Franklin, Printer; like the Cover of an old Book, Its Contents torn out, And stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies here, Food for Worms. But the Work shall not be wholly lost; For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more, In a new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and amended By the Author.”

Once a published edition of a book becomes old, a new edition would be published. That new edition would be a revised edition. The book would still be available to people as a more elegant edition revised and corrected by the author.

'Les Misérables', a French historical novel by Victor Hugo, first published in 1862, was translated into English as 'Less Miserables' and as 'Paavangal' (The Poor Ones) in Malayalam.

Victor Hugo is considered as one of the greatest and best known French writers. In his autobiography he wrote: “The tomb is not a blind alley; it is thoroughfare”. He declares that his grave would not be the end of a corridor which terminates in itself. It would be the beginning of a royal highway.

These people were some of the most eminent thinkers and intellectuals of their times. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe considered to be one of the most versatile figures in German literature and a leading star of the 18th century German literature wrote; "I am completely at peace with the thoughts of death as I am fully confident that human soul is immortal." His firm belief in the immortality of the human soul made the notion about death tranquil.

Goethe continues;

"I am fully convinced that the soul is indestructible, and that its activity will continue through eternity. It is like the sun, which, to our eyes, seems to set in night; but it has in reality only gone to diffuse its light elsewhere."

In the morning, we see the Sun rising over the eastern horizon. It sets in the west by evening. However in reality the Sun never sets. At night, one half of the earth is facing away from the Sun, while it shines on the other half of the earth, where it is day. It has merely set or disappeared from the horizon of our visibility. But it is shining brightly and with all its might. While it is night in India, it is day time for those in America.

Socrates, the Greek philosopher credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy, was sentenced to death by making him drink the poison hemlock, by the government of the time.

Socrates engaged in philosophical debates in the street corners of Athens discussing virtue, justice, and piety with his fellow citizens, seeking wisdom about right conduct so that he might guide the moral and intellectual improvement of Athens. He was put to trial and charged for corrupting the morals of Athenian youth. He was condemned to death or exile by the Athenian government for his teaching methods which aroused scepticism and impiety among students. Socrates rejected exile and

accepted death from hemlock.

Most of the records about the life and death of Socrates and his teachings come from the writings of his most famous pupil, Plato and from the memoirs of Xenophon.

When asked why he was so indifferent about the forthcoming death and why he appeared calm and happy, he replied; "Death is really a change - a migration of the soul from this place to another."

Socrates who lived four hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, says; when I reach the other world, I will be with the Holy and divine people. I will also be with God. This firm belief gives me happiness! He considered it a gain and an interesting experience to be with the divine people and the heroes of olden days in the other world after death. He strongly believed that he would be living there with them and also with God for the rest of the time.

Numerous people were convinced of the eternity that follows death. Let us have a look at what the scripture says about this.

Apostle Paul said:

"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." Philippians 1 : 20

In his Letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul looked forward to the time he could leave this earthly life behind and be with Christ:

"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:

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." Philipians 1 : 21 - 24

He meant that if he continued to live in this world, he would live for Christ, but if he died, he would gain eternal life with Christ. Paul was concerned only with serving Jesus and glorifying Him either way. He was willing to accept both.

How and where did Apostle Paul gain the courage to say this? From a deep rooted and firm faith! A strong conviction of his final destination! An ardent hope of, to whom he is going! Certainty and assurance about the one who awaits him with outstretched hands to receive him!

There are clear reasons behind his steadfast hope! He had received some indications that he might die. There were prophecies and reminders from Godly men. He was warned in advance by the Spirit about the dangers awaiting him in Jerusalem.

Despite all this we can see what St. Paul says to the elders of Asia,

"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

Acts 20 : 22 - 24

The warnings of danger came from the Holy Spirit and were meant to prepare Paul. However, he says;

"And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn out irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me".

Acts 20 : 22 (NLT)

How proficient! There was no other aim or goal in his life! If we are to have the same sort of confidence and proficiency, our dedication to God must be deep enough. We must grow in strength and courage in this worldly life of sickness and difficulties, agonies and afflictions, outcries of sorrow and pain.

Financial worries and debts on one side, unruly and disobedient kids creating trouble on other, irresponsible behaviour by the children, their stubbornness, shouting and anger, verbal abuses and the hurtful things they say on yet another side, hindrances, adversities, miseries and hardships on every side. When life is engulfed by the currents and whirlpools of the overwhelming sea of troubles and disasters, is it possible to stay cheerful and pleasant, filled with peace and true hope? How can this be achieved?

You must have a clear outlook that you have just one and only one goal. I have only an aim, only one ambition - to complete my race; to accomplish the mission which Jesus had entrusted me!

In his final epistle to Timothy, St. Paul writes about his triumphant confidence;

“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

Acquiring this competence, this triumphant confidence, is in fact the most admirable possession.

Have you acquired this possession? Are you sure that you have fulfilled the mission assigned to you and that you have completed the race?

Have I taken at least one step forward, towards fulfilling God's wish about me to become a holy person? Am I going forward in the path of love, following the same footsteps of Jesus? Am I moving on triumphantly?

Think for a moment! Everything in this world is a mere fantasy. Everything is momentary, everything is ephemeral, everything is transient and everything is temporary and vanishing.

We live in a world of constant change. We are accustomed to see things changing. Everything you see could change. Your dear and near might desert you, your companions and benefactors might isolate you and drift away. Those who are keen to help you today might wander away and alienate you. Those who are your foes today, might long to become your friends.

People change, the world change, the circumstances change, the climates change, situations change, health conditions change, friends change, all your earthly possessions change, and even you change, yet there is one person who never changes. Jesus Christ never changes. You can always count on Jesus. You can always depend upon his character which will never change. Everything changes but Jesus. You can always hold on tight to Him.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."
Hebrews 13:8

Accept Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever, as your saviour today itself. Receive Him into your heart as your saviour and your Lord.

Make a promise to him; Jesus, as you died for me on the cross, from today onwards I would live for you.



Chapter 7

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side”.

Luke 16 : 22 - 23

Where does the soul end up once a person is dead? This particular incident narrated by Jesus Christ, clarifies the destiny of souls after death. The narrative of the rich man and Lazarus was not a parable told by Jesus Christ. It was an actual incident. It was an event which happened at that time and not a story. Jesus had not mentioned any names in any of his parables. However, here He mentioned the name Lazarus very clearly. The fact that Lazarus was actually named gives strong evidence that this was a true account. When Jesus narrated this incident, the people of that region who heard him already knew about Lazarus. They knew that Lazarus had died recently and they also knew about the rich man. They were all aware that the rich man had died and was given a grand funeral ceremony.

When the poor man died he was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried, but his soul ended up in the agony of hell.

Jesus Christ had told very clearly that those who pass

away from the earth veer towards two places. The souls depart either to Heaven, to be in the presence of Holy people or to the place of torment, the Hell.

The Hebrew word 'Sheol' and the Greek word 'Hades' are both translated into the word 'subterranean'.

Sheol has two levels.

It is not possible to go from the upper level of Sheol to the lower level. There is a wide gulf between the two levels.

Abraham says to the rich man, “between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”

A wide chasm, a partition has been created between the two categories – We are separated into 'us' and 'you'.

Abraham's bosom is the part often referred to as 'Paradise' which is the upper level of Sheol. This is not Heaven. Heaven and Hell are totally different entities.

It is relatively hard to comprehend the differences between these terms. There are people who consider that subterranean world is the same as Hell. However they are different. We will be able to understand these better only when we perform a thorough study of Holy Scripture.

Nevertheless, while we read about all these, we have to remember one thing. Lord, one day my eyes would be closed for ever. My God, one day I would be dead and depart from this world.

Some day or other each one of us would die. This world is not our permanent dwelling place. We are all aliens and strangers in this earthly home. We are all sojourners travelling towards our real home.

Knowing this a lyricist wrote:

Zion sanchari njan
 Yesuvil chaari njan
 Pokunnu kurisinte paathayil

I am a traveller to Zion and I am treading the path of cross, leaning on the bosom of Jesus Christ!

We are following Jesus on the way of the cross. It is an expedition; a journey to salvation, a pilgrimage.

Mokshayathrayanithu njan nadappathu
 Kaazhchayaleyalla viswasathaleyaam
 Veezhchakal thaazhchakal vannidum velayil
 Rakshakan kaikalil thangidum

This may be translated into:

I have embarked on this journey to redemption, not by sight but by faith. Even if there are ups and downs in this journey of mine, my saviour would uphold me in His arms.

One day this journey to redemption would come to an end. We do not know when! We would be separated from this world, our human body would become dust. When life departs from our body our soul starts its flight to eternity. The beginning of this eternity is either the place of eternal torments and torture, or the paradise often referred to as the bosom of Abraham. Holy people eventually end up in this paradise.

Your life on this earth might be as a poor destitute. Your body might be covered in sores and scabs. You might be struggling to make both ends meet. You might be helpless and unable to get rid of the dogs licking the wounds on your body. You might be a desolate, outcast and deserted by everyone.

You could be a bankrupt person drowning in debt.

Today you might be a famished person starving for food. You might be despised and disregarded by others, facing contempt and disgrace. Despite all this, when you die you would finally reach Abraham's bosom, standing shoulder to shoulder with the saints.

When referring to Abraham's bosom it doesn't literally mean that Abraham is seated somewhere in heaven. Abraham was the foremost among mighty warriors of heroic faith, we come across in the Old Testament. Abraham, when called on to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, left everything behind, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. He is rightly called "the father of the faithful". Abraham was also referred to as "friend of God". He lived out his faith, which manifested itself in an unflinching obedience to God's call. Reaching Abraham's bosom means reaching paradise where Father Abraham dwells.

Our forefathers have composed songs asking whether their beloved ones who have died would be safely received into the laps of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in paradise. However, the forefathers specifically mentioned one thing which many of us forgets.

In the prayers they wrote, our forefathers asked to have mercy on the righteous who departed from this world, trusting God and hopeful of His second coming. It is for them they plead to be seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We see in Matthew Chapter 8 : 11 "Many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven".

The faith of forefathers is eternal and truthful. They sang:

Karuna niranjavane!
 punaruthanathil
 ninnude srishtiye nee
 puthuthakkeedaname-
 Ninnil sharanathal
 Nidrayilay ninde
 Varavinnu katheedum
 Mritharil kaneeyaname-
 Avarabarahathin-
 teyumisahakkudeyum
 Yacobinnudeyum
 Madiyil parkkaname-
 Vannavanum varuvo-
 num mritharthannuyirum
 Sthuthanennu shareera-
 thmaakkal Padaname.

Oh merciful Lord, renew your creation on the day of resurrection.

Oh Lord, grant rest and comfort to our beloved departed ones, who have lived and died with hope in you.

Oh Lord, grant rest to our faithful departed in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

May the souls and bodies together cry aloud and say: glory be to the one who has come and is to come to resurrect the departed.

How meaningful are the lyrics of this song! Who among the people are renewed on the day of resurrection? Those who trusted in you and had truly experienced repentance. Those who trusted in your most Holy Blood! Oh Lord, please have mercy on those beloved of ours who had faith in you; who trusted in your grace; those faithfully departed people who are sleeping

now and those who earnestly believed that you would come again.

Oh most merciful God, please renew your creation upon your resurrection. Kindly have benevolence on those holy people who have trusted in you, have surrendered their lives to you and who wait in hope for your second coming.

Compassionate God, please receive them into the glories of paradise. Please receive and welcome them to the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

They would sing praises perpetually with their bodies and souls, to the one who came and the one who is to come. May they sing incessantly, "Holy, holy is the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Praise to God Almighty in the highest".

God has given us, the present generation, the destiny to follow the example of the holiness envisaged by our forefathers. Despite this, we should not take it for granted.

If you depart this world without confiding and trusting in Christ, but merely performing the rites of the cross, you will not stand beside the most Holy men in heaven. You will stand neither beside the Saints nor the Holy men, if you have not experienced true repentance and have not been redeemed by the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ.

Experiencing salvation while still on earth would be most desirable. God's grace would be very essential for that. This could be explained through an example. Iron is strongly attracted to a magnet. But, sand, leather, plastic or rubber are not drawn to a magnet. Just as iron is strongly attracted to a magnet, those who are captivated by the power of Holy Blood of Christ and attain salvation, are in a state of grace. They would have a constant

rapport and accord in their souls with Jesus Christ.

To be in grace, to have salvation, to be born again, to be converted, to have repentance, to be redeemed, to be sanctified, to be delivered – all these refer to one and the same experience. The experience of being united with Christ! If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. And those who are in Christ become the inheritors of God's kingdom.

The lyrics penned by our forefathers such as, "Saranathale nin krupayil maranamadanjoru daasar" (Those who died relying on your grace), "ninnil saranathaal nidrayilayi, ninte varavinu kaatheedum mruthar" (Those who fell asleep relying on your grace, waiting for your coming), "nin sarane mrutharaam thaatha sahodarar" (forefathers and brothers who died relying on your grace), enlighten us about this notion.

A life surrendered fully to Christ! A life attaining the very nature of Christ!. A life anticipating and awaiting hopefully for Christ's second coming!

Such Holy people are granted rest in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We must comprehend what the scripture says and what our forefathers foretold.

The one who came and the one who is to come is worthy of praise and glory! The one who came; the one who is coming and the one who resurrects the dead is worthy of praise! Let the bodies and souls shout loudly that He is to be praised!

Bishops, priests and deacons are ordained and appointed to teach laymen this praise while alive on earth.

Melpattakkar – pattakkarodu-semrashanmar

Erpadaki-karthavivare-bhumiyathinkal
 Aniyichariva-ranisham thannude-sabhayeyivide
 Anavaratham chai-thetti vasikkum-sthuthikalathale

(High Priests, priests and deacons too, Lord did set in the earth; And they are to adorn His Church, with halleluiah songs; Priests offer earthly fruits, their master's true symbols; And call the Holy Ghost with faith to come into them.)

Why were high priests, priests and deacons appointed by God? They adorn and garnish Gods church with praise and adoration. They repeatedly and continually add-on praises.

'Anisham' – perpetually, unceasingly! Constant praises glorifying God should adorn God's church. Holy forefathers who were found fit to bestow praise, glory, splendour, magnificence and unfading honour, exhorted and entrusted us to praise God.

For what? To encourage worshippers, the children of the church to praise God, to offer praise to God continually. It is right and just for the righteous to praise God. And it is most appropriate, acceptable and befitting to serve God with reverence and Godly fear. Almighty God comes down to earth for us through this praise.

God's glory is manifested when spiritual worship begins with praise from the soul, praise overflowing with holiness and filled with Holy Spirit. Don't we recite in our prayers - just as heavenly angels glorify His name singing 'Heaven and earth are full of His glory', down below on earth, we the most frail and sinful, worship and praise you.

Those who experience the goodness of the Lord, will praise him. Those who have experienced the power of the Holy Blood of Jesus would worship him. Thanksgiving

and praise would emanate from the tongues of those redeemed by the Holy Blood. They would not only sing “Nin sthuthiyum halleluyayum karthave njan nirtharuthe” (O Lord, let the praise and worship to you never cease in me.) but true worship, thanks giving and praise will constantly overflow from their hearts all the time.

When we depart this world and move on, we reach the ranks of Holy men, this is heaven. The alternative is the place of torture in Hades or Sheol.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.” Luke 16: 19-23

You are the sole decision maker of where you should spend your eternity. Neither your wife nor your husband should decide, neither your children nor your parents should decide, you alone must be the final decision maker of your destiny after death.

And the crucial time to make that decision would be when we are in this human body and are still alive. We must make this decision while life still throbs in our body. Seek God while you are alive. Accept the saviour who was crucified, into your hearts right now while you are here in this world.

Jesus Christ who sacrificed His life on the cross has

come to you, yearning to take you to the ranks of Holy men. He stands next to you right where you are. Son, you don't have to suffer the horrors of hell or undergo the pains of the Hades.

Don't ruin your life. Don't destroy your life by descending into the looming darkness and horrors of the land of suffering. He stands knocking at the door of your heart; imploring you not to ruin your life. He says that He can give you a new life. Dear son/daughter; open your hearts to Him.

One day, you will die. Open the doors of your heart and submit your life to Christ. Believe that Christ died on the cross for your sins and that He has forgiven all your sins. His Holy Blood is capable of cleansing all the sins happened in your life until today. Let today be a new beginning.

Invite Jesus into your heart today itself. Make a vow to Him, 'Oh Jesus, as you died on the cross for my sins, I will live for you from today onwards'.

'Oh Jesus, since you bore my sins in your body and died on the cross, from today onwards I will lead a sinless life. Jesus, from today I am your property'.



Chapter 8

But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. *Job 14: 10*

Here Job, a righteous man acknowledges the finality of death and asks the crucial question; after death, where would he be?

This human body would decay and decompose. This body made from soil would return to soil. Man would return to dust.

Job asks again: "Will a man ever live again after death?"

Each one of us is swirling in the currents of the worldly life. We have our own torments and difficulties. We have pressures of work. We have many botherations, distresses and perils in our daily life. We have to overcome several obstacles and hindrances in our every day lives. How many hurdles have we crossed before we reached this far in life?

We cannot stay aloof from this world and worldly thoughts, while we live in this world. Because we are trapped by different things of this world, we feel dejected and worried on several occasions. We are overcome by sorrow, miseries, trials and tribulations. There are times when we have to go through unbearable agonies.

Ernest Hemingway was one of the most famous American authors of the twentieth century. One of his

famous novels 'The Old Man and The Sea' has been translated into Malayalam.

The main character of this novel is an old fisherman, who goes fishing in the sea in his boat. The novel tells the tale of an epic struggle between this old fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. For several days, this old fisherman had set out to the sea and returned empty-handed.

But one day, he prepares his lines and drops them to get a big fish, which takes the bait. The old man hooks the fish, but he finds it difficult to pull the very large fish in. Instead, the fish begins to pull the boat into the deep sea. He is unable to let go of the fish. He wants the fish and at the same time he is conscious of the dangers. He tries his best and struggles to bear the strain of the fish pulling at the line.

In this novel Earnest Hemingway uses the metaphor to symbolize life, its struggles and strife encountered by men in the ocean of life. The journey through the ocean symbolises the journey through life. He portrays the journey of a common man swaying and swirling in the waves of sorrows, miseries and hardships of life, getting immersed and dragged by the bondages of this world. It is a fine illustration of an ordinary man's life and his struggle to survive.

Every man is struggling by the bondages of this world. There is hardly any time to think about a life beyond the toils and strife of the present. Is there a so called eternity? If so how would it be? These are not the topics that we often ponder about or reflect on.

We are agitated and bothered by innumerable problems of our own. We are upset and troubled by

different predicaments in our life. We are crushed by misfortunes and disappointments of one sort or other. Life is a race and we are sweating and sprinting with all our might. An honourable author aptly named his book as Kuthippum Kithappum (galloping and gasping). Sprinting with all the might and then puffing and panting; gasping for breath! Life is like that for many of us. Speeding followed by a breathless state. A life submerged in miseries!

Despite all this, it would be a great fortune if we are able to think about the eternal life, beyond this materialistic worldly life. Where would I end up if I pass away today? If I am separated from this world today by death, where would my soul go? Would I ever come back to this earth? Would I ever meet my departed relatives and those who are dead and gone before me?

My dad has died. Would I see him again? My mother has died. Would I see her again? My husband has died. Would I be able to get even a glimpse of him again? My dearest siblings has died. Would I see them ever again? These questions and the hopeful longings often rise from the bottom of our hearts.

Jesus Christ talks about eternity in the Holy Scripture.

In Luke chapter sixteen, we read about a certain rich man and a poor man. The rich man is introduced without a name. The poor man has a name - Lazarus.

We read as follows:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when

the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

Luke 16 : 19 - 24

Lazarus was poor. Lazarus was diseased and his body was full of sores. Lazarus was hungry and homeless. Lazarus was a destitute. Lazarus was dressed in rags with no other clothes to change into.

Unlike Lazarus, the rich man wore the finest clothes and lived in luxury. He was very well off and basking in the glory of his riches daily. He was wealthy, he made merry and lived a splendid life. He ate well, and he lived happily. Life was good to this man and he had the abundance of this world's good things. This is a true account of two men who lived and died during that time, and was not just a parable.

Jesus had not mentioned the name of specific individuals in any of His parables. But here, he mentions the name of Lazarus.

No names are mentioned in the parable of the sower. Nor does He mention the name of the woman in the parable of the lost coin. The parable of the lost son does not mention any names. There is no name for the Good Samaritan in that parable. The owner of the vineyard who goes to get labourers to work in his vineyard is not named, though again a parable.

When we come across the account of the rich man

and Lazarus, the situation differs from the parables. Here Jesus has mentioned a name – Lazarus – and this is unique.

Lazarus, a poor man covered in sores, lay at the gates of the rich man's mansion. He longed for whatever scraps he might get from the rich man's table.

The rich man's name is not mentioned anywhere. Why is it? Lord mentions the names of only those persons whose names are written in the Book of Life! The name of Lazarus is mentioned explicitly because his name appears in the 'Book of Life'. The name of the rich man is not given because he does not appear in the 'Book of Life'. The rich man is not known or honoured before God's sight. He is not worthy enough to enter the Lord's presence.

The Book of Revelation chapter 20 verse 15 says:

“Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

On the day of the final judgement people would be split into two groups. And the dead would be judged by what is written in the books, on the basis of what they had done. Only those who have their names written in the 'Book of Life' would stand before the Lord. It is clearly recorded in the scriptures that those whose names are not written in the 'Book of Life' would be abandoned into the eternal lake of the fires of hell.

“Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire”.

Revelation 20 : 15

Anyone who does not have their name inscribed in the 'Book of Life' would not be known to God. Eternal God is familiar with those who have their names written in the

'Book of Life'. Think for a moment. Am I familiar to God? Am I unknown and unfamiliar to heaven? Have I achieved the worth to go to heaven?

The rich man died and was buried. We could imagine that the rich man might had a very ostentatious funeral. It would have been a pompous ceremony reflecting his wealth and status in the society. A huge crowd of people might have attended the funeral service. People might have swarmed to express their condolences and to deliver condolence speeches. They might have conducted several memorial meetings to remember the rich man and to express sympathy.

They would have composed messages of sympathy and comfort to the mourners. Many would have told words such as – his soul is resting on God's bosom now, may God give him eternal rest and may his soul rest in peace!

The funeral procession might have been very long. Melancholy funeral music and the sounds of musical instruments might have filled the air! As a sign of mourning, they would have brought out all the colourful umbrellas, black flags and accompaniments. To show the significance of the dead, they might have brought some more of those from the neighbouring churches!

This does not literally mean that these things happened, but the description would give an idea of how wealthy the rich man was and how people would have treated him.

Despite all this we read: "The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment...."

The rich man ended up in the torments of Hades. Never ending torture! He is pleading for a drop of water. We read that he pleads to Father Abraham:

“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

The rich man is crying now. He lifts his eyes and looks upwards. Since it is written that when he looks upward he sees Father Abraham, we can comprehend that paradise is above. The rich man is familiar with the name of Saints, he knows Father Abraham. However, he has no acquaintance with God!

In the present world there are innumerable people like this, who are familiar with Saints, but unfamiliar with God. They are aware of the tombs of Holy men, yet not acquainted with Jesus Christ. They regularly go on pilgrimages to Holy Shrines and the tombs of Saints. But, they do not fulfil the true meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ in their lives.

No one ever reaches God's kingdom merely because they know Saints. There are certain absolute norms for one to reach there.

When Lazarus died, no mention was made about his burial, but his soul was led away by the angels to Father Abraham's bosom. On earth he lived the life of a destitute with his body full of sores. But when he died, he was honoured; he was carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham.

The bosom of Abraham is the representation of the ranks of the righteous and the holy. The congregation of holy men who worship and praise the most Holy God - the father, Jesus Christ - the son and the Holy Spirit. Abraham was the father of the believers. Only a believer who has strong faith can reach the bosom of Abraham. We can

comprehend this fact when we reach the end of this parable.

'Oh Lord, if I happen to pass away from this world today, I beseech you that I may reach the glorious heaven which is the abode of the most holy men. My life on earth is very short and momentary. Please make me worthy of reaching the eternal heavenly abode'. Let this be our sincere longing and prayer.

We listen to gospel sermons regularly. We read and meditate God's words habitually. We faithfully make an attempt to learn God's words. We routinely say our personal prayers. We punctually recite family prayers and follow all the prayers and rituals of the church. All these are good.

Despite all these, if we fail to eventually reach where we should reach, all these efforts would be in vain. If I don't reach eternal heaven it would be the most terrible loss. Wouldn't it be the most unfathomable loss?

Bear in mind! Although we recite the prayer of forefathers entreating that the dead are accepted into the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, do we truly have the preparation and readiness to reach there?

Think for a moment! Have we attained what we should, to reach the place where the most holy and righteous men reside? What should we attain? Just one and only one thing – Jesus Christ!

Saints and Holy men will depart, denominations and creeds may change, churches may get altered, human lives will undergo changes, dear and near may change, parents and friends will not be with us for ever. There is only one person who does not change. Jesus Christ has never, can never and will never change. He is, by His very

nature, unchangeable!

Maaridum manujarellaam
 Marannidum snehitharum,
 Maattamillathavan en manuel,
 Mahimayil vaazhunnu ennum enikkayi.

This may be translated as:

All men will change,
 Friends might forget,
 Unchangeable is my Emmanuel,
 He lives and reigns in glory for me even today.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever.”

He is absolutely not liable to any variation or alteration. Jesus never changes. He is the one entity in our life that we could count on never to change. Accept him as Lord and welcome him into your lives.

Today, he has come near you. He is standing beside you while you are reading these words. He is a God who is near you. He is not a distant God. God is not far from you but, a caring heavenly father very close to you.

He surrendered himself on the cross for you. He gave up His own life on the cross for you and me. He gave His most Holy life for us. Gladly receive Him into your lives. Make a promise to Him.

'Oh Lord! Oh Jesus, from today I belong to you. Oh Jesus, from today I am a new creation. Unlike my past life, I will live a life which is pleasing to you, Lord. Oh Lord, from today I will live a Holy life according to your will'.



Chapter 9

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'” Luke 16:22-24

The rich man, who lived in luxury is now in agony and suffering the flames of fire. The rich man is in a place of torment and flaming heat. He experiences the excruciating pain of hell's merciless fire and never ending flames.

He pleads for mercy to Father Abraham as a result of his torment and suffering. The flames were causing him great discomfort. 'Father Abraham, have pity on me.'

Prayers after death are fruitless. Untimely and late prayers are ineffective and pointless. There is no lack of prayers, there is no lack of familiarity with Holy men, no shortage of prayers to saints. But everything is fruitless!

The rich man pleads for mercy, asking that Lazarus be sent to him so that Lazarus could dip the tip of his finger in water to cool the rich man's tongue. He shouts out, suffering agony in the flames of fire.

The rich man continued: 'Father Abraham, Lazarus

who is now at your bosom used to lie at my gate. He was familiar to me and I was familiar to him as well. When I went out of my house, and when I and my five brothers hastened about with our various businesses, we passed him many times. We have seen him lying at the gate of my house, as we had to walk past Lazarus every time we left or entered our house. Lazarus has seen us as we passed by him so many times. We knew each other.'

'If only you could send that Lazarus here, he could dip his finger tip in a little water to cool my tongue. That will have a small cooling effect.' He was longing for even the slightest coolness he could get in the heat of burning fire.

The flames were causing him great discomfort and suffering. 'I am scorching and blistering in the flames of this torrid fire' - so he was screaming and crying aloud to Father Abraham to have mercy on him.

Despite that screaming, his request was denied. His cries for help were futile. Why?

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'"

Luke 16 : 25 - 26

There was, Abraham said, a great chasm between the two abodes. The chasm was not there by chance, but it has been created there intentionally, a huge gap or rift between two places. A great chasm between you and us! 'You' and 'us' are in two adobes now. There is a division, a great gulf has formed between them.

While on earth, Lazarus and the rich man lived near each other. But now they have been divided into 'us' and 'you' in two different sections.

Because of the gulf there is no access between the two. It is not possible to cross over to the place of suffering, nor is it possible to cross over from there to the place of blessing.

It is a critical and sober situation. A great, impassable chasm that prevents anyone from passing from one side to the other. People on both sides can see each other! The dead and the gone can see each other. However, they cannot move from one side of the chasm to the other. How pitiable! What a painful and deplorable situation!

This would be the time when one thinks: 'While living on earth, if only I had lived a life pleasing to God, I could also have dwelt in the blessed land!'

The fate of sinners in hell are described as that of 'wailing and gnashing of teeth'. Wailing because of the painful writhing caused by torment and suffering. The tears of anguish and the gnashing of teeth out of sorrow, grief, regret and remorse!

Deep despair and disappointment arising from the fact that their destiny is irreversible; there is no chance of escaping for ever!

Abraham says:

"And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

For this He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family.' *Luke 16:27*

He is pleading with Father Abraham; if Lazarus could

not be sent to him, to where he is, then at least he could be sent back to earth. The rich man wants Lazarus to warn his brothers who are still alive, of the dangers of hell. The rich man is now conscious that if his brothers continue to lead the current life, they would also end up in the place of torment and suffering as he has now.

Now his brothers are unaware of this. They have no indication of the fate awaiting them after death. The fate that, they too would enter this eternal torture.

They might be resting now after my funeral ceremony. Alas! They are unaware that my soul is suffering in the furnace of hell!

The rich man's request is that Lazarus be sent to his five brothers to warn them about their fate awaiting them at this place. Lazarus could give a testimony to them.

When alive on earth he could not stand hearing testimonies. He felt allergic to them. There are still many people who consider that giving testimonies is not fit or appropriate for people of Syrian churches. To praise and to give testimonies – are these befitting to people of ancient Eastern churches? There are many who still differ about this.

While suffering at the place of torment, the rich man requests for a testimony from Lazarus. He did not had that chance, but he hopes that his brothers would listen to Lazarus.

Let Lazarus tell them: 'Your brother, who has died, is undergoing eternal torture now. He is in anguish and suffering in the fierce flames of hell and is longing for even a drop of water. There is no chance of getting that. He pleaded to Father Abraham to send me there to dip the tip of my finger in water to cool his tongue. But his request was denied.'

'You all know me very well. You have seen me lying at the gate of your brother's house. I was covered in sores. If he pleaded for a drop of water to be put on his tongue with these hands, once covered with sores, you could imagine his plight.'

'It is true that now my hands do not have any sores. But he has seen it covered with sores before. Don't you think that, for someone who has seen the state of my hands before, would it not be repulsive to ask for dipping that hand in water to cool his tongue? Yet how come he could ask for it? He is parched with thirst, his tongue is hot and dry, and he is suffering there greatly.'

'I personally have seen his suffering and wanted to let you know. I warn you to take heed so that you too do not end up in the place of torment and suffering.'

The rich man says:

'For I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."

Luke 16 : 28 - 29

Father Abraham denied his request mentioning that there are Moses and the prophets to give them God's word. He says that there are prophets on earth - prophets who are blessed with the spiritual gift of speaking the word of Lord, those who are completely dedicated and those who are entrusted by God. Shouldn't your five brothers be listening to their words?

To that he replies:

'No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

The rich man knows from personal experience that

his brothers would not take seriously, what the prophets say. Something more would be needed. Knowing this, the rich man proposes Lazarus to rise from the dead and warn his brothers. They might turn from their ways, if they see this miracle.

It would not be that easy for them to repent. If a dead man rises and tells them a testimony they might repent. They are the sort of people who would not heed the prophecy or the preaching of gospel. They think that preachers and prophets preach gospel for their livelihood.

However, if a dead man rises and preaches to them they would repent.

What was the danger that happened to the rich man and his five brothers? Why did they end up in the place of torment?

Lack of repentance! They did not repent.

'No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

The rich man reached the place of torment not just because he was wealthy. There is no indication that rich people will end up in place of torment. Having riches is not a disqualification. Being rich is not a hindrance for entering God's kingdom.

Conversely, it is not that only poor people will go to heaven. Many have misunderstood this.

Once a rich young man came to Jesus and asked Him that, what must be done by him to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him to sell all his possessions and give it to the poor, and then to come and follow Him.

We see this incident in chapter 19 of the Gospel of Matthew. What did Jesus suggest to that young man? To sell all that he possess and give it to the poor. Then come,

follow Me.

He had been following all the commandments. He had been following the word of God. He meticulously followed the Ten Commandments. However, he had a bondage. He had an affinity to money and riches.

Wealth was a bondage in his life. So he went away saddened and disappointed. On seeing this young man's sad departure, Jesus told His disciples:

“Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 19 : 24

His disciples were greatly astonished on hearing this and asked; “Who then can be saved?”

To this Jesus replies that it is not because he is rich that he will not enter the kingdom of God, but because he has a dependence on wealth.

When we read the verses from the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew about this incident one thing emerges clearly from all the three – Those who depend on wealth will not enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10 : 23 - 24, Luke 18 : 24 - 27

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Mark 10 : 23

“Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven”

Matthew 19 : 23

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Luke 18 : 24

Wealth or riches are not a hindrance to enter the kingdom of heaven. However, if there is a dependence and an attachment to wealth, that would be a hindrance. Whatever is of the paramount interest and the main

attachment, that would be an idol in your life.

Is your wife your most cherished possession and attachment? She would then be your idol. Is your job your paramount delight, then that would be your idol. Do you think highly of your profession and have a dependency on your income and your salary? Then those would be your idols. Do you adore your house? It would be your idol. Do you dote on and marvel about your children? Your children would become your idols. Nothing should become your idol. You should not idolize or have dependency on anything.

There must be one and only one place for me to depend on and to take refuge. Just the bosom of Jesus which was pierced at Golgotha. Nothing apart from the most Holy feet of merciful Jesus Christ. Only the base of the victorious cross of Jesus!

You should not take refuge or depend on anything else or anybody else.

“It is better to take refuge in the Lord, than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the Lord, than to trust in princes.” Psalm 118:8-9

Here, being rich did not hinder the rich man but his hindrance was that he did not repent.

The Scriptures clearly suggest that unless one repents he would perish.

“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” Luke 13:3; 13:5

Jesus Christ tells us that all the un-repenteds would perish without doubt.

“But in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30

God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in their past, but now He commands everyone everywhere to repent for their sins and to turn to Him. This is His unchanging command.

This is a topic that needs our detailed attention. Everyone should repent!

The true meaning of the word repentance is conversion of mind - to change the mind and to change the heart. The Greek verb for 'to repent' is 'metanoeo'. The meaning of 'metanoeo' is 'to have another mind' – a change of mind or heart.

Jambulinga Nadar was a notorious brigand who terrorised people in Tamil Nadu. People in the southern parts of the state were intimidated and terror stricken even by the mere mention of his name.

Jambulinga Nadar had committed several atrocious crimes including murder, looting, assaulting, disguising himself to commit crimes and burglaries. He and his gang had even molested several women.

Attempts by the authorities to capture the notorious Jambulinga Nadar were fruitless. A huge sum of money was offered as a reward to anyone who passed on information about him to the police. Offers of rewards, for information leading to Jambulinga Nadar's capture were publicised in newspaper adverts. That too did not have any avail. Even the police officers were afraid of him.

It was during that time that Amy Carmichael, a foreign missionary was doing missionary work in that part of Tamil Nadu. Amy had the deepest desire to share Jesus' love with the local people and she had a group of unmarried women working with her. They stayed in a rented house. They would visit houses, help the poor and the needy, and take care of the sick and suffering people. She and her

fellow workers persevered in their work despite the difficulties and setbacks they faced.

One evening Amy Carmichael and her fellow sisters came back to their rented house after their tiring work, during the day. Before making preparations for the evening meal they sat down in their room to pray. They sang songs, read the word of God, praised God and started to pray.

There was news about Jambulinga Nadar on that very day's newspaper. An advert about the reward offered for those who could give any information about Jambulinga Nadar's whereabouts was published in the newspapers.

While Amy Carmichael was praying loudly she said: "O Lord, you love Jambulinga Nadar, we know that you love that bandit leader as well. Please give him repentance, please give him a penitent heart."

They were all praying with their eyes closed and suddenly they were startled by a loud noise. Someone jumped down through a wedge in the ceiling from where ceiling boards were removed. None other than the dreaded Jambulinga Nadar! They all got on their feet panic stricken and filled with terror. They trembled with fear.

He told them that he was indeed Jambulinga Nadar. Amy's fellow workers were shocked and were unable to utter even a single word. He continued, "I have not come to kill you or to cause you any harm now. I heard that there are beautiful young women here and my plan was to molest them. I came to know that you have money sourced from abroad. So I came with the aim of looting and taking away all the money."

"While I was hiding above the ceiling, I heard

someone mentioning my name. I also heard somebody speaking about loving me. Who on earth loves me? Is there anybody who could ever love me?"

Amy replied – "Jesus loves you."

To this Jambulinga Nadar asked, "Who is this Jesus?"

Amy: "Lord Jesus is the only begotten son of the living God."

The conversation continued;

"Where is this Jesus?"

"Jesus Christ died on the cross, but He still lives. He is in this room now."

"I cannot see Him or anyone else in this room."

"Yes, He is indeed here. We are standing close to Him. We have come here from abroad and are living here to talk to people about this Jesus and to disseminate the love of Jesus to everyone."

Jambulinga Nadar sat down there. Amy Carmichael told him about the Gospel for some time. She talked to him about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, about the power of Holy Blood of Jesus, about how God's love is constantly endeavouring for the transformation of sinners and about the Holy Blood shed on the cross purifying all our sins.

Amy Carmichael explained the gospel truths to Jambulinga Nadar in the fullness of spirit.

After a while he started sobbing and kept repeating; "Jesus Christ loves me, Jesus Christ loves me as well". Tears overflowed his eyes when he said, Jesus Christ loved him as well.

While he was crying Amy told him a prayer. A prayer of dedication, submitting his life into the hands of Jesus Christ. He repeated the prayer which Amy recited amidst

his tears. That day he went back from there peacefully.

Next morning he presented himself at the police station. Police officers were terrified and they shivered on seeing him. They assumed that he had come to attack the police station.

He told them; "I have not come to attack you or assault you. I am now a new human being. My old self died yesterday night at 11 pm. I have come now to surrender myself. You can put hand cuffs on my hands. You can judge me and punish me. But now I have Jesus in my heart."

This is repentance. The old self is dead. The new man resurrects! Have you experienced this?

"But in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent."
Acts 17:30

This is God's supreme command. All people must repent.

For this there is no need to change your denomination, nor your community, your congregation, your church or your parish.

Only one thing in your life needs to change. Your heart must change. Christ would bring about a change in your heart and mind. Jesus Christ would enter into your heart. He would come into your life which is engrossed in darkness. He would bless you! He would put His Holy hands on your head to bless you.

Now, we can surrender ourselves. We can make a promise to Jesus. 'Jesus, from today I would be a new creation. Oh Lord from today, I am your possession'.



Chapter 10

The rich man died and was buried; but he is suffering and is in a great agony in Hades. He is longing for a drop of water to cool his tongue for he was tormented by the flames. Lazarus was a poor beggar. When he lived on earth, he was full of sores, diseased, weak and helpless.

Why did Lazarus reach heaven and why didn't the rich man reach there? We contemplated about these questions in the previous chapter. Towards the end of the incident, we see the rich man making another appeal to Father Abraham:

'Father Abraham, I understand that there is no possibility for you to send Lazarus to where I am, to dip his finger tip in water and cool my tongue. Nevertheless, my five brothers who are still living on earth do not have any repentance like me.'

'I ended up here as I did not have repentance. Only since reaching here have I realized that if people do not repent when alive on earth, there would be no further chance or feasibility to repent, once dead and gone. If you send this Lazarus to give a testimony before my five brothers, they would repent.'

Jesus clearly depicts that failure to repent was the reason why the rich man did not enter God's kingdom.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for repent is 'nacham' which means 'to be eased or comforted'. We can understand from the Hebrew word that the consequence or the fruit of repentance is to be eased or comforted!

In the New Testament the Greek term used for 'repentance' is 'metanoia'. When we try to understand repentance by associating this word with 'nacham' we can comprehend what true repentance is.

A change of mind and heart! Transformation occurring in one's mind! More than that, it is attaining a new mind, attaining a new heart.

Not merely that, but we acquire a great sense of rest and comfort. Our hearts receive great joy!

Peace reigns where there was no peace! Calmness and tranquillity prevail where there was no calmness previously! Those who were trembling with rage becomes peaceful and quiet! Those who were slaves to evil habits now attain good habits. The cruel hearted becomes gentle, kind and compassionate. Love brought about where there was previously no love!

Men who lived in wickedness, cruelty, vengeance, immorality, adultery and disloyalty change to a life filled with calmness, holiness and the warmth of love. This is repentance.

There may not be any external obvious sinful habits in the lives of many of us. We might not have committed any obvious sins such as alcoholism, prostitution, adultery, murder, theft or any other illegal actions.

However, in our hearts we bear resentments and vengeance. Our hearts harbour bitterness, animosity, malice, dislike and hatred towards others.

There might be discontent and complaints against others in the hearts of many of us. Displeasure and grudge against someone, ill feeling, disagreement and discord with others, and rivalry against some others. It would be a miracle to get rid of all these from one's heart. A unique experience which Jesus Christ alone could grant us! Many among you might have attained this change in your lives and in your characters.

The Lord does not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Will we be able to stand blameless before Christ who looks at our hearts?

“Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it” *Ezekiel 22 : 14*

When a man repents, his life ultimately attains peace. Jesus Christ is the one who provides lasting peace in a man's life. And that is through God's word.

I have read about a very reverend priest called George Matheson. People used to call him 'an ordained atheist'. He himself told a friend that “I found myself an absolute atheist”.

On one occasion he happened to hear God's word. He listened to the words without any preconceptions. God's word touched his heart. He was filled with remorse that he wasted his youth as an atheist. He regretted having lived a life without any morals or ethical principles and integrity. He realized that he wasted his life and surrendered his life to God. He obtained a state of true repentance.

Later on he wrote a very beautiful hymn;

O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe, That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Love that will not let me go - A Love that embraces me and will not let me go. A love that never leaves me!

I rest my weary soul in Thee - Let me submit my exhausted and fatigued mind to rest in that divine love. Let my weary soul rest in God's love in which I abandon myself with all my frailty.

I give Thee back the life I own – I give back my own life to You. Oh heavenly and marvellous love, I surrender my

life to You!

That in the ocean depths its flow, may richer, fuller be
– May my life continue to flow in the depths of the endless
ocean of Your steadfast love to become more meaningful
and fulfilling.

Let that river of God's loyal and unfailing love soothe
our lives.

You can see that love on the cross. Most loyal and
true love that could be seen only on the cross. The
heavenly love in the sacrificial death on the cross. Most
divine love manifested in the blood and water, that gushed
forth from the pierced heart of Jesus Christ!

Than baliyaal paapikale
Rakshichoru daiva sutha
Nin baliyalen kashtathamayichen
Novozhikkaname.
Gogulthayil than maarvu thurannoruthamane
Daaham neekkittozhukiya neeraal chorayathaalum.

(Oh! Son of God who redeemed sinners with your
sacrifice, please ease my pains and sufferings with your
sacrifice. Oh! Noble one who opened your heart at
Golgotha, quench my thirst with the Blood and Water
flowing from your heart.)

The most Holy Blood flowing out of the bleeding
wounds of Jesus Christ on Golgotha would quench my
innate thirst. It would efface all my suffering. It would
eliminate my agonies and take away my pains. Oh! Let me
be transformed and my thirst quenched by the Holy Blood
and Water flowing from the wounds of the crucified Jesus
Christ, the King of Kings! Let my life be altered! Let me
experience the divine healing of repentance. Let the
family life be blessed! Let unity and peace, prevail and
flourish, and the hearts be radiant with the warmth of love!



Chapter 11

“The time has come,” He said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”
Mark 1:15

Repenting and believing the good news. Surrendering one's heart to God. This is true repentance. Setting apart one's life for the Lord - this is repentance! Getting rid of sins hidden in our hearts - this is repentance! A change of attitudes and perspectives that we uphold and nurture in our hearts - this is repentance! Transformation of one's mind, a change and metamorphosis of one's heart! Genuine repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.

We find ourselves amidst all sorts of troubled people. Many face adversities, many hearts are distressed and depressed about the trials in life. There are people who explode with rage. There are some who make the lives of family members miserable by their actions, some who are insolent towards their parents.

There are youngsters who dishonour parents and treat them with contempt and disrespect. Some of them go even a step further by hurting them emotionally and physically. There are men who assault their wives. There are women who are disloyal to their husbands and treat them with hatred and contempt. There are wives who abandon their husbands and vice versa.

There are plenty of families and individuals encountering crisis and deepest despair; those who are leading broken lives. However, where there is

repentance, heavenly peace will prevail! The fruit of repentance would be bliss and joy!

During the journeys of Apostle Paul, Philippi was his first stop in Europe. In a dream, Paul saw a man from Macedonia in Greece pleading with him, saying “come over to Macedonia and help us”. His journey to Europe was in response to this call. While in Europe, St. Paul also visited Athens in Greece. In his sermon to the Athenians, he talks about repentance of all people. This famous quote is about God's plan for the repentance of all people.

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”
Acts 17 : 30

Repentance of all people, everywhere. God does not take notice of and overlooks the times of ignorance. We all have times of ignorance, occasions when we have gone off the path and continued our wayward journey.

Many among us have ruined our own lives in one way or the other. Some of us were immersed in pointless customs, some of us were trapped in following futile traditions, yet others were entangled in superstitious and false beliefs. Lives damaged and shattered by various unthoughtful acts – those who wasted their lives for injustice and wickedness; those who spent their money for heinous deeds, those who misused their body and health for immorality!

In our earlier lives, how many people might be hurt by our words and deeds? How many good hearted people might be saddened and wounded by our actions? Haven't we created a turbulent and agitated atmosphere in our own homes by our angry and outrageous behaviour?

In spite of all this, when Jesus Christ comes into our hearts everything becomes peaceful and calm. When Christ comes into our hearts, anger and disharmony will

be driven out of our lives; unity and harmony will prevail in our homes; happiness will invade our hearts; cruelty, deceit and crooked attitudes will disappear from our hearts, and the tendency for thefts and robbery will escape from our lives.

The Scripture asks us to produce fruits that are consistent with repentance.

“I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”

Acts 26 : 20

“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.”

Luke 3 : 8 (KJV)

We must be able to experience the fruits of repentance in our practical lives.

Jesus Christ has changed the lives of many. It is not a fellowship that brings about this change. It is not an individual who instigates repentance in a person. This change is brought about exclusively by Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ can bring about a change in mind and heart.

There is no need to change one's Christian denomination. Nor is there any need to change the community or the church. It is the personality that must change; it is human heart that should undergo a change!

While reading these words keep asking God; 'Oh Lord, You can change my character. I roar like a lion trembling with rage, but make me as calm as a lamb. Oh most merciful Lord, You are able to make my life tranquil and gentle, and cast away my pride and arrogance. Oh Lord, please change my behaviour and my whole nature'.

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

Acts 17 : 30

When St. Paul went to Athens, he could see statues of gods and demigods everywhere - in niches and on

pedestals, in temples and on street corners. Paul must have been appalled as he looked upon all this idolatry, for we read that;

"His spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols". Acts 17: 16

Wherever Paul turned, he saw statues, temples, and shrines. He saw temples and statues in the name of Greek Gods – Hercules, Apollo, Mars and the Goddess Celine.

Areopagus or the Hill of Ares functioned as court of justice in ancient Athens. While in Areopagus, in the shadow of the Acropolis and among the statues of deities, Apostle Paul discovered one altar dedicated to the 'unknown God'. A statue dedicated to God unknown!

On seeing this, Apostle Paul turned to his task of preaching. When he started preaching, some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. Athena being the city of intellectuals, the philosophers from both sides started arguing over, what Paul spoke about.

The Epicureans were people who thought that the ultimate goal in life is to have happiness. The goal of Epicureanism is pleasure achieved through the removal of physical pain and mental anxiety. Their philosophy revolves around attaining happiness and pleasure.

Unlike the Epicureans who hold pleasure paramount, the Stoics grant the highest importance to attain wisdom. They believed that virtue and wisdom are the abilities necessary to achieve satisfaction. For them wisdom is the goal, not pleasure. The main theme of stoic philosophy is to attain the heights of true knowledge, and the moral and intellectual perfection.

When these philosophers heard the Apostle's words, they reached a conclusion that he is a 'loud mouth' and a babbler.

"So he reasoned in the synagogue with both

Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean."

Acts 17: 17-20

When they said this, Apostle Paul stood up in the meeting of Areopagus and spoke to them. The Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing, but talking about and listening to the latest ideas. They were trying to find, if they could gain any new knowledge from Paul.

He quoted from the verses of their own poets and talked to them. The God whom you refer to as the unknown God; he is in fact Jesus Christ who once lived on this earth and was crucified.

People of Athens - you are religious people in every way, you are very keen to lead a prosperous and flourishing life. The God whom you serve as the 'unknown God' is not really unknown. He is Jesus Christ who is still alive.

Christ can save you. He will give you repentance and lead you to salvation. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

Let that voice of the Holy Spirit, which reverberated in the hills of Areopagus in Athena ages ago, echo in your

ears now. Let that divine sound resound inside the walls of your heart!

Oh Lord, there were innumerable occasions of ignorance in my life. I lived a life of slavery to sins. Things that should never have happened has taken place in my life. I wandered through ways I should not have gone. I gave in to many indecent and shameful deeds. I was an addict of many bad habits.

Lord, my soul is in a state of deepest darkness today. Sins have captivated my life. Oh Lord, please have pity on me.

I believe that You were tied up and restrained on the cross to release me from the bondage of my sins. Lord, I believe that You can undo the bondages of my sins; that You can change my anger and my vengeful nature; that You can change my immoral life.

Please bless me by coming into my life today. Oh Lord, I once told You that I have repented. I once declared that I have surrendered my life to You. However, I admit today that a complete and thorough dedication has not happened yet in my life. My heart is not yet fully sanctified.

There are still many bondages in my heart. The evil one has tied me up under his yoke. I am encircled by many dreadful habits. I am entangled in problems that cannot be easily solved. My life is agitated and disturbed. I am engulfed by depression. Oh my owner, I am coming to You pleading for Your mercy.

Oh my saviour, who died on the cross for me, please wash me with the most Holy Blood shed on the cross. Please cleanse me with a drop of the precious Holy Blood. Jesus, from today I would live as a new being. Oh Lord, from today I would be a new creation. From today, I would lead a life pleasing to You.



Chapter 12

“He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

“Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

“No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' “He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” Luke 16:27-31

The reasons for the rich man ending up in the place of torment were:

One – He did not believe

Two – He did not repent

To repent there should be faith in God, faith in God's profound love and faith in the marvellous deeds of God. One should have a steadfast faith in the efforts and mysterious ways through which God attempts to redeem men. It is impossible to repent without having faith. And without true repentance one cannot enter the kingdom of God.

When the Pharisee, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the

signs You are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
John 3: 3

Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, did not understand what Jesus meant by these words. Nicodemus a learned man, recognised that Jesus was sent by God. He was also a man of faith. However, he was not able to comprehend when Jesus said "Unless a person is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Nicodemus could not understand. He said: “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”
John 3: 6

There is a distinction between fleshly birth and spiritual birth. Fleshly birth is birth involving body. One is born as a son or daughter of a father and mother. This is fleshly birth. However, one's spirit should undergo a spiritual birth as well. There should be repentance. There should be a radical transformation of heart!

The rich man mentioned in chapter sixteen of Luke's Gospel did not had repentance. Thus he ended up in the place of torment.

How can one know if there is repentance?

In the Acts of Apostles chapter 26, we can read a speech given by Apostle Paul. This remarkable speech before King Agrippa and Festus, the Roman governor, is one of the most heart touching parts of the Bible.

In his speech Apostle Paul says:

“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.”

Acts 26 :19 - 20

There are three main subjects in his speech.

One: Turn to God

Two: Repent

Three: Perform deeds fitting and appropriate for repentance

How can you determine true repentance? Repentance is proven by the fruits and deeds befitting repentance.

Listen to what John, the Baptist, had said about this:

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.” *Luke 3 : 7 - 8*

You might have claims and can boast about your noble heritage and ancestry. However, to lead a life free from damage and destruction, there should be deeds befitting repentance. One must bear fruits befitting true repentance. Prove by the way you live that, you have repented for your sins and turned to God.

Indeed the same thing was told by Jesus in his first sermon – the 'Sermon on the mount' found in the Gospel

of St. Matthew.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” *Matthew 7 : 15*

There is no change inwardly, but outwardly there are all the expressions and acts. Referred to as 'Prophet' - but in reality a false prophet! Wearing the costume of a sheep, but in reality there is a wolf hiding inside.

“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

Matthew 7 : 16 - 20

By their fruits you will know the tree. Are you bearing fruit worthy of repentance? As is the tree, so is its fruit; if the tree is good, it will bring forth good fruit. A good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not produce good fruit.

Evaluate the fruits you bear. Do they befit a repented person? Am I a born again person? Do I have an experience of spiritual rebirth? Have I repented? Will I reach God's Kingdom if I die today?

Repentance is a prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God. Do I have repentance? Am I bearing fruits worthy of repentance? What indeed are the fruits fit for repentance?

“Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” Every

good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. Am I bearing good fruit? Does my character bring forth argument, stubbornness, malice and dispute? Am I an angry, adamant, troublesome, bad tempered and a hostile person? Do I have a quarrelsome and revengeful personality? Do I possess an outrageous and cynical character?

Have I given due respect to my parents and have I been fully obedient to them? Am I wasting my life by idling away and in procrastination? Am I obsessed by cinemas, movies and involved in reckless deeds?

Do I indulge in smoking, alcoholism and drugs? Am I addicted to pornography? Is my life entangled in the vulgarity and filthiness of the world of internet chatting and Facebook friendships? Do I possess a cruel and vicious attitude? A wicked heart? Is my heart straight-forward? Am I artificial, crooked, treacherous, dishonest, deceptive and cunning?

Do I cheat and betray others? How pure is each and every part of my body? Am I liar? Do I ridicule or treat others with contempt? Am I someone who spreads rumours and malice about others?

Have I hurt anyone by my words or deeds? Have my actions traumatized or wounded anyone's feelings? Have I stolen anybody's possessions? Have I ever cheated or deceived by forging false accounts?

Have I used my body for immorality or abuse? Was my money spent for misdeeds or felony? Have I acquired anything illegally? Have I ever given up the God - given health and vigour, for sins and misdeeds?

If so, you are producing fruits that are worthless and inappropriate. The Scripture says:

“Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.” Hebrews 6: 7- 8

There is no lack of rain; it rains often. Nature blesses the earth abundantly with timely rain. Despite this, earth bears thorns and thistles. God assigns each one of us different missions. Even after receiving the blessing from God; one bears thorns and briars. As a consequence the misery of being tortured in flames of hell awaits. In the end they would be burned.

Therefore, reform your mind. Get cleansed by the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ. Confess your sins and give up sinning. Lead a renewed life. Thus prepare for welcoming Christ when He comes again. Attain eternal bliss!



Chapter 13

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Galatians 5 : 19 - 24

There are fruits of the spirit and fruits of the flesh. We ought to bear fruits befitting repentance.

The tree can be known by the fruit it bears. Outwardly we could be very polite and sweet talking. Prophet Isaiah has recorded:

“These people come near to Me with their mouth and honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.”

Isaiah 29 : 13

Here, Prophet Isaiah has foretold about worldly people, who think of themselves as the most pious and devout. They have praise on their lips; there is worship on their lips, there is 'Praise the Lord' and 'Hallelujah' on their

lips. Despite all these, there is malice and greed in their hearts. Their lives bring forth fruits of the flesh. Yet they maintain an outward appearance of bearing spiritual fruits.

Apostle Paul refers to such people as “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (2Timothy 3 : 5). They act as religious, but they reject the power that could make them godly.

Their actions and attire are of the most godly men – outward appearance is of a most devout and pious person! They perform very long prayers, they observe fasting, religious rites and rituals, and strictly follow all religious customs. They are content and satisfied with their deeds. They behave as if they are the most religious, though their hearts are filled with avarice, jealousy, selfishness, arrogance, anger and resentment. They have a nature that doesn't submit to anyone and a character that is unable to give due respect to others. Despite all these, they make sure that they habitually recite all prayers and follow all the religious rituals. Their mask of godliness, piety and devotion hides their polluted hearts.

Very good prayer meetings, excellent Bible studies, Sunday schools, Gospel messages, missionary works – there is no shortage for these nowadays. However, our hearts are full of greed and avarice.

Those who produce fruits of the flesh are those, who continue to produce the fruits of the old human nature. The Scripture says that such people will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

St. Paul refers to this old human nature as flesh.

The old human nature has anger and dispute. The old human nature has all worldly lusts; most filthy and ignoble intentions; despicable and shameful longings. The old

human nature is full of selfishness and dishonesty. There is greed and love of money. The old human nature demands recognition and respect from others and yearns for attention and consideration from other people. There is jealousy and envy, and bodily desires and cravings. Crucifying the old human nature and the rising of a new man is rebirth or the experience of being born again. When one attains this born again experience, they start to bear fruits of the spirit. Then, harmony will prevail in the place of disharmony and discord. Husband and wife becomes one mind. Parents and children becomes one heart.

There will be no conflicts or rivalry; nor any antagonistic clashes, strife or treachery. Just pure solidarity, harmony, unity, love and amity!

This is the unique position of a repented person. Jesus Christ would come into his heart. Christ would take over the control of everything. The control of every single organ in his body would be in Jesus's hands.

Jesus bought me and paid His Holy Blood shed on the cross as my cost. Henceforth I have no rights over me. The very first step of dedication and a born again experience is the acceptance and recognition that Jesus Christ has full control and authority over me and over everything that belong to me. Then one starts to bear forth fruits of the spirit. Consequently I would only look where Jesus would look. I would look only as Jesus would look. This is self-discipline.

My hands would do only what Jesus would do. My hands would not do anything that He wouldn't. I would say only what Jesus would say. My tongue would not say a word that Jesus would hesitate to say.

My tongue would taste only what Jesus would taste. I would pour into my mouth only things that Jesus would drink. I have given my tongue to Him and He bought it with

the price of His Holy Blood. Not just my tongue alone but He bought all the parts of my body with His Holy Blood.

Apostle Paul says: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies."

1 Corinthians 6 : 19

Christ bought my intellect and brain for a price. I cannot think of anything that is undesirable. My thoughts are now in Christ's hands. I should not be thinking unwanted thoughts. I should not have any vulgar and repulsive desires. Nor should I harbour hatred and revenge towards others. I must not harbour malice or animosity to any-one!

My tongue is in the hands of Christ. My tongue has now become the tongue of Christ. Henceforth this tongue would be reserved exclusively for praising Jesus, giving testimony for Jesus and to say just what is pleasing to God. Each part of my body is now Christ's, as Christ bought it. Now it belongs to Christ.

Do you have this assurance? Have you given everything to Christ's hands? If you have, he would receive it. He would not ask for it or pressurise you to get it from you.

"I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs."

Psalm 12 : 5 (ESV)

If you give, He would take it.

The young boy gave, a small food pack to Jesus with trembling hands! His hands were shivering. This incident happened in the hill sides of Bethsaida. A crowd of more than five thousand sat in rows. These people had been starving as they had not eaten for the past three days.

They had forgotten hunger and thirst, when they were listening to Jesus.

Jesus called his disciples to Him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way"

Mark 8 : 1 - 4

His disciples looked at each other. Questions welled up in their minds - Feed them? What did Jesus say? How can we feed them? Where would we give it from? Do we have anything with us to give? They had nothing! Philip, who was a native of Bethsaida, was very concerned – Jesus came to my native place and said this, yet I do not have anything to give!

A small lad heard this conversation. He thought for a moment. I have five loaves of bread and two small fishes in my bag. My mother packed it for me, when she sent me off. While I was listening to Jesus, I forgot about this food and by now it might have gone stale. Would Jesus accept this, if I give it to Him? Even if He accepts this, would this be adequate for anything? He took out the bag of food and then reluctantly held it back while looking at the face of Jesus.

Andrew saw these actions and realised that the boy have a desire to give Jesus something. He took the boy to Jesus and told Him; 'this boy has five loaves of bread and two small fishes. He looks very willing to part with them and give it to you. Do you think this will be of any use?'

Jesus held out his hand.

Jesus accepts from those, whoever gives willingly. Try giving your insignificant life to Him. I gave my life to Jesus when I was merely seventeen years old. He accepted and took over my life.

The boy proffered the bag of food to Jesus. Jesus held out His hand and got it from Him. He opened the bag. He broke the loaf of bread and fish into pieces, glorified and then blessed it.

The disciples collected it from His hands.

The crowd had been sitting in rows. The disciples then served the food to the hungry people. Not once, not twice, but they served it three times.

They served the food till all the people had enough to eat and were satisfied. Jesus asked them to collect the left over bread. The left over bread was collected in baskets. There was enough to fill twelve baskets.

How did this happen? Not by magic! If almighty God's hand touches, there is abundance.

Dear friend, try giving generously. You would see it increasing. Debts would be repaid. Diseases and sickness would be cured, your intellect would become brighter and your life would prosper.

You could see everything changing for the better. Miracles would happen. Jesus received the loaves, gave thanks, and blessed it and then the disciples distributed. The left-over was enough to fill twelve baskets.

I often visualize, in my imagination, a scene unfolding that evening.

It is a conversation between a father and mother at a house on the hillside of Bethsaida. The mother is anxious; it is three days since their son had left, there is no news from him at all.

The father comforts her, asking her to be quiet.

The mother continues; "I gave our son just five loaves of bread and two small fishes."

The husband says, "You need not worry. While listening to the words of Jesus, he will not feel hunger or

thirst.”

Just then, they catch a glimpse of their son walking energetically towards them. He doesn't look tired or fatigued. His face glowed with happiness and he was smiling.

Then they saw twelve men following him. They had baskets of food on their heads – loaves of bread and fishes. And behind them all, they saw Jesus accompanying with a smile on His face.

Jesus lifted his hands towards the father and mother, and said: “In this hillside town of Bethsaida, your family is blessed. You are blessed. Your son is also blessed. Your son gave what he had to me. That appeased the hunger of five thousand people. You are blessed and fortunate”. Jesus blessed them all.

The parents along with their son knelt at the feet of Jesus and so did his disciples. All of them jointly praised Jesus. Why was there a celebration of praise at Bethsaida?

Because the young boy gave what he had with him to Jesus!

Dear men of God who read these words, are you willing to give what you have to Jesus? There is not even five loaves of bread or two small fishes. Lord, I merely have – a very short life, the left over from what I have ruined. Just a brief life completely wrecked by me and destroyed by my sins.

O Lord, I surrender my life into your hands today. Please bless me and accept me. Please sanctify me. Keep your most blessed hand on me. Oh my Lord, please use me according to your will and your purpose.



Chapter 14

“No, Father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” Luke 16 : 30 - 31

The rich man died and was buried. He is suffering in the Hades. Lazarus also died. But the angels took him to paradise. They carried him to the ranks of Holy men.

The rich man could not enter the heavenly kingdom where Lazarus was dwelling. We had been thinking about the reasons why he could not.

The rich man had not repented. Hence Father Abraham replied to him,

“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”
Luke 16 : 29

The rich man pleads with Father Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to give a testimony so that they do not end up in this place of ordeal and anguish like him. But Father Abraham refused, and told him that this should not happen by sending dead Lazarus. They have Moses and other Prophets on earth. Let them listen to the words of the prophets. Let them take notice of the Word of God spoken through the men of God. And thus they should come to a repentance. This was what Father Abraham suggested.

Yet the rich man continued, "That is not the case, Father Abraham. My five brothers would not repent by hearing the words of prophets in this world."

"No, Father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."

Luke 16 : 30

For them to repent, a dead person who has risen must go and give them a testimony.

He wants Lazarus to go and let his brothers know about the state of fiery torment he is currently in and that Lazarus had reached the land of holy eternal peace. Lazarus could tell them about what he directly saw and experienced after death.

The rich man continued: "But Father Abraham, if someone from the dead is sent to them, then they would surely repent of their sins and turn to God". They would only repent if they witness a great miracle like that. A dead man rising and convincing them about what he experienced in his own words, would be the only way that could bring them into repentance.

But Abraham said, "If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead."

To repent and to turn to Jesus is something that must definitely happen in one's life.

To live a life that pleases God in every way should become your daily experience. God must be pleased with your public life as well as your personal and secret life. You have to constantly check yourself to see if there is any sin left in you or coming back to you, that Satan has a claim on.

Without these it would be meaningless to merely say that I am a repented person. It would be useless to talk about repentance just for the sake of it.

Man, due to his own nature is inclined to do evil and sin. Even when there are no outward deeds of sin, the sinful nature stays within. Occasionally it escapes as words, sometimes it would be reflected in our acts and behaviour. Sinful nature dwells in our blood despite the fact that we do not commit any sins outwardly.

Our Lord talks about this sinful nature in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter Seven. Sin proceeds from within and is hidden in the hearts of men, even if it is not expressed through words or deeds. It is what emanates from our defiled and corrupt hearts that makes us unholy.

“Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” Mark 7: 15

When we have an impure heart inside, whatever emanates from it is unholy. It is what comes forth from inside that defiles a man.

“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come - sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” Mark 7:20-23, Matthew 15:11, 18-20

When a person starts to live a life pleasing to God, this would bring a change in his values and behaviour. From where impure passions came forth, from where immoral thoughts transpired, from where jealousy and hatred ensued, now love comes forth. Isn't it a miracle that

a heart that was full of enmity, bitterness, envy and revenge is now brimming with nothing but love?

This is something that could be made feasible in our daily lives. Let us sincerely aspire in our hearts – Lord I have a past life of sinful nature. But now, please grant me the opportunity to bear fruits of the spirit. When we start praying sincerely for this, we are sure to receive this from Him.

'Hallelujah', 'Praise the Lord' and 'Glory to God' are the spontaneous expressions of joy, thanksgiving and worship towards God, when one is set free from the nature of sin. It would be meaningless to say 'Praise' or 'Praise to God' without changing your sinful ways. One could recite "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord" with his lips even while living in sin. Worshipping God could be either from the lips or from the depths of the heart. Even though many of the religious observances, rituals and rites are meaningful, most people just perform them outwardly without realising or recognising the importance or the true significance of them. For many people, devotion to God still ends with the external acts of piety.

There have been changes in some aspects. I recently read about the inhabitants of Santhal Ashram. They were people who had dedicated themselves to God, to serve Christ and to work for Christ.

An incident happened at the Ashram once. People who were responsible for the cleaning duties – those who used to clean the surroundings and cattle sheds took a week's leave. According to the rules of the Ashram, the performance of these duties then falls on the inhabitants of the Ashram. The inhabitants of the Ashram are very religious, devout and pious and have come from different

walks of life and from different situations. They took turns in doing the Ashram chores. They themselves did the sweeping, washing of the dishes and the cleaning of the cattle sheds.

But a particular high caste lady who was from a well off family was hesitant to do these chores at the Ashram. Then, Dr. Stanley Jones, a Methodist Christian missionary asked her - "Aren't you converted, then why are you hesitant to do these? Haven't you taken a vow in life to do such things?"

The lady replied politely, "I have not converted to that extent!" The reply was not meant to be confrontational; it was a polite reply. I have not converted to that level. There is repentance. There is an eagerness for Christ and an eagerness to work for Christ. But the willingness to come down to the level of a servant and to endure the hardships at that level was still lacking!

That lady who claimed to be a servant of God did not bear in mind that all are alike before God, that no one is greater or smaller, that there isn't a caste separation as higher caste or lower caste and that she was supposed to perform the duties just as others did it.

In true repentance there are no questions. There would be no reluctance to do any job. An attitude to humble and lower oneself to the level of Christ for the sake of Christ's name – this is repentance. Repentance should not be merely in words, but must be in deeds.

The rich man did not repent. Nor did his five brothers. As a consequence, irrespective of their merits, good deeds, acts of charity and prayers, they would not reach the kingdom of God. And indeed they did not. They went to Hades, the place of suffering.

Let the 'Sun of Justice', Jesus Christ, shine in the darkness of our hearts and draw us to that radiant glory. Let Jesus be born into our wasted hearts. Oh, what an experience it would be, if Jesus were to be born in our hearts! It is an indescribable and unfathomable sensation. Day by day we would start to experience the love, joy, happiness and peace as a result of Jesus dwelling in our hearts.

It is not that there wouldn't be any sufferings or hardships, no misery or grief, no diseases or pains in one's life. Not that there are no more troubles, obstacles or problems. In spite of all these one could experience the comfort and relief that Jesus alone could provide. One could experience His presence in the midst of all these.

Oh Lord, I am a sinful person, what a marvel it is for the most Holy Lord to be born in my heart! It is a miracle that you are dwelling in my heart.

The more you know, the more humble and modest you would be. The more humble and modest you become the more you can proclaim about God's honour and glory. That is praise! That is adoration and worship!

A young man by the name Francis Thompson lived in Northern England during the nineteenth century. His father was a doctor and he wanted Francis to enter the medical school, which he did. As a young boy, he attended a Catholic school in Northern England and it was thought that he might pursue the priesthood, but instead he went to study medicine.

While at the medical school, he stooped down into an appalling and dreadful life. He became a drunkard, started using drugs and begged for his subsistence. Gradually his health declined and he was very frail at the

height of his youth. He looked very rough, uncivilized and ragged like a beggar. He went down into the mires of life and led a pathetic life. He ended up homeless and wandered on the streets of London like an insane person.

He had a love for literature and wrote poems right from the very young age. He used to write poems once in a while, but never read or referred to them later. Once while spending his night in front of a shop-veranda, he thought about his past life and jotted down some lines before he slept.

Wilfred Meynell, an editor of a Catholic literary magazine happened to see this soiled manuscript. When Meynell read them he wanted to find the author and started looking for him in all possible places. With some time and effort Meynell located Francis Thompson in the streets of London. Meynell welcomed Thompson to his own house.

Meynell and his wife spoke to Thompson and invited him to stay with them. They took care of him and prayed for him. They helped the poet to get back on his feet and to get rid of his drinking and drug habits. They told him about Jesus and this led to his repentance. Thompson was brought back into a normal life by their constant care, affection and persistent prayers. He accepted Christ as his saviour.

After this he wrote the famous poem, 'The Hound of Heaven.' The poem describes how Jesus Christ came after him like a hound and enticed him, and how the wandering soul finally surrendered to God's love.

Jesus Christ is coming near you now and pleading to take possession of you. Jesus Christ is coming near you and knocking – 'Dear son, let me rest my head in your

heart. Daughter, let me convert you so that you start bearing fruits of the spirit.'

'Let me bring forth prosperity to your family – let me make your life most rewarding and fortunate – let me give you joyful good times.'

Most merciful and gracious Lord is calling you with love and talking to you. 'If you are willing to open your heart for me, I would live in your heart. I bowed my head on the cross so that I could live in your heart. I gave up my life on the cross to come into your heart. I suffered all the bitterness and agony of dying on the cross to sanctify you and to make you bear fruits of the spirit'.

Would you surrender yourself? Right now, could you make a promise to Jesus? Oh Lord, from this moment onwards, I will start bearing fruits of the spirit. Lord, please come into my heart and reign over my heart – from this moment, I will lead a blessed life. Lord, please take possession of me.



Chapter 15

“He said to him, if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” Luke 16 : 31

A strong belief is needed to bring about repentance. Repentance cannot be attained without firm conviction. In the incident that Jesus mentioned above, the rich man had no repentance, nor did he believe in God, in the Kingdom for God or the Spirit of God. He had no belief in the need of a true repentance in a man's life. He had no conviction about a never ending hellish torment.

He never contemplated about what would happen after death or that he could end up in the place of everlasting torment. He was not a believer. Only true belief can lead one to repentance. The lack of belief is the reason why many people think about suicide. A life full of disappointments and hopelessness, a life immersed in sorrows and anguish, a life of suffering, afflictions, anxieties and sadness! We talk about tension, worries and cares, frustration and stress. Why do these occur? Why does human mind agonize and grieve?

Doesn't every man have his own share of sorrows? Who on earth doesn't have anxieties and worries? Each one has secret sorrows which the world knows not. For some people it is more, for some less. There will be miseries in life. Life on its own is full of suffering.

Look at this meaningful poem sung by the Hindi poetess Subadrakumari Chauhan:

शिशु ने दुनिया में आकर
रो रो कर हँसना सीखा
गिर गिर कर चलना सीखा

(A child once born, cries and cries before learning to laugh, falls and falls before learning to walk.)

We learn to laugh through crying and crying! Isn't that true? There is inevitably sorrows and tears in one's life. The proof of a life being born into earth itself is a piercing cry.

Crying is the first sound the baby makes when entering this world. A baby's cry is a very positive sign of a healthy life. Isn't the whole life filled with cries? Aren't we all going forward through tears? Sorrow and agonies one after another. Lost and disappearing hopes. Shattered dreams. All the optimism and confidence gone. Cannot see a way forward in the enveloping gloom. Times of unbearable and devastating trials. Life's crisis becomes worse day by day. Every single door seems to be closed. Feeling totally depressed and desolate!

One day a young man set off from his house. This happened in 1772. His mind was restless that night. When he reached the road in front of his house, he realised that it was very foggy. The fog was not that heavy when he started, but now it was dense. If he walks for fifteen minutes he should reach the banks of the river Thames in London. But the fog was getting denser.

He spotted a horse carriage nearby and asked the driver if he could take him to the banks of Thames. The driver agreed hoping that the fog would disappear soon.

The horse carriage went forward. The streets were familiar to both the driver and the young man. However, because of the dense fog they couldn't go far. Time and again they lost the way. The horse carriage wandered

through various streets for about an hour and a half. They could not reach their destination - the Thames river bank! In the end, the driver told the young man that there was no point in going any further as he had completely lost his way. The young man was very weary and decided not to go any further and got off the carriage.

He kept on trying to find his way in the dense fog. He had no clue where he was and was unable to find the way. The fog became so dense that he could not see where to put his next foot down. He lurched his way forward and then something touched his hands. He felt it with his hands and could comprehend that it was the statue of a horse. He suddenly recollected that the horse statue was just the one on the road in front of his house. His footsteps had brought him back to his own front door!

Thankfully he walked into his house, entered his room, fell on his knees and started crying. "Oh! Jesus, I was fleeing away from You, but You brought me back here itself. I was desperate and had decided to end my life tonight by jumping into the river Thames without anyone knowing about it. I was totally depressed with my life and wanted to commit suicide. Oh God, You did not allow me to do that!"

"What a marvellous situation! Isn't this in fact God's love? Isn't this God's overflowing mercy? You did not let me die like that. I might have gone near the banks of Thames in the horse carriage. But I could not recognise or locate where I was and You brought me back here. My Lord, I cannot understand this fully!"

This young man was on his knees and could not control his tears. He started to write amidst the tears. It came out as a song first, which he sang and then he wrote it down.

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm."

To perform His miracles and marvels God adopts mysterious and enigmatic ways! God walks on the sea and rides over the tempest.

The young man later on became the famous poet William Cowper. This is the story behind this well-known poem by William Cowper.

Many who are depressed and hopeless might be reading these words. How many of you, burdened by life's troubles are reading this now? Who among you, troubled and weighed down by the miseries of life are reading these words?

Some among you might have nothing to look forward to in life and have thought about giving up your lives. Some among you might have attempted to commit suicide. Some of you might have tried several ways to end your lives. Aren't there some who are disappointed in having failed in their various attempts to commit suicide?

You are reading these words at this moment solely because God loves you. It is just because Jesus Christ cares for you. God is calling you by your name! Do not be hopeless and weary. God is going to perform His miracles in mysterious ways. He is going to work wonders through unknown ways. Even in our darkest moments, God watches over us.

Those of you who are downhearted and hopeless, and who lament and weep that everything is against me, God is coming near you. The ever living God is riding on the waves of the oceans and tempests, and is coming to save you, to turn everything in your favour. God might be coming to you through the dense fog or he might be

coming to you riding on the waves of the ocean.

God might be walking towards you over whirlwinds and storms. Who knows? Nevertheless, God works!

Please do believe. There is a Christ who loves you. There is a Christ who knows and cares for you personally. He perceives your heart's aches and pains. He sees your pain and agony. His hands, pierced by nails reaches out towards you, to wipe off the tears from your eyes. His Holy hands are extended towards you to blot out your pains.

Christ, who is still living, is coming near you now. When talking about repentance and belief, even children of God have misconceptions and misunderstanding. Everyone has his own viewpoints and outlook about true repentance and belief.

There is a beautiful narrative.

Once the Sun and the Moon had a disagreement which led to an argument. The dispute worsened as both sides were adamant about their reasons.

The Sun said: "The leaves of all trees on this earth are green in colour."

The Moon said: "I totally disagree. Leaves are not green at all. They are silver in colour."

The Sun continued: "Don't I know that they are indeed green in colour?"

He said: "All the people on earth constantly move about. They are always doing something. They are in relentless motion."

The Moon answered: "No that is wrong as well. People on earth are all sleeping."

The Sun responded: "It is so noisy on earth! What a clamour and commotion!"

The Moon retorted: "That is wrong as well. It is not noisy at all, instead it is very quiet there. It is silent on earth with barely any movement!"

The argument continued. By this time someone came rushing to the scene hearing all the agitation going on. It was the Wind.

The Wind asked: "What is the matter here? Why are you arguing? Seems like this has been going on for a while".

The Sun replied: "Moon doesn't understand what I say. Aren't leaves on earth green? Isn't the earth a bustling and noisy place? People on the earth constantly move about, don't they?"

The Moon was not ready to give up. He said: "All the leaves on trees on the earth are silver. People on the earth are sleeping. There is no noise at all."

The Wind said to them. "Both of you are right in what you say. However, the Sun said of only just one half – the day. What the Moon said is also right. He spoke about the one half he saw – the night. But I, the wind see both day and night."

"At night men are sleeping. So the Moon is right about that aspect. At night people do not move about. Everything is still and silent. As Moon light hit the leaves they turn silver and glimmer at night. What the Sun said is also true. During the day, the leaves are green. People are in constant movement. There is hustling and bustling and great commotion during the day. Thus the Sun is also right about what he said."

"However if the sky turns grey and cloudy, then the leaves are neither green nor silver. They turn dark. The leaves appear as if they were black in colour. So what both of you said is partly correct." The wind continues, "I see

everything all the time!”

The wind symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Men think in different ways and different angles. Their perspectives and mind-sets are varied. Some people would like repentance to conform to their own view points. It is the same situation about belief and faith. Some would like it to comply with their own beliefs. They try to restrain it within the limits of certain notions and systems.

They wish to set boundaries and to contain them within certain frameworks, which seems to concur with their own opinions and viewpoints. This is how new beliefs, doctrines and new doctrinal philosophies came about. This is how new denominations and new sects began.

God, the Supreme Being, who exists independent of the universe, who is absolute, who transcends space and time, is all-knowing and can see everything. The Holy Spirit of God is aware of everything, sees everything and is omnipresent. The Holy Spirit strives to reveal the reality and the true nature of the partial truths that prevail around. This is done through the Holy Word of God. When we earnestly go through the Word of God, then we would perceive what true repentance is about.

There are people everywhere who nurture difference of opinions and prejudices. They follow diverse concepts and hold on firmly to their own rights and wrongs. Such people are not willing to recognise or respect other views or notions. Some are unwilling to see that in everything there could be partly true observations, half true know-hows and that there could be judgements that are only partly correct. Some lack the outlook and conviction that all things return to, gather around, and concentrate back on the living Christ, who is the centre and the focal point. Some have unstable and slippery mentalities, who

maintain certain philosophies, doctrines, advice and ideologies which are not Christ centred. We could find such people even in spiritual fields.

The Holy Spirit is the one who interprets and decodes what repentance and spiritual fullness are. An attitude that only my own view is fully correct and a feeling that everyone else is wrong is dangerous and unhealthy.

Oh God, grant the grace to everybody to see my Christ. Please open the eyes of everyone to see Jesus Christ, to discern the true meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, to figure out the real worth of the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ which He shed on the cross. This is the only thing we can pray for.

None of us are perfect.

Oh Lord, I am still ignorant of much; a multitude of things are unknown to me. Would the miniscule intellect of this insignificant man discern the mighty secrets of this spiritual orb?

Start moving ahead in compliance with the words of God's Holy Spirit.

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going."
John 3: 8

There are some who utter, 'How could I believe?' Yet others are perplexed and bewildered, when it comes to matters of faith and finds it difficult to believe.

Bend your knees at the Holy feet of Christ, in solitude, without anyone overhearing, without anyone observing and appeal to Christ: 'Oh Lord, please illuminate my intellect, it is obscured in dark shadows. Oh Lord, heed my prayer and grant me sensibility and consciousness'.

God would light up your intellect. He would illuminate the eyes of your soul. The spiritual world would be opened

up for you. Do not be alarmed even if you cannot comprehend anything.

Just remember one thing alone. There is an eternal immortal truth. A truth for all ages. It is the ever-loving Jesus Christ.

There is a place exposed by love, a place revealed by love. It is the cross raised on Golgotha. Love epitomized by Christ who died on that cross. That should be our destination. Do not look elsewhere nor turn towards any individuals. Do not let any fellowship behold your attention nor let any denomination grab your thoughts.

“Fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Hebrews 12 : 2 - 3

You would not be discouraged or hopeless, you would not feel pessimistic. Instead you would face all your miseries with a smile and you would go forward peacefully, when Jesus holds your hands. Jesus Christ would lead you on. He would wipe the tears from your eyes.

Jesus would expel all the pains and agonies of your heart. He would give you peace and serenity. Jesus would get rid of the sinful state of your life. He would give you repentance and faith. Christ would give you new experiences. You would be convinced that Christ has worked in you and that he is reigning in you!

Then, you would start praising him. That is when true worship begins. You would exalt that 'This divine liturgy is blessing, peace, sacrifice and praise'. Then you would start to comprehend the meaningful grandeur of the

verses “Render us fit to constantly proclaim and give praise, thanksgiving, glory, worship and never fading esteem to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever”.

You would then rise to the tradition of the forefathers who sang “Let me never stop praising, glorifying and adoring You, Oh Lord”. Then you would start praising God with your own tongue. That is when Heaven comes down into your hearts. Then the Lord of heaven would take over the helm of your life. Your life would start to flourish. That is when your life starts to be useful to many people.

Thus, start bearing fruits of the spirit. Submit yourselves to Jesus. Welcome Jesus into your hearts. Let us accept Jesus into our hearts. Make a promise to Him and surrender yourselves right now. Jesus, from today I am your possession. Let us pray.

Most merciful and ever living Lord, we praise You with a thankful heart as You have entered into our hearts to give us faith in our disbelief and to give us true repentance. We praise and glorify You as You have visited us, Your lowly and unworthy servants, because of Your ineffable and immeasurable mercy.

Oh Lord, please deliver us from satanic effects and evil. Please undo the bondages of illness. Please destroy the yokes of Satan and deliver us from his enslavement. Grant us peace and joy in our homes. Prepare us for Your second coming.



Chapter 16

People who have departed from this earth through death are still concerned about the loved ones, they left behind. Even if they are in the place of suffering, they do not wish their loved ones to end up in the same situation.

The rich man had realized very well that if his five brothers continued their current way of life, they would also reach this place of suffering. Without doubt they would end up in the same place. He recognized that his brothers did not had repentance.

The soul has the ability to comprehend things. Even after quitting the body it can still think, perceive and remember things, and is conscious of everything. It has memories of people on the earth. The soul is still aware of how the people left behind on earth are living. There is the pain that they continue to live a life without repentance.

The dead and the departed have the total conviction that if those living on the earth continue to live like they are, they would end up in eternal torture. No loss would be equal to the loss of not reaching the shores of eternal joy.

The dead could see the magnificence and splendour of the heavenly kingdom. Here the rich man could see Lazarus seated at the bosom of Father Abraham.

He is sorrowful and his heart is filled with remorse and despair that he has lost that fortune for ever. At the same time, in his heart he has a strong desire that none of his

beloved should come to the same ordeal.

Hence he says, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." Luke 16:27-28

The rich man having understood very well that the glory and joy that Lazarus is experiencing is eternal and that the torture he is going through after death is for ever, begs Father Abraham on behalf of his brethren. He wants them to be warned, so that his fate does not befall them too. He pleads with Father Abraham to send Lazarus for a testimony to his brothers. He requests Abraham that Lazarus be sent back from the dead to narrate to his five brothers what he saw after death.

But Father Abraham refuses and said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." There is no need for a dead person to rise and give testimony to them. The word of God is all that is needed and they have prophets to give them that. There are prophets appointed and consecrated by God over the ages for that purpose. If someone is not willing to believe God's word given through the prophets, then they would not believe even if someone comes back from the dead to teach them. The message would be the same and they should listen to the word of the prophets.

They can listen to the words of God while still alive on earth. They can hear the words of the Holy Spirit spoken through the tongues of prophets. They can pay attention to the voice of the Holy Spirit and repent, and turn away from their sinful ways.

The rich man continues to plead: 'No, Father Abraham, they will not repent if someone on earth speaks

to them' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will surely believe and repent.'

To this Father Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' They will not believe even if someone rises from the dead and goes and talks to them. Repentance is possible only through belief.

Here, our merciful Lord states the essence and foundation of life after death. To reach heavenly kingdom, one should inevitably have repentance. Your life must be transformed and you must be converted. Repentance is a change of heart and mind that brings us closer to God. Your heart should undergo a change. Without a change in your heart, without a change in your character and mind, you will not reach heaven through whatsoever reason or through any other ways.

By the term repentance, it means to become a new creation. The old character changes, the attributes, personality and nature of the old being changes. The old angry nature changes, the former quarrelsome and grudging nature changes and the immoral ways of the past changes. All the previous trends and attitudes change and the whole perspectives about life undergoes a transformation. The aims and goals of life turn to a totally different direction. The man who is self-centred becomes Christ-centred!

Repentance is brought about by faith. Without having faith, it is pointless and there is no meaning in saying that one has repented. There is repentance only through faith.

That is why Father Abraham told the rich man; "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them". The

rich man says: 'No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' To this Father Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' Repentance is through faith. And faith comes from listening to God's words. Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. So we must listen to God's words. Through hearing God's words and having faith in His words we must repent.

It is written:

'For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?' Romans 10 : 13 - 15

We all proclaim that we have faith.

In the epistle of James, chapter two, we read that even demons believe in God. Not only that, they shudder at His name.

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder."

James 2 : 19

If so, then why is it that demons don't receive blessings from God? They believe in God and accept Him as the almighty God.

They do not obey Him according to what they believe. Where there is faith, there would be obedience. There would be deeds according to the faith. There would be changes in life following that.

James says that faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action and a change in one's behaviour, is worthless. Faith should be proved through actions in one's life. Faith and deeds are two sides of the same coin. If there is faith on one side, then there would be action on the other.

To say that 'I do believe' and not to bring forth actions that befit that faith, is a lifeless faith.

James refers to such people as 'foolish people' or 'vain men'. The Holy Spirit clearly depicts this in the epistle of James.

'What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed", but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

James 2 : 14 - 17

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

James 2 : 18 - 20

Dear brethren, your faith should be manifested through your actions. When someone says that I have faith and then refuse to obey God's words, actually it is unbelief. This would be pure betrayal and treachery. According to the scriptures, it is deceiving oneself.

Whatever that does not originate and proceed from faith, is sin according to James. Faith is a great gift and a

blessing from God. It is a tremendous grace from God.

When the Israelites travelled through the wilderness of the desert, God sent fiery serpents among them. These fiery serpents bit or stung many of them to death. One by one they all fell victims to the snake bite. Then Moses interceded for the people and prayed to God. Oh God, the people whom you brought along are dying by the bite of the serpents. How can they be saved? What is a solution to this severe problem? And then God made a wonderful provision for their relief.

'The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live". So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.' Numbers 21 : 8 - 9

So they were asked to make a bronze serpent and it was put upon a pole. The pole was set so high, that it was visible from anywhere in the Israelite camps.

This bronze serpent was raised on a pole in accordance with the words of God. If they looked up at this bronze snake when bitten by a serpent, they would be saved.

Many would find this hard to believe. It would be highly illogical to think that looking at a bronze cast could heal anyone from snakebite, but that is exactly what God told them to do. The poison of the snake is most pernicious and the poison gets into the bitten person's blood stream, very fast. When this blood circulates, the poison penetrates to other parts of the body. How can this poison, which has spread throughout the body be eliminated by looking at a bronze snake set on a pole far

away? How would the body get rid of the effects of the snake venom?

It is easy to comprehend that it would be cured, if an antidote is injected into the body. Equally, being cured by taking a medicine orally is also believable. However how can one accept that the poison would be eliminated from the body by looking at a bronze serpent without taking any medicine or treatment? It is beyond the comprehension of human intellect. This cannot be perceived by human rationale or interpretation.

Just imagine a scene now. A person bitten by a fiery snake is fainting and his body is slowly succumbing to death. Meanwhile, he looks up to the bronze serpent raised on the pole. When he looks, he regains his strength and vitality. The effect of poison is eliminated from his body.

It was the ever-living God who asked for this bronze serpent to be raised on the pole. There was God's words behind the raising of the bronze snake on the pole. This pole was planted there according to the word of God.

Since these preparations were done consequent to God's word, the people who were bitten believed this. As they had faith in His words, they believed in the actions of the word of God. With this faith in their hearts, they looked at the bronze snake on the pole. When they looked, the effect of the snake venom was wiped out.

Imagine that a snake bitten person in one of the tents is arguing. "I find it hard to understand what Moses is saying. How can the snake venom be removed from my body by looking at the bronze serpent on the pole? I cannot accept this. Moses might be saying this because he is an old, traditional and conservative man. There is no

scientific basis for what he says and Moses is not aware of any recent scientific developments.”

“Old Moses does not have the intelligence of the modern generation or the up-to-date scientific knowledge and awareness of the contemporary society. That could be why he is saying these things. Hence someone like me, who has a bright intellect and is logical, would not believe this.” While babbling like this, the man starts to sink slowly. He becomes weaker and weaker. Finally he faints and then he falls.

Then another man comes running to him and says, “Dear friend you need not die. Ever living God has arranged a plan to save you. Just look at that Bronze snake statue, it was prepared according to His plan. The Prophet has done this, complying God's word. Moses did not make this out of his own intentions and wish. He made this bronze snake based on God's instruction.”

“Believe in God. Believe in the word of God who asked to look at that Bronze serpent. Go on, look at that snake.” He barely opened his eyes and glanced at the snake, from where he was lying. Alas, what a miracle! His eyes started brightening. His body started to become alive and to warm up. He regained his vigour and vitality, and became energetic.

He jumped up from where he was lying. He did not feel like resting idle any longer. The first person who told him about this, had already moved on to another tent. He ran to the next tent to inform those who were lying there, tired and exhausted. He started proclaiming, “Dear people, there is no need for you all to die like this. Quick, look at that bronze snake statue. If you look there, you would also be saved. There is no need for you all to perish

by this snake bite.” They ran to all the tents. Whoever looked, however desperate they were, or feeble their sight, or distant their tents were, they all were cured. There is no need for any philosophy or logic here.

What does the scripture say?

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”
John 3: 14- 15

Today just start believing as you are moving in the path of destruction, being bitten by the deadly snake who is the devil, and as the venom of sin spreads in your body resulting in the death of your soul. Look upon Christ who is raised on a cross at Golgotha.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3: 16

God loved me and He loves you. As a consequence we have a way to deliverance and salvation. Christ has become a sacrifice for us. Those being bitten by the snake – the old snake of the Garden of Eden, need not be in the path of destruction anymore.

Christ lives on, to give you an invigoration and uplift. He shed his blood on the cross for that. Just as the bronze serpent was raised on a pole, our most merciful Christ was raised on a cross for us in the middle of the camp. He was raised for us in the middle of the world. He was raised midway between BC and AD. Christ was hoisted between the earth and the sky, hoisted between two murderers and he was crucified intervening between God and men.

So Look at Christ. That is why Apostle Paul says in

1 Corinthians 1 : 23 “But we preach Christ crucified”. That is precisely why he says again, “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith”. Hebrews 12 : 2

Those who have been stung by sin are ruining their lives. They are sinking into deep despair and their lives are wrecked. Those of you who are like this, please look onto the cross of Jesus Christ.

“Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.” Psalm 34 : 5

He will remove all your humiliation and perpetual shame. He will take away all your endless contempt. He will give you peace. He will forgive your innumerable sins. Jesus will remove all the adversities in your life. He will blot out all your sins and omissions. He will wash you, sanctify you and turn you into a new creation.

Let us hand over our lives into His hands. Let us look at Him. Let us believe Him. Let us have faith that His Holy Blood would get rid of all our sins, sanctify us and lead us into true repentance. Let us promise Him 'Oh Lord, I have wasted all my life until now. All these days of my life were in vain. But today I am surrendering myself into Your hands'.



Chapter 17

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11 : 1

What is faith? We hope for one thing. We get an assurance about it. We have not seen it; yet we get the firm conviction that we have it. Faith is the complete trust and confidence of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

The first man in space, the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, spent a large part of his life as a hardworking student, before being thrust into international superstardom, when he was launched into space on April 12, 1961, at the age of 27. On his return from his space voyage, he said: “I have looked for God on this Earth, but did not see him. I looked for God in space and I did not see him there also. God is not on Earth nor is he in space.” Gagarin was not a believer of God. Gagarin was an atheist. He was ridiculing the existence of God. He talked in jest that he looked for God in space.

Some people complemented and appreciated what Gagarin said. But there were others who were saddened by this. He was twenty seven, when he made this statement. Seven years later, at the age of thirty four, he was plagued by a very serious ill health. The sickness claimed his life. Before he passed away, he recollected

dejectedly, 'Alas my life is lost'.

It is a blessing to be able to believe in God. Charles Duke, a United States astronaut, was the pilot of the Apollo 16 Lunar Landing Module. He was the youngest person to walk on the Moon and spent nearly seventy two hours there. After his return, he participated in the World Conference on Religion and Peace at New Delhi in 1980.

During the conference he said “I have suffered great sadness in life. I prided myself that I have attained the greatest achievement that I could ever have. But it did not give me peace. I assumed, the seventy two hours I spent on the Moon was the greatest hours I could ever have in this life. The whole world applauded me. I was honoured wherever I went. I was rewarded and everyone admired me.”

“But I did not had peace in my heart. My family life was in shambles. My wife was very depressed. She was very melancholic. This went on for seven years after my journey to space. But luckily, during this miserable and desperate phase in her life, she happened to hear the Holy Word of Jesus Christ. She dedicated her life to Jesus.”

“Oh, the peace and tranquillity she enjoyed! What a change she had! That set me thinking. May be I should also hear God's words. I too listened to His Words. God's words changed me. I too found peace. I found tranquillity. I feel that I am blessed now. I feel that I have made a great achievement. I found Jesus Christ. I was fortunate enough to believe in Jesus Christ.”

Charles Duke, a man who went to the Moon; someone who spent seventy two hours on the Moon. He says now that he is fortunate. Why does he think he is

fortunate? Because he found Jesus Christ and was able to believe in Jesus Christ.

John Glenn is another American hero and an astronaut, one of the original “Mercury Seven” astronauts and the first American to orbit the earth. When he returned to the Earth after his space mission, some of his friends asked him whether he was afraid to go to space. They had prayed for him. They asked whether he was sure he would return from space.

John replied, “No I was not afraid and I need not be. Whether I am on Earth or in space, I am sure I would be safe in the hands of Jesus Christ.”

Neil Armstrong, was the first person to land on the Moon in 1969. After the landing he raised a flag on the Moon and the very first words he said was, “Praise the Lord”.

James Irwin was an astronaut and the twelfth person to land on the Moon. Upon setting his foot on the moon, he immediately opened his Bible and read Psalms 8.

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour.”

Psalm 8 : 3 - 5

The Holy Bible was the very first book to be taken to the Moon.

Scottish missionary David Livingstone was one of the greatest European missionaries and he went to Africa for his missionary work. Livingstone, who was born and brought up in an aristocratic family, could have stayed

back in England as a rich and affluent person. Instead, he gave up all the affluence and luxuries to proclaim the gospel among the primitive and savage tribes of Africa.

The sacrifice made by Livingstone and his love was thought provoking among several people. Back in England, the native place of Livingstone, there was a person called Henry Morton Stanley. He was an atheist. He initially thought that Livingstone was irrational and what he did was quite absurd. But Stanley went to Africa and stayed there and lived with Livingstone for some time.

Later on Stanley says about Livingstone; "I genuinely saw Christ through Livingstone's life. The qualities exhibited by him such as sincere love, sacrificial mentality, kindness, efforts to help others, a mind willing to endure any hardships – all of these cannot be seen in ordinary men. I saw the true reflection of the heavenly love of Jesus Christ and his great sacrifice on the cross, in the life of Livingstone."

Not only did Stanley accept Jesus Christ and became a believer, but also became a co-worker of Livingstone as a result of witnessing the life of Livingstone.

Stanley was with Livingstone from then on, when he did God's work in Africa. On seeing Livingstone's life, Stanley found Jesus Christ. It is worth thinking, with my life did I achieve what I should have?

Was I able to show Jesus Christ to others through my life? I preached. I did the work of God. I experienced repentance years ago. Yet, was I able to reflect Jesus Christ through my life? I too am contemplating!

Let the flame of faith in Jesus Christ burn in your lives. May the faith in Jesus Christ lead you.

Faith – faith that the mighty power of Jesus Christ is sufficient and more than enough for me – to uphold me in my suffering; to take care of me in my hardships; to give me support and strength, when I am shaken amidst adversities. Let the strong belief in the sufficiency and providence of Jesus Christ, rule your hearts.

Aren't there crisis and critical junctures in your life? Isn't life marred with hostilities, adversities, hardships and anguish? On every single day of our life, we are going through a multitude of ordeals and uncertainties. Isn't this life on earth full of misery and struggle? The raft, that is life, is moving forward wilted, weary and exhausted by storms; being tossed about and shaken by countless tempests.

However, let me say, there is an individual you can rely upon and lean on in this worldly life. It is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. If you lean on Him, if you confide in Him, you will not be shattered, you will not be shaken. You will not be withered or exhausted.

Rely on Jesus and lean on Him. He has opened his most holy chest. His holy hands are outstretched. If you welcome Him into your lives, He will give you peace. He will comfort you. He will give you shade and shelter. He will be your helper. He will support you in your suffering. He will come and sit beside you in your sick bed.

As it is said in Psalm 41, the Lord will sustain us on our sickbed. Our most merciful and compassionate Lord will alleviate and soothe our pains; He upholds and supports us in our sick bed; He transforms our sick bed; He converts our bed of illness and restores us to full health, He turns our sickbed into a bed for rest. If you submit and surrender your lives to our living Christ, allowing Him to

enter into our day to day life, that would be a blessed and most fortunate experience. This experience is ultimately the repentance brought forth by faith.

Have you gained faith yet? This will eventually lead to repentance. How do you acquire this faith? In his epistle to Romans, Apostle Paul talks about how to obtain or receive faith.

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” *Romans 10: 17*

Hearing the word of God! When you hear the word of God, it brings forth faith. The beginning, progress, and strength of faith is by hearing the word of God. The Word of God is full of power. God's message is full of life. God's word is life and power.

We hear the word of God that is live and active. We accept the word of God whole heartedly. When we comprehend and grasp the word of God we acquire faith. Heroes of faith are radiant stars in history.

Couldn't we also become heroes of faith? Wouldn't it be possible for us too, to acquire that fortune?

A vibrant prayer-based-life is the backbone of any family or any region. Your family life would be a blessed one if you have a strong prayerful life firmly based on faith in Christ. Your personal life would also be enlightened by prayer. Just one thing is enough. Start a prayerful life, based on strong faith in God. It is not to convince anyone or to display it externally.

One should maintain a personal relationship with God. That relationship should be a constant and steadfast one, not a wavering and unsteady relationship. An

inseparable relationship of love. This could be obtained through prayer, reading and listening to the word of God. Thus we can compose and establish heaven on earth. That is why it is said – 'How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?'

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” *Romans 10: 13*

If you seek salvation then call upon the name of Christ.

Only those who lead a converted life on earth, brought about through repentance by faith, would be able to possess eternal life after death. Gaining entry into Heaven, which is unreachable by us through our efforts could be achieved only by trusting in the Holy Blood of Jesus.

We cannot enter into God's kingdom merely on the strength of some good deeds or accomplishments of ours. Only if we rely on and fully depend on one person - Jesus Christ, we would be able to gain an entrance.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” *Acts 4: 12*

By having faith and by fully relying on Christ, by believing in the crucifixion of Christ and by having a strong conviction, by having a new resolution that just as Christ died on the cross, my old being is also dead and by starting to lead a new life - one can reach the kingdom of God. In essence, what is needed and is essential is to become a new creation in Christ.

Talking about the practical and realistic side of things, spiritual knowledge cannot be contained within our human wisdom. It cannot be comprehended by human

intellect.

C.S. Lewis relied on his intellectual capabilities and learned a lot. When he acquired knowledge, he concluded that all spirituality is mere absurdity. He thought of devotion to God and having faith in God as foolishness. He thought: Man is an intellectual being. He has logical thinking powers. Then why should he believe in God? However, when he started reading the Bible more and more, and attempted to comprehend the word of God, he acquired more clarity and certainty. If you read his book "Christ, Christianity and Faith", you would be able to notice how an atheist was transformed into a believer.

Robert Louis Stevenson was a famous English literary novelist. His famous works include "Kidnapped" and "Treasure Island". He was an atheist till late in life. Later on he read the word of God, listened to and meditated on the word of God. Thus he surrendered his life for Christ.

Could the miraculous personality of Jesus Christ be contained within the minimal and meagre intellect of man? Merciful God yearns to reside in our heart and invites us by opening His heart to us.

Noah had faith in God. So he accepted the word of God. By the word of God, he was blessed in his generation to be a righteous man. Abraham had faith in God. He believed in eternal God, who created everything out of nothing. Abraham's belief in God was credited to him as righteousness.

Moses believed in God. Thus he was able to rescue six hundred thousand people. Moses knew and experienced what true worship was. And he let a large society know about God.

Believe and have faith in Jesus today.

Then your hearts would be transformed, your character would change and you would long to attain the character of Christ. Your view point about life would change. Peace would rush into the inner chambers of your heart. Christ would enter your hearts. You would feel that you have an owner and guide to lead you forward. Jesus Christ would become your owner.

You would recognise that you have a guardian. Just believe that, the one who was punished for our sins and was put to death on the cross, the one who shed his blameless blood for us, is standing near to you now.

Believe that He is looking at you right now, with eyes full of love.

Open your heart and mind, and speak to Him freely. Oh Lord, till today I lived as a slave of sin and as a captive of satan. I indulged in countless sins. Oh Lord, today I am bidding farewell to sin; I am rejecting Satan and all his army and accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and saviour. From today onwards I would live as a new creation in Christ.

I would lead a new life by having faith in Jesus, accepting and loving Jesus, and worshipping Him wholeheartedly, experiencing the true forgiveness of sins and eternal life granted by Jesus, while looking forward eagerly for His second coming.



Chapter 18

One: "But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?"

Job 14 : 10 (ESV)

Two: "If a man dies, shall he live again?"

Job 14 : 14 (ESV)

Three: "Who can live and not see death?"

Psalms 89 : 48

Four: "Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?"

Psalms 89 : 48

Five: "Will the departed spirits rise and praise you?"

Psalms 88 : 10

Six: "Do you show your wonders to the dead?"

Psalms 88 : 10

Seven: "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"

Romans 7 : 24

We have been thinking about these seven core or pivotal questions in relation to the state beyond death. These questions can be repeatedly seen in the book of Job and Psalms, in relation to the state beyond death. They formed the basis for the thoughts, reflections, studies and meditations in the previous chapters.

The incident of Lazarus and the rich man sheds light into life after death.

Lazarus died. He was carried by angels to the bosom of Father Abraham – to the ranks of Holy men in heaven.

The rich man died and was buried ceremoniously. But he was sent to the place of torture in hell.

Both Lazarus and the rich man were residents of the same neighbourhood until their death. They lived so close-by, that they saw each other almost every day. The rich man lived inside his house and Lazarus outside the rich man's gate!

Those who lived in the same neighbourhood, those who knew each other - they were separated after death – to entirely two different places, to two different worlds! On this earth, the rich man wore the finest robes made of silk and linen. He spent every day of his life in the lap of luxury.

However, poor Lazarus was a sick and suffering man. He was a destitute who led a sad life. His body was covered with sores. Despite all this, when he died he was welcomed into the joy of eternal paradise. Heavenly angels came down to earth to welcome him to heaven and his soul reached the ranks of Holy men.

On the contrary, when the rich man died he got a splendid funeral ceremony. His funeral was pompous and with all the grandeur fit for the great. The prayers, rites and rituals were performed with due respect.

We read in the Gospel that the rich man was buried. "The rich man also died and was buried." (Luke 16 : 22). But alas! His soul ended up in Hades.

They could see each other after death. The only issue was that they were at two different places. From Hades, where the rich man was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. He recognised Father Abraham. He also recognised Lazarus seated at the bosom of Father Abraham.

He is fully aware of everything at this stage. The rich man could even have a conversation with Father

Abraham who is in heaven.

After death, the spirit can plead, the spirit can recite prayers. But everything is fruitless and unworthy. Those prayers are not timely and are late. Late prayers and delayed realizations, which are unable to bring about any results!

It is not possible for the rich man to reach the congregation of Holy men, where Lazarus now resides. Father Abraham says to him:

“And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us”.

Luke 16 : 26

A great chasm – there is no such chasm on earth. Here anyone can talk to any other person, they can work together, travel together, and have interactions with each other. But once we pass beyond the curtain of death, it would not be possible to go from one place to the other.

Besides, the departed souls are still very much conscious of their beloved ones, whom they have left behind on earth. The rich man, even though he is in the place of torture, is greatly concerned about his five brothers, who are still alive. He earnestly hopes that they too must not have the same plight as him, ending up in Hades.

Many of our dear ones might have departed from this world. Some among you, who are reading this now, might have lost a dear husband or wife in the past.

Those who are gone from the earth still cares about those who are alive!

The departed souls still care for us and are concerned about us. Are we aware of this and do we care? In reality,

the truth is 'no'. If we were conscious, then it would have led to our repentance.

Let us say: a father has died and departed from this world. He leaves behind his good name, reputation and the inheritance that he gained over his life time. His children are indebted to carry on the good work and honour of the father and to uphold his values and reputation. The father who can see all this from the other world would be extremely saddened, if his reputation was ruined by his children.

The rich man appeals to Abraham, to send Lazarus to his brothers, as Father Abraham refuses to send Lazarus to him. He pleads that although Lazarus could not be sent to where he is, could he be sent to warn his five brothers who are still alive on earth? He said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

It is very likely that while alive on earth this rich man might not have paid the least attention to testimonies or in giving one. He might not have given any importance to Gospel meetings. If he had, he would not have ended up in Hades, the place of torture.

If he had paid attention to the word of God, he would have repented and believed. Then he could have avoided the place of torture.

Think for a moment. Would our dear and beloved departed be sorrowful and weeping while thinking about us?

“Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’” Luke 16 : 29

God does not wish to send any one from the other world to earth, to carry out His work.

In order to carry out His missions and assignments on earth, God has appointed Prophets throughout the ages. They were commissioned by God to undertake this mission.

We must be prepared to obey and heed the words of such prophets.

We should not be waiting for miracles to happen, to start believing in God. There are some people who say that they would believe only, if the dead rise from death. There are some others who say that they would have faith, if they see terminal diseases being cured. There are yet others who claim that they would believe in God, if He appears to them in person. These are all pointless arguments and vain attitudes. These are not truthful or meaningful statements. Instead they are absurd and illogical inferences. They are worthless and aim at creating unwanted debates, controversies and disagreement.

It is not possible to bring back the dead souls to earth. It is demonic to have contact with or to have a conversation with dead souls or dead men's ghosts.

Such an incident is recorded in the book of Samuel. After the death of Samuel, Saul asked his servants to find a woman who is a medium. He then went to her and inquired of her to bring up the soul of Samuel, and it is written in the scriptures that she brings up Samuel.

“So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. “Consult a spirit for me,” he said, “and bring up for me the one I name.”

But the woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?”

Saul swore to her by the Lord, “As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this.”

Then the woman asked, “Whom shall I bring up for you?”

“Bring up Samuel,” he said.

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!”

The king said to her, “Don't be afraid. What do you see?”

The woman said, “I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth.”

“What does he look like?” he asked.

“An old man wearing a robe is coming up,” she said.

Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.”

1 Samuel 28 : 8 - 14

In the above passage, it is written that the woman could see Samuel coming up out of the earth. It is written that she showed that to Saul.

What does this mean? Saul had saddened God and had given space for Satan. What he saw coming out of the earth was not actually the soul of Samuel, but a satanic soul.

Remember and keep in mind that the activity of satan and demons are involved in bringing back the dead souls.

There are people who assume that dead souls speak the truth. However it is written in the scripture that satan himself could disguise as an angel.

“And no wonder, for satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his

servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.” 2 Corinthians 11 : 14- 15

It is futile to comprehend things, once we are departed from this world. Let us try to grasp and understand things while we are still alive on earth.

Let us hear God's word and repent. Let us have a contrite and penitent heart today. Let us surrender our lives to Jesus today. Let us welcome our saviour Jesus, who was crucified for us, into our hearts today.

Let us make a pledge to Him:

Lord, I had not realized the truth all this time. I conveniently ignored the eventuality of death and led a wayward life. Oh Lord, I led a reckless life completely unmindful that one day I would have to depart from this world. I was inattentive and heedless about my soul and shamelessly chased the worldly pleasures. I spent my days in acrimony, drunkenness, immoral idol worship and futile deeds of the unbelievers. Oh Lord, please forgive me. My Lord, who gave up Your life for my own sins, please place Your most Holy hand on me right now. Please cleanse me and purify me.

Please grant me the most fortunate experience of having a true repentance. Have mercy on me and bless me to accept You and lead a holy life pleasing to You.



Chapter 19

“He answered, Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.” Luke 16:27-28

“Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’” Luke 16:29-30

The souls of the dead eagerly view the happenings on earth while residing in the spiritual world.

Abraham lived on the earth for one hundred and seventy five years and then died. Isaac, son of Abraham lived on the earth for one hundred and eighty years before he passed away. Jacob, son of Isaac lived for one hundred and forty seven years before his death. After him, his son Joseph lived on the earth for one hundred and ten years before he too departed by death.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – four generations. In short, just over six hundred years rolled by during the life span of those four generations on the earth.

Moses was born almost four hundred and thirty years after that. That means Moses was born on this earth more than eight hundred years after the death of Abraham. While Abraham was alive Moses was not even born on this earth. Despite this, Father Abraham knew about the

vocation and service of Moses from beyond this world.

The ministry of Moses, who was born centuries after the lifetime of Abraham, is recorded in the scriptures like this:

“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’” Luke 16 : 29

Abraham knew that, on the earth there lived Moses and other prophets who proclaimed fruitful and profound celestial prophecies. Father Abraham did not know this while he was alive on the earth as Moses was born centuries after the death of Abraham. Abraham had never seen Moses on the earth. But Abraham watched what was happening on the earth from the other world. He saw Moses and his blessed services from beyond this world.

Saints watch and observe, from beyond this earthly world, the services and ministry we do on this earth.

Isn't this fact enough to make our life enthralled? Aren't our forefathers delighted and rejoicing watching the spiritual acts we do in our humbleness, the virtuous acts we do, the auspicious blessings and good accomplishments we earn?

When Rachel, the wife of Jacob died at childbirth, she was buried by the roadside. When King Herod killed the new-borns of Jerusalem, the prophet mentions about Rachel crying for her children.

“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”
Matthew 2 : 17

This affirmed what was foretold through the prophet Jeremiah. Rachel who died centuries ago is weeping for the children, from beyond this world, when King Herod had all the young boys of two and below, living in

Bethlehem and its outskirts, murdered.

Rachel cried for the children. Her lament for the children was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah more than six hundred and fifty years before the event occurred.

Apostle Paul, in chapter eleven of the epistle to Hebrews, mentions a long list of saints from the Old Testament. Noah, Enoch, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Gideon, Jephthah, Moses and Joshua. Then at the beginning of the twelfth chapter he says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses".

These warriors of faith from the Old Testament lived many years before Saint Paul! We are surrounded by these faithful who lived in different periods of history. They watch over us and encourage us to run our race steadfastly.

We stand in the midst of this saintly society. A society of those who have departed and those who are still alive!

They won their races. They ran ahead in their races knowing that this carnal world was not worthy for them. They ran ahead looking at Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Even though we are surrounded by a community of witnesses, we should not be looking up to them. Saint Paul emphasizes that we should be looking up to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Jesus thought of the joy set before Him – the great joy of redeeming scores of sinners. He foresaw the great fortune of peacefulness, to be experienced by the helpless multitudes. He foresaw the joy of countless sinners, destined for hell, reaching the kingdom of heaven. He thought of this joy set before Him. So He endured the cross scorning its shame and was seated at

the right hand of the throne of God.

Christ disregarded and overlooked the shame. He was not offended nor disappointed, He did not feel sad or resentful nor did He feel any ill-will when He was struck and spit on His face or when they put a crown of thorns on His head or when His limbs were nailed to the cross. Amidst all this He prayed for them "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Run your race looking ahead at our living Christ. Follow those footsteps. Apostle Peter said: 'He left us an example, that you should follow in His steps'

We read so in the second chapter of the epistle of Apostle Peter, starting from verse 21;

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly."

1 Peter 2 : 21 - 23

Centuries ago prophet Isaiah wrote (in Chapter 53) that, "In His humiliation He was deprived of justice".

It could happen that we might not get justice in this generation. People around us might misunderstand us. Many will ridicule us, look upon us with contempt, scorn us and mock us. We might have to face various struggles and strife and hostility in this spiritual life.

Despite all of these, we can be assured of one thing. If we run forward looking at Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith, then He would stay as our support and shade. Eventually, He would welcome us to the ranks of Holy men on the heavenly shores of eternal joy.

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

It is relatively easy to say that everything is trivial or insignificant. It is easy to preach. But when faced with difficulties and trials, when there is suffering, when there is trouble and crisis within one's own family, when your own children turn against you and avenge you, when your own wife curses you and keep away from you, when your own husband inflicts physical injuries and beats you cruelly, when your parents view you with contempt and disgust – would we stay upright with stable and substantial faith in such circumstances? This needs some thought and is worth reflection!

Are we able to face the challenges and adversities in our life cheerfully with a smile by holding up the sword of the Word of God from the Holy Spirit? That is genuine Christian life!

We could see a verse related to this in the Gospel of John (chapter 8, verse 56). Here our Lord says:

“Your Father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day; he saw it and was glad.”

Father Abraham had faith that he would see the day of Jesus Christ. It is written that he was glad. Christ was born centuries after the time of Father Abraham.

When the Pharisees and elders of the church heard this, they were contemptuous. They said:

“You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!”

They asked Him whether He, who is not even fifty years old, has seen Father Abraham who passed away a long time ago.

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before

Abraham was born, I am!"

At this, they picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus hid Himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. John 8 : 57, 58

We stand in the midst of people, a society who picks up stones to throw, when they hear about the true Word of God. They will pick up stones to throw at you, throw mud at you, tie you in chains, and will attack and torture you. Apostle Peter was imprisoned. When we read the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 11, we come across that incident. Apostle Peter was put in a prison. Similarly, the followers of Christ might experience persecutions and torture even now. Yet one should stand firm, holding on to the promise of eternal life and finish the race of life set before you.

The time has come that we should not delay any longer in surrendering our lives to Jesus.

Before we turn the world upside down, let us turn our lives upside down. Let us welcome Jesus Christ into our hearts, the only one capable of turning our character, our very nature upside down.

Let us surrender ourselves at the foot of the cross and say – I will praise You from among the ranks of the holy men who are dead and gone and the holy men who are still alive. I will glorify You. I will worship You. I will do Your work. I will anticipate and wait hopefully for Your second coming.



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. അമൃതധാര 2. ആന്തരികശാന്തി 3. ശുഭഭാവി 4. ശാന്തിതീരം 5. മധുമൊഴി 6. മുക്തിമാർഗ്ഗം 7. നിത്യവിശ്രാന്തി 8. നിറപറ 9. ജയജീവിതം 10. വിശ്വാസജീവിതം 11. വാടാമലർ 12. ദിവ്യാരാധന 13. എനിക്ക് കൂടിപ്പാൻ തരുമോ? 14. നീതിമാനാകുന്നതെങ്ങനെ? 15. തുറന്നവാതിൽ 16. വരവും ചിലവും 17. ദൈവരാജ്യം 18. AMRUTHADHARA (English) 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. മുദ്രാമോതിരമാക്കും 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 (English) 41. WAY TO LIBERATION (English) 42. നിന്റെ മൂതന്മാർ ജീവിക്കും 43. വന്നു പ്രാതൽ കഴിച്ചുകൊൾവിൻ 44. എന്നെ തൊട്ടതാർ? 45. സൗഖ്യമാകുവാൻ മനസ്സുണ്ടോ? 46. അത് സഹിക്കാകുന്നവൻ ആർ? 47. എന്നെ ആർ വിടുവിക്കും? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 48. നന്മയുടെ പാനപാത്രം 49. പ്രത്യാശയുടെ പ്രഭാതം 50. ഇനിയും വൈകണമോ? 51. ARE YOU WILLING TO BE HEALED? (English) 52. കണ്ണീർപ്പാടം - ഭാഗം ഒന്ന് 53. കണ്ണീർപ്പാടം - ഭാഗം രണ്ട് 54. BESIDE CHERITH (English) 55. യഹോവയുടെ ഭൃജങ്ങൾ 56. കണ്ണീർ തോരുമോ? 57. കണ്ണീർക്കണങ്ങൾ 58. എല്ലാം നന്മയ്ക്ക് 59. ആശയൻ 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. ചുള്പോലെ കത്തുന്ന ദിവസം 69. ഗിരിനിരകൾ 70. THE CITIES OF REFUGE (English) 71. ഗിരിശൃംഗങ്ങൾ 72. THE BLINDNESS OF LONELINESS (English) 73. യുദ്ധയുടെ ലേഖനം 74. കാറ്റിന്റെ വഴിയേ 75. കയ്പിന്റെ മധുരം 76. തളിരണിയും കാലം 77. ജീവജലത്തിനരികെ 78. BEYOND DEATH (English) 79. ദാഹജലം 80. ആശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ഉറവ 81. പുനേനരുവി 82. കെണിയും കൂടുകയും 83. അഴിയാക്കുരുക്കുകൾ 84. ഭയപ്പെടേണ്ട 85. ഭീരുത്വം മാറണമോ? 86. പ്രതിസന്ധികളിൽ തളരാതെ 87. നെല്ലും പതിരും 88. ശാപമോക്ഷം 89. അനുഗ്രഹത്തിലേയ്ക്ക് 90. HOW LONG IN TWO BOATS? (English) 91. കണ്ണീരിലെ മഴവില്ല് 92. കിതപ്പും കുതിപ്പും 93. നഷ്ടസൗഭാഗ്യങ്ങൾ തിരികെ കിട്ടുമോ? |
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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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CRF's MAIN MEETINGS IN KOLENCHERY

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Kolenchery - Perumbavoor Road,

Valethupady Bus Stop, KADAYIRUPPU

Ph : 0484 -2689489, 9142 303096

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