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*“Thirty Lessons on the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ”*

*for "Christian Apologetics Doctoral Dissertation"*

*in Arabic Language*

By

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## **Introduction**

The life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ attract millions of people. While the motivations may differ, the study of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ remains central and enduring throughout the years and across the universe. In this study, we focus on what the Church has affirmed over the years according to the Bible, especially in the four Gospels. We will not address intellectual criticism or what other religions or non-Christian doctrines have said about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Our study connects the Old Testament (the Torah, the Prophets, and the poetic books) to what is found in the New Testament to clarify the message of salvation. This study may help remove ambiguity or prevent misunderstandings for some readers. Although Jesus Christ was neither a king nor a famous political leader, and despite not being a wealthy person, he influenced human history and gained followers who live according to His teachings and follow His example worldwide across different peoples and races. Within just two centuries, Christianity became the fastest-spreading religion in the world. Therefore, with this study, we aim to introduce this unique Christ, both in His teachings and His life. It is necessary to point out that this study follows a chronological approach to the life of Jesus Christ, from birth to death and then to the resurrection. Our study begins with the story of His birth which is marked by five significant events, and then moves on to explore the customs, religious practices, and political as well as religious backgrounds of that time in Judea, where He was born. Then, we move on to studying the prophecies found in the Old Testament to prepare the reader for a religious understanding of Christ—addressing the question, “Why was He called Christ?” Through our study of the life of Jesus Christ, we will also discuss His miracles and teachings. By the end of this study, you will have a comprehensive understanding of Christian thought regarding

Jesus Christ. In this study we will try to answer the many contradictions between Islam and Christianity such as:

- 1- While the Quran affirms the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, it denies His divinity and His Crucifixion and resurrection. Both are the backbones of our Christian faith without which salvation is not possible. In this study will explain the reason for such a claim.
- 2- While we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the “Way, the Truth and Life” and whoever does not believe in Him will have everlasting damnation, Muslims believe that Muhammad is the final prophet who is the “Seel of all Prophets”.
- 3- While we, as Christians, believe in Salvation from sin by the redemption of Christ, Muslims believe that there no salvation and sin is just ‘mistakes’ which were committed by the deception of Satan.
- 4- While we, as Christians believe that the Bible is the “Inspired Word of God,” Muslims believe that the Quran is.
- 5- While we believe that there should not be divorce, Muslims believe that a man has the right divorce his wife, and can be married to four wives in the same time.
- 6- While we, as Christians believe that the only way to heaven is by believing, Muslims believe that the only way is to confess “the Two Shahada or witnesses: there no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.”

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Birth of Jesus Christ**

The story of the Nativity begins with a recounting of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, so that we may understand that He came from the lineage of Abraham and the Prophet David, and also from one of the fathers of the Jewish people, in order for the prophecies of the Old Testament and the promises of the Holy Revelation concerning Him from the lineage of Judah to be fulfilled. These promises are not connected solely to the people of Israel, but to all peoples of the world, for God promised Abraham that in his seed (i.e., in Christ), all peoples, nations, and tribes would be blessed, and that He would provide redemption and atonement for every child of woman, no matter how peoples and tongues differ. He also gave His promise to Moses and David, and perhaps many of His people did not understand God's intent that He does not offer salvation only to the people of Israel, but to all peoples of the world. And God gave details about the birth of this Christ the Savior, and about His life and His death and resurrection. And above all, God gave promises to those who would believe in Christ and special promises to His church. And as we study the life of Christ, we will study those prophecies that were spoken about Him hundreds of years before His coming and how they were fulfilled.

In this chapter, we will learn about:

- The Preparation for the Birth of Jesus Christ
- The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary
- The Birth of John the Baptist
- The Birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem

- The Shepherds Visit the Place of the Nativity
- The Magi (Wise Men) Come to Worship Christ

The Jewish people were waiting for a prophet or an anointed king (the Messiah); for the priest would anoint the king or prophet with oil, and they were awaiting the coming of this Messiah from God from on high, to be a king over them to save them from the bondage of Roman rule, and to make them a nation that would dominate the rest of the nations. And He would be an example of divine rule and remove injustice and evil from the world. Therefore, when Christ did not reign, they were disappointed in Him, as He did not fulfill what they had hoped for. The Evangelist Matthew begins with a recounting of the genealogy of Jesus Christ; to prove that Christ came from the lineage of King David, whom the Lord promised that his kingdom would have no end, and his kingdom would be eternal and would be greater than the kingdom of his father David. This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who came not to reign over a transient earthly kingdom, nor to achieve an earthly dream of victory over all enemies, but He came to reign over people's hearts and bring them into the kingdom of God which will last forever. For God sent Jesus Christ not to rule and govern the lands of peoples or establish an earthly kingdom, but to accomplish the redemption that would reconcile every believer in Him among sinners with the Heavenly Father, and establish the heavenly kingdom, a kingdom that endures forever. Thus, His kingdom would be much greater than the kingdom of David and Solomon, and His kingdom would have no end, meaning it would last for all eternity. And from His birth, many acknowledged Christ as King and Lord and believed in Him, and they came from the farthest countries to present gifts to Him. And through the years, thousands, indeed millions, believed in His redemption and became part of His flock. And thousands suffered and gave much for His message, not only that, but they sacrificed their lives and were martyred for that message. But King Herod

feared for his kingdom, and likewise Satan feared the sovereignty of Christ as King. Both tried to stop Him, but the eternal will of God was much stronger, and Jesus Christ accomplished His mission, and accomplished the wondrous redemption for which He tasted suffering. Both the Evangelist Matthew and the Evangelist Luke begin the story of the Nativity by emphasizing the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and that He is from the lineage of King David, whom God promised that his seed would reign forever, to confirm that this is what was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, who will reign over the hearts of believers forever.

### **The Preparation for the Birth of Jesus Christ**

First: The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary

Second: The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Priest Zechariah

Third: The Annunciation to Joseph the Carpenter

Fourth: The Annunciation of the Angels to the Shepherds

Fifth: The Visit of the Magi (Wise Men) to Jesus Christ

### **First: The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary** (*Luke 1:26–38*)

The birth of Jesus Christ was wondrous and unique of its kind, and without faith, man cannot accept the virginal birth of Jesus Christ. But God intended through the virginal birth more than just a "miracle," but He intended to reveal to us the truth of the "Incarnation." For Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and not from a natural human relationship by the will of a man. We read in the Gospel according to the Evangelist John that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Mary was surprised by the appearance of the angel before her, and he said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary." Fear is a natural thing for every person, but God removes our fears and confirms His presence with us. And the angel announced to her that

she would conceive and bear a son and call his name "Yeshua" in Hebrew, translated as "Jesus" in Arabic, meaning "the Savior," for He will save His people from their sins. And the name "Isa," which many use, comes from the Greek origin of the word "Iesous," which is from the word Jesus or Yeshua, meaning "the Savior." How marvelous was the faith of the Lady Virgin when she believed this strange news, but she asked about how it would happen, for she did not know a man. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most-High would overshadow her. Therefore, the Holy One (i.e., the one without sin) who would be born of her would be called "the Son of God." This conception was not the result of any physical relationship between God and Saint Mary, but by the action of the Holy Spirit. Many err when they think that Christians have attributed divinity to Jesus Christ and His mother, the Virgin Mary, apart from God, but Christianity does not attribute divinity to the Lady Virgin Mary at all; rather, it gives her the appropriate status, even if she is called the title "Mother of God," she is the mother of God incarnate i.e., Jesus Christ in the flesh. As for divinity, it belongs to the person of Jesus Christ, who revealed Himself and His incarnation. Is anything too difficult for God? For all things are possible with the Lord. And Christ is also "the Word of God," meaning God's revelation of Himself and His surpassing love for mankind. And we must believe what God revealed in "His word," the Holy Bible, for it is the word of God. Therefore, it is said in the Book of Hebrews, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son Jesus Christ..." That is, God's revelation to us is in Christ, and therefore He is "the Word through whom God revealed Himself to us," as we will explain in more detail later.

And despite the difficulty of the matter, Christ would be born without the will of a man. Saint Mary obeyed the words of the Lord and His will and submitted to them, and that

teaches us submission despite the difficulty of the matter, for when we submit to the Lord, He must work extraordinary works in us in His kingdom, for He is the God capable of all things. Many err when they think that the phrase "Son of God" means that God married a human and begot a son, for that is not the intended meaning of this designation, to be a father in the bodily understanding meant from the "Holy Trinity." Rather, the meaning here is about the Sonship of Jesus Christ to God, and that He would be called "Son of the Most- High" or "Son of God." This is not merely a metaphorical expression and likewise, as we indicated it is not an expression of a physical relationship between God and Mary, for God is not a man; far be it from God to have a physical relationship.

As for the birth of Jesus Christ in this extraordinary manner, it confirms that He is an extraordinary person, not only in His birth, but in His life, teachings, miracles, death, and his limitless love. Therefore, He is "the perfect man and the perfect God," and He is "the Word of God" who became in the miracle of His birth and the holiness of His life "a sign for the worlds," so that the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son..." Thus, Jesus Christ and His mother, who obeyed the will of God, became "a sign for the worlds."

The title "Son of God" is a divine revelation. The Heavenly Father declared that Christ is His beloved Son (Mark 1:11), and there was a voice from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Likewise, Christ declared that He is the Son of God, saying, "Do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'" (John 10:36). And when Christ met the man born blind whom He healed, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have

both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you." And he said, "Lord, I believe!" and he worshiped Him. (John 9).

*"Christ," the "Word of God" and God's Revelation of Himself*

The verses clarify the declaration that Jesus Christ is "the Word of God," or in other words, He is "God's revelation to us about Himself." Since we could not see God or know about Him, therefore, out of the abundance of His love for the world and all humanity, He chose to reveal Himself to us. For God revealed to us about Himself, His power, wisdom, and greatness in creation and in nature (Romans 1). And since one does not know a person's thoughts and personality unless he speaks with him, likewise Christ was "the Word of God" incarnate, in whom God revealed about Himself and His power, but also His love, as He offered us His redemption, as we will study later. For in Him, i.e., in Christ, God revealed to us about His plan for the salvation of the world; and in His teachings, God revealed to us about the eternity of goodness and divine love; and in His miracles, God revealed to us about His infinite power; and in His attributes, that He is the perfect one whom no one can condemn or convict of sin; and in following Him, we have eternal life, for there is no salvation in anyone else. And God also revealed Himself and His will through the Holy Word which He gave to His chosen prophets. We will study in detail and know that the Holy Word was written by humans whom the Spirit of God guided and gave the holy inspiration. We know that God revealed His word to Moses, "the Torah and the word means teaching" that is, God wanted to teach His people about His way. And God also gave David "the Psalms" for praise and worship. Many may err by believing that every prophet came with a book, for many prophets did not come with a book, but all of them called to the worship of the one God and to piety, doing good and righteousness, and avoiding corruption, vice, and loving others.

And when we read the Holy Scriptures, we know that they prophesied in one way or another about the coming of the Savior.

*The Element of Faith in Accepting the Divinity of Christ*

When we read the Holy Gospel, we find that there are some verses or passages that speak of the divinity of Christ, i.e., His divine attributes, and others that speak of His bodily attributes. Therefore, we must not confuse the verses that speak of Jesus Christ "as a man" with those that speak of His divine attributes "as God." So, when you read that Christ was hungry or thirsty, or that He prayed, then the Holy Word is speaking about Him in the perfection of His humanity (or what we call His human nature). And it also speaks of Him in the perfection of His divinity when Christ declared that "I and the Father are one," and "Before Abraham was, I AM." We previously mentioned that we cannot accept or believe this impossible matter except through faith and belief. Therefore, we must ask God to "help our unbelief."

*As for the "Incarnation," it Has Four Objectives:*

The first objective is to be the perfect example or the perfect model; He is the model we should become like, and He who shows us how we can live like Him. The second objective is to be "the perfect Teacher" who showed us the mind of God the Father and taught us through His teachings, His life, His miracles, and His actions. The third objective is to be "the perfect Sacrifice" that would be offered as an atonement for sin, just as God's people in ancient times offered a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, so Christ would offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice without blemish (as the Scripture commanded the sacrifice to be without blemish), to satisfy heavenly justice for redemption and atonement for sins. The fourth objective is to reveal to us about the attributes of God and disclose His perfect nature and essence, the

complete love of God for mankind and His tenderness and compassion for human suffering in redeeming sinners and evildoers were manifested.

*How Do We Believe?*

We must know that accepting this matter, "the Incarnation and the unity of God the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit," is an act of faith, and no one can convince a person of this matter except the Spirit of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it says: "And to those who desire the Son, He will reveal Him." That is, without God's revelation of Himself to you and his internal, heartfelt persuasion, you will not be able to believe through mere logic or mere reason without the element of faith. For the Holy Bible says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11. It also says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." For as God's position is above our position, and God's power is above our power, and God's infinity is above our finiteness, likewise His thoughts are above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways. If we accept that God can do everything, then why cannot the omnipotent God "incarnate," taking on human flesh, to become like us, and offer Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? Yes, nothing is too difficult for Him. The Evangelist John presents Jesus Christ as fully man and fully God. For although Jesus Christ was fully man, He also was and never ceased to be the eternal, preexistent God, who was from eternity (John 20:30-31). Therefore, Christ's teachings, works, and miracles are inseparably linked to His person and essence. Through this study, we will examine this in more detail. If we are not believers in these truths, we must pray, asking God to help our unbelief, as His disciples also asked, and we must also ask God the Father to lead us to complete conviction that Christ is the Savior of the world and that He is "the Word who became flesh," meaning that God has revealed "by His word" to us, about Himself and His love for us.

*The Hymn or the "Song of Mary"*

This canticle includes several important truths: It magnifies the Lord and rejoices in Him; she did not claim divinity. God is the Savior and all humans need God's salvation, and she is also among humankind. Salvation here means Christ's eternal redemption from the condition that led all humanity away from God. God has done great things for her beyond human ability. In her humility, God the Almighty, who can exalt the humble and bring down the exalted from their thrones, has exalted her. God's promise to "Israel" through the Savior Christ has been fulfilled. God fulfilled His promise which He made to our father Abraham, that in his seed "Christ" all peoples and tribes of the earth would be blessed through faith. The Lady Virgin Mary was meek in her acceptance, belief, and obedience to the will of God; humble despite her status; patient in her tribulations and sorrows which she endured at the crucifixion of Christ; believing in all that the Lord promised and did.

**Second: The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Priest Zechariah** (*Luke 1:8 - 80*)

He was a Jewish priest and a servant of the Lord, working in the Temple, managing the affairs of sacrifices, teaching the people the word of God, and conducting worship services. At that time, there were more than twenty thousand priests, and it was difficult for all of them to serve in the Temple at the same time. Therefore, the priests were divided into twenty-four divisions, each consisting of a thousand priests. A lot was cast for one priest to offer incense inside the Temple each year. The lot fell to Zechariah from the division of Abijah, and this was not by mere coincidence, for there is no coincidence in the lives of believers, but there is God's providence and timing. So, do not speak of coincidence in your life, but speak of God's providence and care. The angel informed the priest Zechariah, while he was inside the Temple, that he would have a son, despite his advanced age, and the angel gave him a sign

that he would be unable to speak until this child was born, and also so that the people would know that an angel had spoken to the priest in preparation for the message of the son, John. And when the child was born, he named him "John," meaning "the Lord is gracious" according to the angel's words, because God would be gracious to mankind, and John would come to prepare and pave the way before Jesus Christ.

**Third: The Annunciation to Joseph the Carpenter** (*Matthew 1:18–25*)

It was necessary for Jesus Christ to have a father to care for Him in His childhood, and it was also difficult for this righteous man who was betrothed to a virgin girl, Mary, to accept that his betrothed was pregnant. Therefore, he intended to divorce her quietly, i.e., without making it public. So, God sent him an angel to reassure him that what was conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit and not an act of immorality, i.e., without the will of a man. So, he believed in faith and took his wife. And Joseph believed that this happened so that what the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel," meaning "God with us." That is, God would "incarnate" to be among us, taking on our human flesh, so that He could offer the perfect sacrifice for us.

**Fourth: The Shepherds and the Angels** (*Luke 2: 8 – 20*)

There were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, and in the deep darkness, they saw a great light, and a great multitude of angels appeared to them, and they announced to them that a Savior, "the Christ," was born for them in Bethlehem. And this great multitude of angels was praising God, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" The simple shepherds believed in the angels and went to visit this newborn. They found Him in a manger (i.e., an animal feeding trough), and that was a wondrous thing, for

naturally kings are born in palaces, but Christ was born poor so that every poor person might know that Christ came for him, and He came humbly so that every person who comes to Him may be humbled. Here we point to the connection between "Glory to God in the highest... and on earth peace," as it is said in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." For the glory that is in the highest, i.e., in heaven, came and dwelt among us so that we might have God's peace and joy on earth. And so that the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, who said: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:67). Christ came to give us the peace of God the Father, which everyone who believed in Him and became His child enjoys... This peace that comes because of the confidence that we have an eternal hope, that we will be in heaven upon our departure from this life, and that is not from the works of our piety but because of His mercy and redemption, for He paid the price of our salvation from the dominion of sin.

**Fifth: The Magi (Wise Men) Present Gifts to Jesus Christ** (*Matthew 2:1-12*)

We do not know much about the Magi (Wise Men), but they appear to have been students of astronomy. We also do not know their number or where they came from, but they came from the East. But some scholars think they came from "Parthia" near the site of ancient Babylon. Interpretations about this star that appeared to them have also multiplied; some say it was a star that appeared due to the conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars. They came to Herod to ask about the newborn who would be king. King Herod became afraid and persuaded the Wise Men or Magi to go and search for the child, and when they found Him, they should return to him again so that he too might go and present his gifts. And when King

Herod summoned the religious scholars and asked them, where would the king (the Messiah) be born? They told him that He would be born in "Bethlehem of Judea." Therefore, he ordered that all male children two years old and under be killed, according to what was stated in the prophecy of the prophet Micah, to ensure the elimination of the new king. How many times are we unable to obey God for the sake of personal loss? Herod deprived himself and his house of faith in Christ, who gives eternal life and an imperishable kingdom and an eternal inheritance. As for the Magi, the star led them to the place of Jesus Christ's birth, and they came and presented gifts to Him: gold (indicating that He is a king), frankincense (i.e., incense, indicating that He is a priest), and myrrh (indicating the bitterness of His crucifixion), as some commentators say. And although the Jewish teachers knowledgeable in religion and the Holy Scriptures knew that Christ would come, they rejected Him and did not accept His message because it did not align with their purposes. And the Magi returned by another route after the angel appeared to them in a dream. Therefore, Herod ordered the killing of all children under two years, and thus the prophecy was fulfilled that there was a voice of weeping and loud lamentation heard in Ramah, i.e., in the cities of the Jews, because their women would weep for their children. Therefore, Joseph, Mary, and the child went to Egypt, fleeing this killing, and therefore it was also said, "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hosea 11:1, cf. Jeremiah 31:15).

### **Summary**

The prophecies spoken hundreds of years ago about the coming of Christ, about His miraculous virginal birth, about His birth in the small city of Bethlehem, about His role as Savior, and about His atoning redemption on the cross have been fulfilled. Even though the Gospel in the original Greek used the word for virgin, and this clearly means a girl who has

not been married before, this is a difficult matter to understand, and we also cannot be convinced of it without the element of faith.

We find that the connection between all the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ is closely connected by faith. So, Mary believed that God is able to do what humans cannot; the priest Zechariah believed that he would have a son in his old age, and that this child who would bear a name meaning "the Lord is gracious" is the one who would prepare the way before Jesus Christ, proclaiming that the all merciful God would send Jesus Christ as mercy and grace to the world. And the shepherds also believed what the angels said, so they went to worship Him; and the Magi (people of wisdom) believed that Christ the King who would reign over people's hearts had been born, so they came and worshiped Him.

The element of faith is what leads us to follow Jesus Christ and His redemption and atonement for us, humans. Therefore, we must strive to understand and then believe and thereby attain eternal life. And we explained the meaning of the name Christ, i.e., the Anointed One of God for the accomplishment of redemption. And we also meditated on the meaning of the name Yeshua or Jesus or Iesous or Isa, all of which are designations for the original Yeshua, meaning Savior and we will explain in detail the matter of sin and salvation later. And we reviewed the term "Son of God" and that it is not a metaphorical term, nor an expression of a human relationship between God and Mary, but an expression of the Incarnation. We pointed to the necessity of faith to accept these truths and that faith is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to bring us to heartfelt and intellectual conviction. What many do, which they call celebrating the glorious Nativity, especially in Western countries, does not conform to the commandments and teachings of the Lord of this feast and its reason. Many have descended into turning this sublime occasion into commerce and financial gain, heedless of the commandments and teachings of this Christ who will come to judge the living

and the dead, and who will give eternal life to everyone who becomes His disciple, i.e., who keeps His commandments and teachings.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Childhood of Jesus Christ, and His Circumcision**

We know little about the childhood of Jesus Christ, yet the Gospels mention a few accounts that shed light on significant aspects of that period of His life. These can be summarized in three key points:

1. His circumcision was on the eighth day as required for every Jew, in order to fulfill the Mosaic Law.
2. He was obedient to His parents, Mary and Joseph, and He undoubtedly worked with His earthly father in the craft of carpentry until the beginning of His public ministry.
3. He grew in religious knowledge and grew in body, spirit, and mind.

And the grace of God was with Him, and He was beloved by everyone.

#### **The Circumcision of Jesus Christ** (*Luke 2: 21*)

God commanded Abraham to circumcise every male, eight days after birth as a sign of the covenant He established with him (Genesis 17). Abraham's descendants continued to observe this tradition. Later, the Lord reaffirmed this command to Moses (Leviticus 12).

The Mosaic Law also required that every woman who gave birth present herself at the temple forty days after delivery to offer a sacrifice for purification. A wealthy family would offer a

one-year-old lamb, while a poorer family—such as the family of Christ—would offer a pair of doves or two young pigeons (Leviticus 12). This is what Joseph and Mary did. On the eighth day, the child was purified (circumcised), and a name was given to Him as the angel had commanded them: He would be called "Yeshua," from which comes the word "Jesus" in Arabic, meaning "the Savior." In the Greek language in which the Gospel words were recorded, the name "Iesous" was used, which became "Isa" in the Arabic language used in the Noble Qur'an.

Joseph and Mary came from Nazareth to the temple in Jerusalem to present the sacrifice, bringing the child "Jesus-Yeshua" with them. Because they were poor, they offered a pair of doves. This teaches us that there is no shame in being poor, for Christ came and lived in poverty to redeem every person, whether rich or poor. Thus, the family of Jesus Christ fulfilled the ordinances and the Mosaic Law given by the Lord to Moses. In this regard, we must not forget that Christ said, "I have not come to abolish but to fulfill," although He opposed the interpretation of some of the Law's commandments and precepts, He restored their correct understanding, as we will study later. As for Christ's followers and disciples, they understood that circumcision is the "external sign" of the relationship between God and man and is not a religious obligation or requirement. Therefore, baptism replaced circumcision as an "external sign" of a public confession that a person follows Jesus Christ, is in a sacred covenant with Him, and has pledged to obey Jesus Christ's commandments and teachings and to walk in piety, as we will study later. Baptism is performed by sprinkling water, resembling a person's washing, and is a sign of the forgiveness of sins and entry into a sacred covenant with God.

Christian baptism is usually performed by a priest or clergyman, by immersing the person being baptized in water or by sprinkling them with water after asking them if they believe in Christ as their personal Savior, and if they promise to live in piety in the present time

until the day of their death and departure to heaven. If it is a child, the pledges are taken from the parents to raise this child in the fear of God as a child of the sacred covenant between Christ and the Church. There are several forms for performing baptism, differing among Christian denominations, including immersion in river water or in a large basin in the church, or sprinkling water on the head. One of the Christian denominations is called "Baptist" because they believe that baptism is for adults only; adults are the ones who know the true meaning of baptism, not children, as children have not made their personal decision to follow the Lord. The baptism of children does not mean their eternal salvation, but rather the parents' pledge to raise their children in the fear of the Lord and according to His commandments. Despite this, there are many Christians who do not follow Christ's teachings or glorify Him in their lives even though they have been baptized. Therefore, this denomination decided to scrutinize this matter. When Christ's message spread among other peoples who were not Jewish (who did not practice circumcision), many discussions took place among Jesus Christ's followers and disciples regarding this matter. Since circumcision is not efficacious for man's salvation, eternal redemption, and his relationship with God (Galatians 2, Colossians 5), His followers and disciples preferred not to burden those who believed in Christ and His salvation from the Gentiles with the traditions and practices of the Jews (Acts 15). Thus, there became freedom in Christ, or Christianity, regarding circumcision. It is left to personal preference according to the customs and traditions of people, as well as for men's general health. Here, it is worth mentioning that there is no commandment in the Holy Bible regarding (female circumcision) at all, and the people of God never practiced this custom at any time. We conclude that God gave women their full physical right in marriage, just like men, because God blessed marriage and sexual relation. This was also for the survival and multiplication of humans as

the Lord commanded when He created Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 2).

The Apostle Paul spoke about circumcision in (Romans 3), confirming that circumcision avails nothing, neither hastening nor delaying in much or in little, but faith is what justifies a person, and that God will justify the person who practiced circumcision (by his faith), and also will justify the person who did not practice circumcision (by his faith as well). He added that true circumcision is the "circumcision" of the heart, whereby Christ "cut off" sin by His death on the cross, and therefore baptism became a symbol of the covenant between God and man instead of circumcision.

#### **The Story of Simeon the Elder and Anna the Devout** (*Luke 2:22–38*)

We read these two stories in the Gospel according to Luke the Evangelist (chapter 2), after he narrated the story of Christ's circumcision and the presentation of the offering (a pair of doves) in the temple of the Lord. The story tells us that there was a pious, devout elder to whom God had revealed (by the Holy Spirit) that he would not see death before seeing Jesus Christ, who would redeem the world. This was fulfilled, and he rejoiced for the realization of this hope which the men of God throughout all ages had been awaiting according to God's promise. Simeon said, "Now, Lord, you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples." That is, this salvation would be for all the peoples of the world, not only for the people of Israel. Although this salvation came from the children of Israel, as Jesus Christ was of Jewish origin, many Jews rejected Him and did not accept Him because they did not wish to believe in that Christ who would reign over the hearts of humans. They were expecting an earthly king who would make them superior to all nations and liberate them; they wanted an

earthly kingdom, not the kingdom of heaven. This pious elder also prophesied that the Saint Mary would have "a sword pierce through her own soul," meaning that she would suffer for the sufferings of her Son, Christ, on the cross and the treatment of those who rejected Him. There is no need for us to describe the pain of a mother seeing her son scourged, crowned with thorns, and then crucified. As for the second story, it is the story of Anna the prophetess, who rejoiced when she saw the child in His mother's arms. She praised God and spoke about Him to those devout people from the Jewish people or from other nations who were present in the temple to offer sacrifices and offerings to God, awaiting His coming. Through these two stories mentioned by Luke the Evangelist, he confirmed an important truth: that this is the Christ who would come and would not be a savior for Israel only, but for all human beings who would believe in Him. And that salvation is for all people, not restricted to the people of Israel, and that in Him (i.e., in the name of Jesus Christ) all the tribes of the nations would be blessed.

### **Why Did God Choose the People of Israel?**

God did not choose the people of Israel to be "His chosen people" because of their piety or because they were better than other nations. On the contrary, God chose the people of Israel despite the hardness of their hearts and their disobedience. He said about them that they are a "stiff-necked people" and disobedient to the will of God, and a people "dull of hearing." Nevertheless, He chose them to be a blessing and a grace to other nations, and for God to be glorified through them, as from among them would come Jesus Christ who would give redemption, and to be an example to other nations in submission to God and in loving Him. When we study the Holy Scriptures, we find that God dealt with many non-Jews among the personalities mentioned in the Holy Bible, such as Job, Ruth from whose lineage Christ came, Cornelius the Roman soldier, the Ethiopian eunuch, and others.

When Jesus Christ came, it was expected that the first to believe in Him would be the Jewish people, but they rejected Him and even killed Him, thinking they were thereby rendering service to God to preserve their traditions and way of life. But the first to accept faith in Christ were His disciples, who were also from among the Jewish people, and they became a blessing and grace to other nations. God used His first disciples in spreading the Gospel message first to the Jewish synagogues where the first apostles went... and there they met Jews in those synagogues, including the devout who believed that this was the Christ (i.e., the Anointed One) whom God had promised. His disciples were confident and argued that Christ had come; some believed and others rejected. Unfortunately, those who rejected Christ's message did not allow those who believed in Jesus Christ to continue worshiping in the temple, but expelled them, imprisoned them, and killed many of them (Acts 7). Therefore, it became necessary for the Church (which is the community of believers) to be formed away from the Jewish synagogues, gathering first in homes, then they had places of worship after their conditions stabilized and after Christ's followers paid a heavy price for spreading the message of salvation. The price in many cases was sacrificing their lives. History informs us that all the disciples of Christ whom He chose were martyred for the sake of spreading this message.

#### **The Flight to Egypt** (*Matthew 2:13–15*)

Interpreters believe that Joseph, Mary, and the child Jesus came to Egypt when He was less than two or four years old, fleeing from the order issued by King Herod who wanted to kill all male children less than two years old, thereby ensuring the elimination of anyone who could become king. This was because the Magi (wise men from the East) had come to worship Him as king, and thus there would be no one to compete with him or his sons for the throne of the kingdom. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled that "Rachel," the name of Isaac's

wife, referring to the daughters of the Jews, would weep for her children, and a voice of wailing and loud lamentation would be heard in the land of Judea (Jeremiah 31), as we studied previously. This event must have happened suddenly, so no one could escape or flee from that wrath, but divine providence preserved the life of Jesus Christ to accomplish its purpose, which is providing eternal salvation. Thus, the prophecy that says, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1) was fulfilled. It is not known how long Jesus Christ spent in Egypt, but most likely it was a period not exceeding five years, which the Holy Family lived in peace and quietness, even in the absence of Jews in the area due to the generosity and love of the Egyptians for strangers. History records that many Jews came to Egypt after 70 A.D, i.e., seventy years after Christ's death, to live there after the destruction of the temple, and they lived and settled in the land of Egypt for hundreds of years. From this, we know that the Holy Family lived in peace among the Egyptians who hosted them, honored them, and opened their hearts to them.

**The Return to Nazareth** (*Luke 2:39–40; Matthew 2:19–23*)

When King Herod died (history tells that he was a cruel king), an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream asking him to take the child Jesus and His mother and return to "Nazareth." Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled that He "would be called a Nazarene" (i.e., from the city of Nazareth) (Isaiah 11:1). After returning from Egypt, He lived in Nazareth. The city of Nazareth was close to Jerusalem; it was a humble city, not a city of kings or the wealthy, but a city of trade, where corruption, theft, and fraud were rampant. Therefore, one of Christ's disciples, when he was first invited to come and see Christ from Nazareth, said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). This teaches us that God may call us to go to a city famous for corruption, to preach His goodness, and that we can live as children of God

during a corrupt city full of evils, and that God has His followers even in the most corrupt countries.

**Jesus Christ Grows and Becomes Strong in Spirit and Grace** (*Luke 2:41–52*)

Jesus Christ had not yet reached the age of twelve when He went up to the temple with His parents and was discussing and debating with the Jewish teachers. He likely went up to the temple on one of the important feasts like the Day of Atonement or Passover and undoubtedly went up with many men, women, and children. Perhaps His parents thought He was with the other party until the time of departure came, and they were surprised by His absence, so they began a serious search for Him.

Finally, they found Him in the temple after searching for three days. Christ must have been arguing with the Jewish scholars about the coming of the Christ, redemption, atonement, who the Christ is, and the purpose of His coming according to the prophecies contained in the Torah and other holy books. Thus, we know that He understood the Holy Scriptures, which many of the Jewish teachers had erred in interpreting, and the extremists among them had added commandments and ordinances to God's people or interpreted the commandments according to their erroneous concepts. If the grace of God was upon Him and because of His good understanding of spiritual matters, the teachers listened to Him despite His young age. Therefore, there is no age limit for knowing God; every person can draw near to God despite their youth. We must know that this knowledge of spiritual matters was not used by Jesus Christ to declare what would happen in the future or to perform any of the miracles mentioned in the Holy Bible about His childhood. But the Holy Bible teaches us that He was knowledgeable of the Scriptures, not a performer of miracles like a magician or sorcerer.

The Holy Bible does not tell us that He spoke in the cradle before the age of natural awareness and understanding as mentioned in some apocryphal gospels like the "Arabic Infancy Gospel." As for performing miracles, that happened from the beginning of His ministry to its end, to announce His person and message and to confirm this message. In this story narrated by Luke the Evangelist, His parents searched for Him for three days. Since one of the important sources from which Luke the Evangelist derived his information was Virgin Mary herself, she must have been telling the story with the feelings of a mother whose son was lost for three days, searching for Him with what she described as agony. The most important comment when they found Him, and these words were ringing in the ears of the mother of Jesus Christ, was what Jesus Christ said: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" She knew well, being one of the people most aware and believing in who the true Father of Jesus Christ is, namely God the Father who sent His Holy Spirit upon her and she became pregnant, and that He is called "the Son of the Most-High." Among the important matters mentioned in the Gospel is that Jesus Christ was obedient to His parents and submissive to them, and Joseph, His father, worked in the craft of carpentry, and undoubtedly Jesus Christ assisted Him. The Gospel does not mention anything about Joseph after that, leading us to conclude that he had died. Jesus Christ must have known much about the Romans and the injustice that befell the Jews because of this occupation through His daily dealings with the people and with Roman soldiers.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Old Testament Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ and Their Fulfillment**

In this chapter, we will learn about the various prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament (i.e., before the coming of Christ) regarding what would happen concerning Jesus Christ (His birth, miracles, life, crucifixion, and resurrection). These prophecies prepared the hearts of the Jewish people to await the coming of the Christ.

#### **God's People Await the Coming of the Savior Messiah**

After the Jewish people returned from captivity or exile (around 538 BC), they rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Both were symbols of the restoration of their relationship with God and their identity as a nation. Since that time, the people had been looking forward to restoring the ancient glories of the reigns of David and Solomon, when the people enjoyed peace, prosperity, and security for their land against any aggression. We must note the close connection between the state's political affairs and religious affairs according to what is stated in the Torah and the Holy Scriptures. When the Romans ruled the land of the Jews, taxes increased, and slavery spread. Therefore, the people looked forward to the coming of a prophet or divine intervention from God to deliver them from the humiliation of colonialism and Roman exploitation of their land and to bring them goodness and blessing. Consequently, the hearts of the Jews were prepared to receive Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ began to travel through the land doing good and performing miracles, crowds gathered around Him. However, their hopes were soon dashed when they felt that Jesus Christ did not come to rule as an earthly ruler nor to be a religious leader, but His mission was higher and nobler: to redeem and save not only the Jewish people but every people, nation, tribe, and tongue. When His disciples realized this truth, their concepts of God's plan for humanity's salvation changed. After

their close affiliation with Judaism, their affiliation became to the kingdom of God, which encompasses the world and not just the state of Israel. Thus, they went about preaching the message of Christ to the nations.

### **First: God's Promises to the People of Israel**

#### *1. The Promise or Covenant with Abraham (Read Genesis 12 - 18)*

God promised our father Abraham that He would bless him and that in his seed all the nations and tribes of the earth would be blessed, as mentioned in (Genesis 22:18). God changed Abram's name (meaning 'exalted father') to Abraham (meaning 'father of a multitude'). When comparing this with what the Apostle Paul says in (the Epistle to the Galatians 3:15-29), one discovers that this One ("your seed") is not Isaac (the son) but is Christ, in whom all the tribes of the earth would be blessed. Thus, Abraham became the father of all believers who would believe in the salvation and redemption of Christ. This is the text of the verse found in (Galatians 3:16): "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your seed,' who is Christ." Thus, the sons of all who believe in Christ and accept His salvation became sons of Abraham.

#### *2. The Promise or Covenant with David (Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16)*

Although this prophecy speaks of Solomon, the son of David, it speaks of the kingdom that would endure forever from the offspring of David. Jesus Christ was from the lineage of David, whose heavenly kingdom became established forever. It is not of the kingdoms of this world but is a permanent and everlasting kingdom. When we read the Gospel, we find that both Matthew and Luke intended to trace the genealogy of Christ from the lineage of David and from the tribe of Judah, in order to confirm that this promise is firm and that He is the King who would reign forever.

*3. The Promise of the New Covenant (Read Jeremiah 31:31-33)*

Therefore, God promised to give His people hearts of flesh, i.e., not hearts of stone that feel and sense but do not obey Him as Father; rather, they would obey Him out of love resulting from God's salvation for them, accomplished on the cross. In this covenant, the Holy Spirit teaches them the word of God and opens their eyes and hearts to understand it. This New Covenant is what happened after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, after which the Church (i.e., the followers of Christ) were formed. The Church is not the buildings but the members of the one body, the followers of Christ who believe in Him. The buildings are the place where they worship the Lord and learn His word.

**Messianic Prophecies Concerning Christ and Their Fulfillment**

One of the main reasons for the Gospel writers' belief in Jesus was the way His life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Christ. The following is a list of some of the key prophecies:

*First: Prophecies Concerning the Christ*

- The Birth of Christ in Bethlehem

Matthew 2:1-6      Luke 2:1-10

- The Birth of Christ from a Virgin

Isaiah 7:14      Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

- Christ as a Prophet Like Moses

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19      John 7:40

- Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

Zechariah 9:9      Matthew 21:1-9      John 12:12-16

- Christ Rejected by His Own People

Isaiah 53:1, 3      Psalm 118:22      Matthew 26:3-4; John 12:37-43; Acts 4:1-12

- The Betrayal of Christ by One of His Followers

Psalm 41:9      Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50      Luke 22:19-23

- The Trial and Condemnation of Christ

Isaiah 53:8      Luke 23:1-25; Matthew 27:1-2

- Christ's Silence Before His Accusers

Isaiah 53:7      Matthew 27:12-14      Mark 15:3, 4      Luke 23:8-10

- Christ Endures beatings and Spitting from His Enemies

Isaiah 50:6      Matthew 26:67; 27:30      Mark 14:65

*Second: Prophecies Concerning the Virgin Birth Jesus Christ*

*(Read Matthew 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-20 and compare with Isaiah 7:14)*

"Behold, the Lord Himself will give you a sign" (i.e., that Christ Himself would become a sign for humanity) that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," meaning "God with us." In other words, God became among us and like us (this is what we call the Incarnation of the Word). The birth of Jesus Christ from a virgin who had known no man was not merely to prove the prophecy but to prove the Incarnation. Christ was not like Adam; Adam was created from the dust, while Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Adam sinned, while Christ had no sin. Because the Word (Christ) became flesh, He is fully God and fully man without separation or division. Therefore, He has divine attributes and human attributes. This mystery is great; we cannot comprehend its dimensions with mere intellect or human thinking, but God, through the Holy Spirit, gives us this conviction and this faith. Hence, He is referred to as the "Son of God" to indicate that He was born not by the will of a man nor by human intervention. Here we must know that the description "Son of God" does not mean that Christ was born as a result of a physical relationship between God and Saint Mary – God forbid that He should have a physical relationship like humans, for He is not a man (but God is spirit), and spirit does not procreate or multiply as humans do. While we affirm that the "Son of God" is not in the physical sense or concept, it is also not a metaphorical expression, as some attempt to approximate this reality by comparing it to "son of the Nile, son of the valley, or son of the generation." Rather, this expression is to affirm the reality of the "Incarnation of the Word." As stated earlier, it confirms the sonship of Christ to God, which occurred without the will of a man.

*Third: Prophecy Concerning the Place of Jesus Christ's Birth*

*(Read Matthew 1:1-6; Luke 1, and compare with Micah 5:2)*

The prophet Micah prophesied that Jesus Christ would be born in a small town, Bethlehem, which means in Arabic "House of Bread" or "House of Plenty." It is the city of King David, from whose lineage Jesus Christ came (also read John 7:43).

*Fourth: Prophecy that Jesus Christ Would Be Like Moses the Prophet*

*(Read John 7:40-43 and compare with Deuteronomy 18:15-19)*

The similarity between the prophet Moses and Jesus Christ is that both led the people from slavery to freedom. Moses led the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom. Similarly, Jesus Christ led His people who believed in Him (and would believe) from the slavery of the darkness of sin to the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The second similarity is that both the prophet Moses and Jesus Christ were "from among your brothers," meaning they were from (the children of Israel). And Israel is Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (meaning "prince of God").

The third similarity is that both were truthful in conveying what God told them (read Deuteronomy 18:18): "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." Therefore, Stephen addressed the Jewish leaders, stating that the prophet they were speaking about was Jesus Christ (read Acts of the Apostles 7:37).

*Fifth: Prophecies Concerning the Jews' Rejection of Jesus Christ, and His Family*

*(Read Matthew 26:3-4; John 12:37-43; Acts 4:1-12 and compare with: Isaiah 53:1-3; Psalm 118:22)*

While many Jews accepted Christ's message and believed in it, many others, including the chief priests, rejected His message and did not believe in Him. Because of this rejection, Christ's disciples turned to the Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) to tell them about Christ's message, and thus Christ's message spread to most parts of the world.

*Sixth: Prophecies Concerning the Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem as King*

*(Read Matthew 21:1-9; John 12:12-16 and compare with the Old Testament: Zechariah 9:9)*

Kings were accustomed to entering cities they had conquered riding horses after war. But Christ entered Jerusalem riding a young donkey, indicating that He is a king of peace. When

we examine the word "Jerusalem," it means "land of peace," exactly as Isaiah declared that the Christ would be the "Prince of Peace." He is the King who would reign over people's hearts. Although He entered Jerusalem triumphantly, He did not establish His kingdom on earth because His kingdom is an eternal, heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one. Since then, Christ reigns in the hearts of those who believe in Him, and thus they have peace with God.

*Seventh: Prophecies Concerning the Crucifixion and Suffering of Jesus Christ*

Look at the comparisons and read all those verses prophesied by God's prophets before the coming of Christ, and you will know that they were fulfilled as follows:

1. One of His followers would betray Him and hand Him over to His enemies.
2. He would be arrested and tried.
3. He would not defend Himself before the courts.
4. They would mock and insult Him.
5. He would die on the cross between two thieves.
6. He would suffer.
7. He would be given vinegar (to alleviate the pains of crucifixion), but He refuses it because He wanted to drink the cup of suffering to its end.
8. They would cast lots for His garments to divide them.
9. Not a bone of His would be broken.
10. He would be born poor but buried with the rich.
11. He would rise from the dead and ascend to the heavenly Father.

*Eighth: Prophecy Concerning the Death of Jesus Christ as an Atonement for Sins*

(Compare John 1:29 with Isaiah 53) It is stated in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman (Christ) would crush the head of the serpent (Satan), due to His victory over the devil, thereby offering the perfect sacrifice on the cross.

This is what John the Baptist pointed to when he saw Christ coming and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Just as the Jews offered a lamb without blemish as an atonement for sin, so Christ offered Himself for us on the cross to become an atonement for sin so that we might obtain God's forgiveness. This is what Jesus Christ said when He gathered with His disciples: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you," meaning that He would give Himself for His beloved ones who believe in Him and those who believe in Him will have everlasting life.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Political, Religious, Cultural, and Economic Conditions**

#### **During the Time of Jesus Christ**

In this chapter, we will discuss the following:

#### **First: Political Conditions and the Roman Rule over the Jewish Lands**

The Romans ruled most of the known world at that time after Alexander the Great's conquest of most of the world's lands. They ruled most of Europe, North Africa, Egypt, Turkey, and Palestine, but they did not rule Persia and the Arabian Peninsula. The "Supreme Ruler," or what was called "Caesar," ruled from his central authority in Rome through governors he appointed in various provinces, who were subject to him. We know from the Holy Bible that the

Lord Jesus Christ was born during the days of Augustus Caesar, the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire, and the governor of Judea was Herod the king who was a harsh and unjust ruler. This king was Herod the Great, who renovated the temple to appease the Jews. Herod ruled the country from 37 BC to 4 AD. Subsequently, the kingdom was divided into three provinces to be ruled by his three sons.

The Romans ruled the subjugated lands through a strong army, which was the most powerful army known in that history. It had a great naval fleet and a strong land army, where each legion was divided into five thousand soldiers, and every hundred soldiers were under the authority of a military commander called a centurion. This army worked on building bridges and paving roads, so that all roads led to Rome, enabling them to reach any province under their command in the shortest time to quell revolutionary movements and to revitalize commercial activity for the Roman state. This strong army was able to suppress many insurgencies, and rebellion attempts among the peoples they ruled. There were many attempts among the Jews for independence and expelling the Roman colonizer. Therefore, they became known as revolutionaries who always stirred up trouble, but the Romans quickly suppressed every attempt at independence and separation from the Roman Empire.

The Romans were concerned with maintaining peace in their lands by suppressing all revolutions or insurgency movements in the country. This peace was called (Pax Romana - or the Peace from Rome), thereby enabling them to impose taxes, whether monetary or in-kind. Egypt was considered the breadbasket of the Roman Empire, sending its harvest as an annual tax to the government. This peace was a reason for the spread of thought, languages, and Christianity as well. The Jews considered Roman rule a kind of slavery imposed upon them and were unable to get rid of it despite numerous attempts that almost succeeded in liberating their land. The more resistance and rebellion increased, the tighter the Roman grip on the

Jewish people became. Therefore, the Jewish leaders preferred cooperation with the ruling authority. However, some still harbored the desire for independence and the restoration of the idea of a religious state, which also stemmed from Jewish religious thought. Examples of these revolutions include the Maccabean Revolt, which the Romans suppressed a few hundred years before Christ's days, and after Christ, other revolutions occurred, ending with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and leading to the demolition of the temple in 70 A.D. approximately 40 years after the death of Jesus Christ. After that, the Jews were dispersed throughout the world. Some migrated to Egypt, some to the Arabian Peninsula and Persia, and some migrated to Europe and even Russia. Due to this dispersion, the Jews learned the Greek language because it was the official language of the whole Roman Empire, but they preserved their own Hebrew language for the purpose of preserving and studying the Holy Scriptures. After King Herod's death, the kingdom was divided into three states or provinces ruled by his three sons. We also know, from the Holy Bible, that the Romans ordered a census or a general registration, requiring every individual to return to their homeland or clan to register. Therefore, Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem because they were from the house of David, and there Christ was born. This was, as we discussed before, also a fulfillment of prophecies.

Thus, we see that the Jewish people longed for a "political" savior to deliver them from Roman colonization and enslavement. We can also add the word "religious," because according to Jewish thought, there was a close connection between religion and state. Therefore, when Jesus Christ began His ministry, healing the sick and performing miracles, large crowds of people gathered around Him. They were expecting this earthly king to declare Himself king. This alarmed the Jewish leaders who feared these revolutions that might bring upon them the wrath of the Roman state and its subsequent punishment. King Archelaus was

removed because of the complains of the Jews. The Romans appointed Pontius Pilate as the governor of the Jewish province. During that time the crucifixion of Jesus Christ took place. At that time, Emperor Tiberius ruled the Roman Empire, reigning between 14 AD and 37 AD, approximately 23 years. When the Jewish people realized that the Lord Jesus Christ did not share their "political agenda," they turned away from Him. However, a large crowd believed in Him and in His message and remained faithful to it. They were the disciples who were able to spread believing in Him throughout the Roman Empire. In a short period of time, they were able to establish communities who believed in Him not only at the major cities of the Empire but even to the heart of the Roman state itself in Rome.

We will study the trials of Jesus Christ before the Roman governor Pontius Pilot in more detail later, but we must mention that Governor Pilate found no guilt in Jesus concerning the accusations against Him to be a political leader. Therefore, he tried to save Him from the hands of the Jews through several attempts, including scourging. When these attempts failed in the face of Jewish insistence, he transferred the trial to another governor. When all these attempts failed, he handed Him over to them, washed his hands, and said he was innocent of the blood of this righteous man, firmly believing that He had done nothing deserving the death penalty. However, this does not absolve Pilate of his responsibility for administering justice in his land.

### **Second: Economic and Social Conditions**

The Romans did not collect the heavy taxes imposed on the subjugated peoples themselves but left this task to the governors who ruled these lands. The value of taxes amounted to about 5% of an individual's income. However, tax collectors (publicans) seized this opportunity to earn illegitimate money. Since they had the right to use any Roman military force to

collect these taxes, they gained great influence in the country. Such behavior made them to be hated by the people. We find among those who left this profession and became followers of Jesus Christ two individuals: Matthew, who wrote the first Gospel and the other person is Zacchaeus the tax collector, who promised to repay whatever he had taken from people unjustly to become a true disciple of Christ. The Roman state tax was not the only tax imposed; there were taxes for the temple according to religious customs, such as collecting tithes, as prescribed by the Mosaic Law. The chief priests and those in charge of the temple abused their religious authority and influenced by establishing a market inside the temple for trading currencies, as Jews and others came from many countries to offer sacrifices. They also sold calves, sheep, and doves that were offered as sacrifices to God. This is what Jesus Christ confronted at the beginning and the end of His ministry, and it was, later, became the main reason demanding to crucify Him to get rid of Him.

As for the economic situation of the Jewish people, it did not a better future or progress and prosperity. The Roman state neglected the country's development; their primary concern was not the progress or prosperity of these peoples but rather benefiting from them. Consequently, poverty and injustice increased. We find that Christ dealt with many poor people who gathered around Him and whom He taught. The rich were a minority, but some among them loved Christ's teachings and became His followers such as Joseph of Arimathea, who requested that Jesus Christ be buried in his own tomb. Thus, the prophecy that the Messiah would be born among the poor and be buried among the rich was fulfilled. Here it should be noted that the rich were not feudal landowners but perhaps owned small farms. Regarding "slavery," it was a socially accepted matter, and we must not view this issue through the lens of the present era. Slavery did not necessarily mean injustice and tyranny; it was like a social

organization where laborers worked in agriculture or other jobs. The Old Testament frequently mentioned the etiquette of a master's treatment of a slave and vice versa. However, the hardness of the human heart and arrogance led to mistreatment of slaves, especially women, in many instances. It is worth mentioning that the Lord Jesus Christ never taught the "liberation of slaves." Instead, He taught about love, equality, obedience, and submission, as well as about hard working not laziness. He also taught about faithful stewards whom employers entrust. Christ's message was not about freeing slaves or enriching the poor.

### **Third: Cultural and Linguistic Conditions**

The Greek language was the official language of the vast Roman Empire and was used in correspondence and political affairs of the state. However, the Romans did not interfere in the internal affairs of the lands they colonized and subjugated. They left them to use their original languages, just as the Egyptians used their ancient language, and the Jews used the Aramaic language (which is the colloquial Hebrew) - the language of the ordinary citizens. They also used the Hebrew language in their religious practices as it was the language of the Holy Scriptures. Although the Jews were using the Hebrew language to study the Torah, some of them learned the official language which was the Greek language. They used Greek to study various literatures or philosophies for education, or to use it after migrating to other parts of the Roman state. The Roman state allowed some individuals to become naturalized Roman citizens if they were born in a Roman province or if they pay for it. Therefore, we find that Christ's disciples wrote the Good News about Jesus Christ in Greek, not in Hebrew. Luke the Evangelist and the Apostle Paul both wrote in elegant Greek. Using the Greek language led to the spread of the Gospel message (the Good News) in most parts of the Roman state. After that followed by various translations up to our present time. Although Alexander the Great

built the city of Alexandria and its great library to be a city of science, literature, philosophies, and different cultures. Therefore, the Jewish religious life was not influenced by these philosophies. That is why we do not find conflicts or discussions between Jesus Christ in His teachings and the various Greek philosophies. However, these conflicts appeared when His disciples began preaching in other regions outside Judea. Also, we do not find in Christ's teachings any discussion about homosexuality as they were rarely mentioned in the books of the Torah and the Jewish Prophets. Often, those practices were not prevalent in the society as was the case with non-Jewish societies where Christ's disciples preached outside the Jewish community in later days.

#### **Fourth: The Religious Conditions in Judea**

The Jewish people, in general, were more morally committed than other people. This was due to the existence of the Holy Scriptures and the practice of Jewish worship in the temple, and the long history of religious culture. The temple occupied the foremost place in the life of the Jewish people, even for those dispersed outside Judea. Worship took place in the synagogues, and it was symbolized by praying towards the temple (as the qibla where praying people tune their faces towards the Holy Temple according to Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the temple. Th). Such practice remained active even in Islam where people pray toward Mecca. Every Jew was accustomed to going to the temple annually, and if they lived nearby, they went continuously to worship there. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ went and taught in the temple until the time of His crucifixion and death.

As for public and private life, it was subject to the Ten Commandments, which prohibit theft, adultery, false testimony, and so on. In saying this, we are not measuring the Jews against the holy Word of God but rather comparing Jewish ethics to other nations. Even if the

Jews were not committed in their worship and adherence to the Holy Scriptures, they were bound by the prevailing customs and practices in their society, which influenced their daily behavior. However, this only increased their pride and feeling that they were better and superior to other peoples. In fact, they kept adding many prohibitions and rules to the Holy Word, which results in becoming more difficult to follow. It worthwhile to mention that the Lord Jesus Christ do not criticize the divine inspiration but against the added parts. This led to heated discussions between the Lord Jesus and the chief priests and Jewish teachers, but we do not find any arguments between Jesus Christ and the pagan priests because the Jews did not worship idol after their return from the exile. The real discussions were about the true worship, justice, good works, love, acts of mercy, stewardship, honesty and true worship acceptable to God. We summarize these beliefs representing the religious trends present during the ministry of Jesus Christ as follows:

- 1- The Pharisees: those who were meticulous strict in preserving the Holy Scriptures and what was added to them from the teachings in the Jewish Talmud and the like. There were many discussions between the Lord Jesus Christ and members of this sect and teachers. Although the Lord Jesus agreed with them on most of their basic teachings, they opposed him because of keeping the tradition and hold it more important than following God's revelation. Jesus warned them of following false teachings. Jesus's teachings often contradicted their teachings because He had a different interpretation for the Mosaic Law. These individuals were concerned not with what was godly, but with the tradition of preserving the outer shells of religion. The pharisees were the ones who debated Him most and tried to entrap Him. However, the most disagreement was concerning keeping the Sabbath. They prohibited anyone from doing any work on that day, even doing good

deeds. He told them that “man was not created for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man”, and that life is better than the Sabbath. Jesus violated the fourth command of keeping the Sabbath to return it to follow the original meaning, to better life of humans.

- 2- Sadducees: they were a group of more liberal leaders than the Pharisees. Contrary to the Pharisees, they did believe only on the five books of Moses but not the books of the prophets. They did believe in the “life after death or the Day of Resurrection”. They also did not believe in the existence of angels, thus rejecting many of the teachings of the Old Testament. Therefore, they rejected the various prophecies about the coming Christ. They also leaned more towards politics. Consequently, they were wealthier and were centered in Jerusalem, where the priests and chief priests practiced religion and politics.

Jesus Christ chose to stay away from the conflicts in Jerusalem and chose to begin His ministry in the northern part of the country in the region of Galilee, and then in the cities, villages, and surrounding areas. His fame spread quickly and reached the ears of the leaders in Jerusalem who feared His influence on the people. They sent to Him several times, asking Him about religious issues, the goal of which was to find a charge against Him. Due to their insistence, along with the Pharisees as leaders of the Jewish people, Pilate found no alternative but to hand Him over to them to be crucified.

- 3- The Zealots: they were a group of those who wanted to change the harsh reality by force causing unrest. They believed, as many of today, believe that things does not change except by force. Jesus warned agaist using violence and force especially when preaching religious matters. It worth mentioning that one of Christ's disci-

ples, Simon the Zealot, was from this group who had a change of mind after following Christ the savior. He realized that the message of Jesus is calling for love, forgiveness, truth, and mercy. Therefore, he turned from using force to using logic and peaceful persuasion.

**The Reasons for the spread of Christianity:**

Due to the deterioration of financial and living conditions and the feeling of oppression, the Jewish people longed for that "Savior" who would achieve elevation and independence for them. However, Paul explained thoroughly that Christ was not an earthly savior for the Jews but a spiritual Savior who came to save and redeem every person, not only in that age but in all ages to come, and for every person from every nation, people, tribe, or tongue; so that everyone who believes in His name may receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In addition to the role and works of the Holy Spirit, we can summarize the main reasons in several points:

- 1- The peaceful atmosphere throughout the Roman Empire which favored peaceful travelling and spread of the Good News.
- 2- The paved Road network and navigation throughout the Roman Empire.
- 3- The appeal to the piety, ethics, and prayers of the first disciples
- 4- The miracles accompanied the preaching of the Word.
- 5- The longing for social justice and a loving relationship which was taught and emphasized in the teaching of Christ and His followers
- 6- The longing among pagan societies to create communities ruled by love and care such as the Christian communities.

- 7- The longing for pious life free of sin and immorality in accordance and in obedience to Jesus's teachings.
- 8- The followers of Jesus provided a strong and unrefutably argument for the Lordship and that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah and Savior in accordance with God's plan not only for the Jews but for all mankind.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Jesus Christ Faces Satan**

Many thinkers and scholars attempt to interpret the verses found in the Word of God concerning Satan and the unseen spiritual forces of evil in a way fits their beliefs. Due to the difficulty of accepting the inspiration found in the Holy Books, some have sought to provide an explanation acceptable to reason devoid of the element of faith, claiming that Satan is merely an idea to explain the evil. This has led to denying the existence of Satan and his kingdom, or reducing evil to a mere human failing, error, or simple oversight. This diminishes the gravity and wickedness of sin. When we do not feel that sin is profoundly sinful, humans will not feel the need for salvation. Consequently, Jesus Christ becomes merely a good man, not the Redeemer, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In this chapter, we will learn from what Jesus taught, not only through His teachings but also through the confrontation between Him and Satan, to teach us how to confront Satan even though we are much weak.

**First: Who Satan is? and What His Plan Was?**

Satan is a fallen angel who disobeyed God (Isaiah 14). He is not merely a symbol or an idea, but a real being with a real existence. The Holy Bible tells us that this angel wanted to become like God, therefore, he was cast out from God's presence. Through our study of the Scriptures, we know that Satan constantly works against God and against those who obey Him to hinder God's work and the extension of His kingdom. Since his fall, the Lord did not arrange for his salvation but is kept for the day of eternal damnation in the everlasting hell. Satan is the ruler of this age and has many forces of evil spirits. He possesses great authority and power. We cannot overcome him except by the power of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the power of God Himself, who was able to defeat him on the cross. We also know that Satan is the one who tempted Eve and deceived her into disobeying God. Adam also followed her and fell into the sin of disobedience. This does not place blame on Eve alone nor absolve Adam of responsibility; for God had commanded him to eat from all the trees of the garden, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he must not eat. When Satan tempted Eve, he tried to plant doubt in her heart:

*1- Doubt in God's Love and the Truth of His Word.*

“Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God had created. Satan said to Eve: Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden?

*2- Doubt in God's Punishment or Judgment if They Ate from The Tree.*

Eve said to the serpent, that they may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.” The serpent said to the woman, "You will certainly not die..."

*3- Doubt in the Consequences of Sin and Pride.*

“... For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Disregarding God's command leads to disobedience and breaking His commandments. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." (Genesis 3:1-7). Satan takes many ways to turn people away from following God's ways and doing His will. Among these ways is to stirring doubt in our hearts, so we doubt God's ability and the truth of His promises. Satan often tries to fuel doubt in the truth of the Scripture so that we do not obey God. Satan also tries to afflict us with discouragement and failure so that we do not look to God to solve our problems but rather look to our limited abilities. He also tries to deceive us by making sin appear attractive and without consequences, so that we desire it and go after it, just as Eve desired it and gave it to her husband to sin as well. He also convinces us to postpone good things so that we never do them, or to postpone our repentance so that we never return to God despite of His closeness to us and His surpassing love.

**Second: Satan Tempted Jesus Christ, but He Was Defeated** (*Read Matthew 4:1-11*)

While Satan succeeded in deceiving Adam and Eve, causing them to fall into the sin of disobeying God, he failed in deceiving the Lord Jesus. Satan tried to tempt Christ with a three-dimensional plan to triumph over Him. We note that Satan used the Holy Scripture in the three temptations by modifying them. Satan (or the devil) used various tricks to turn the Lord Jesus away from His mission so that He would take a different path than the one God had set. But despite the weight of the sufferings of the cross, the Lord Jesus knew the divine will, so

He endured all sufferings to accomplish the redemption He offered us on the cross. And at the resurrection, Jesus destroyed all Satan's authority (Colossians 1:13-14). Satan attempt to:

- 1- *Testing Him to prove His status as the Son of God:* "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." And thus satisfy His physical need and feeling of hunger. But Christ knew that He is "the Son of God," and would not use this authority to perform miracles except to confirm His divinity when teaching people; He is not a magician. Jesus answered him, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Here, the Lord Jesus affirms another truth: physical bread does not satisfy a person's spiritual need. He also said about Himself, "I am the bread of life," meaning He alone can satisfy the heart of a person hungry for God's righteousness and holiness. Thus, He is the true bread that came down from heaven to give salvation to all flesh so they may enjoy God's salvation.
- 2- *Testing Him to put God into Test:* Satan is skilled at changing the scriptural text to suit his goals, for he used the verse found in (Psalm 91:11-12): "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." These verses do not mean that a person should throw himself from a height merely because God promised protection but mean that God is with us protecting our feet if they strike stones. Therefore, the Lord Jesus also answered him with what is written, saying, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
- 3- *Testing Him to Worship Other Than God:* When Satan wanted to show the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, he said to Him: "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me." As if Satan wanted to say, why go to the

cross and all its sufferings, since he knew that the earth and its fullness would belong to the Lord Jesus, and that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him. But because of His boundless love, He had to undergo the sufferings of the cross and offer redemption to humanity. Thus, the devil tried to turn Him away from the cross. The Lord Jesus answered, saying, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" This is one of the Ten Commandments, indeed the first and most important one.

### **Satan's Authority**

Satan has authority to move without restraint on earth, for he is the ruler of this world as the Scripture says, but this does not mean he has the eternal, everlasting, and absolute authority that belongs to God alone. The Lord Jesus was armed with the Holy Word of God and would not be misled or made to doubt God's Word. For the ruler of this world is coming, but he has no claim on Him - as Christ said (John 14:30). After Jesus overcame the tempting devil, angels came to serve Him to confirm the Lord's presence was with Him, and here Christ declared victory against Satan since the beginning of His public ministry. From this victory we learn that temptation might be for physical needs, emotional needs or psychological needs. Jesus performed miracles that show His authority over the evil spirits as follows:

- 1- Casting out a demon out of a boy.
- 2- Drove demons out of the daughter of the Canaanite woman.
- 3- Drove an impure spirit out of a man.
- 4- Drove demons out of a demon-possessed man.

When the Jews accused Him of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, meaning He also a demon and was performing these miracles by Satan's

power (Beelzebul, the prince of demons), Jesus answered them saying that every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined. So how can Satan's kingdom stand if he works against himself? No one can enter a strong man's house unless he first ties up the strong man... meaning that Christ has the ability and authority over Satan's forces and the forces of evil so that He can bind the strong man, i.e., Satan, and drive out evil spirits.

**Fifth: Jesus Christ Speaks of Satan's Defeat and End** (*John 12:31-32*)

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." That is, at the cross, the ruler of this world, Satan, was driven out, and he awaits the eternal judgment awaiting him along with all his allies. In the book of Revelation, we find that Satan will meet his appointed fate in the lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10). The Lord Jesus referred to the truth that the eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). This terrible end is not the end awaiting humanity, but a person chooses this end with complete freedom by going to eternal hell. For the Lord Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live." Also, we can say according to what is stated in the book of Hebrews, God did not arrange salvation for fallen angels, meaning Satan and the host of demons, but kept them for eternal damnation. but He arranged salvation for humanity by offering salvation through Christ's death on the cross.

**Sixth: Evil and the Evil One**

When we think or ask ourselves why we do evil? Or why do we do evil, while we wholeheartedly want to do good? ("Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" - Psalm 51:5)? The original sin was inherited by the fall of the first parents, Adam and Eve, and thus death spread to all people. The first sin caused the separation of man

from God spiritually and physically. Thus, sin became inherent in us, and we need power outside our will and out of our corrupt nature to avoid committing sin or thinking about it. This power comes only from God, who can transform us by His Holy Spirit so that we can live according to His will. Therefore, we should not blame Satan if we fall into sin; responsibility lies with us when we sin against God and others. Just as a student fails an exam for many reasons and causes, the result remains the same: failure. The Holy Word of God informs us that Christ said that out of the pure heart comes goodness, and out of the evil treasure of a person's heart comes evil. Therefore, if we feel that evil overcomes us and fills our hearts, we must resort to the One who changes our hearts through the regeneration or rebirth by the Holy Spirit, who can change our hearts. Holiness is separation from evil and drawing near to the holy God, about whom it is written that His eyes cannot see evil. It may seem that God is distant and does not punish evil, but God has clearly revealed that He is a loving God who is patient and slow to anger so that sinners may return to Him. Curiosity or greed may drive us to walk the path of committing evil. The Scripture also commands us not to repay evil with evil so as not to give a place to evil in our souls, but to leave vengeance to God, who judges with divine justice. This means not to seek revenge but leave the judgement to God. We also know from the Holy Scriptures that evil may return against the one who does it. A person may set a trap for their brother may fall into it. We must avoid evil doers and ask God to help us not only to do good but also to keep us from evil.

### **Seventh: Repentance Alone is Not Enough**

The Lord Jesus said that a person who decides to live a godly life must clean the house—through repentance—so Satan leaves and not return. But if this house is not filled with the Holy Spirit, Satan may come back and find the house empty and clean, then comes with seven other spirits more wicked than himself and would dwell in this clean house. Jesus adds

that the final condition of that person would be worse than the first condition. Therefore, repentance alone is not enough, but a person must accept the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and seek to be filled with Him by receiving the Holy Spirit and His work in the heart.

## Chapter 6

### Jesus Christ Begins His Public Ministry

Reading: (Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1)

#### **The Period of Silence**

The period of silence before Christ's coming extended for more than four hundred years. During this time, no prophecies were received, and there were no messages from God to His people. Days may seem long, and we may feel as if God is not present or not answering prayers. However, later the disciples of Christ understood that He came at the right appointed time, as one of them said, "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Hearts were prepared to receive Christ, and the political circumstances, despite their badness, were suitable. The Jews were awaiting the Messiah. The Lord Jesus began His public ministry at the age of thirty. His ministry lasted only three years, during which He did much and impacted all our humanity.

#### **First: John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Christ** (*Matthew 3:1-12*)

We read about the birth of John, son of the priest Zechariah, to whom an angel appeared and informed him that he would have a son. He would be the one to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. Thus, the prophecy found in (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3) was fulfilled: "I will send my

messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"— "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" The meaning here is not that the Lord would send an angel from heaven, but that He would send a person bearing a heavenly message, which was to "repent and be baptized... with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Baptism is the "immersion" of the repentant person in water before God's servant as a declaration of repentance to others. Therefore, John the Baptist said, "I baptize you with water, but after me will come one who is more powerful than I, ...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Christ would baptize with another kind of baptism like fire that purifies, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we read the story of Abraham, we find that "circumcision" is the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants. Circumcision continued as the sign of the covenant between God and His people until the coming of the Lord Jesus, who was also baptized. But after Christ died and rose, He commanded His disciples to preach His message, teach people His commandments, and baptize them in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism became a "sign" for allegiance to the Lord Jesus and acceptance of Holy Spirit's work. John the Baptist came with a stern message and had a powerful impact. He said that every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into fire. The Baptist's message was surprising, but it was clear and evident. Therefore, his fame spread, and people came to him from every side. However, when John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus coming, he said, "Look, the *Lamb of God*, who takes away the sin of the world!" In doing so, he represented the lamb offered daily in the temple as a sacrifice for the people and on the annual great Day of Atonement fulfilled by Christ when he died at the Cross. Unfortunately, John the Baptist was unjustly executed.

**Second: The Testimony of John the Baptist** (*John 1:19-41*)

John the Baptist confirmed that he is not the Christ, but he came to bear witness and prepare the way before Him. He also confirmed that Jesus is from heaven and would speak the words of God, which people might not accept. He attested that he baptizes with water but the one who will come after him (meaning Christ) is more powerful and would baptize with the Holy Spirit, which purifies like fire, for the forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist witnessed that "this is the Christ," for he heard a voice from heaven during Christ's baptism saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." The Jews used to baptize Gentiles who convert to Judaism to acknowledge and confess their sins. But John the Baptist baptized all who repented of their sins, including non-Jewish people. He attested that repentance has two important aspects:

(a) Turning away from sin and evil.

(b) Drawing near to God and doing acts demonstrates fruits of repentance.

This is what the Lord Jesus said in His parable about the person who cleaned his house and cast out the devil without filling it with God's Spirit. Therefore, the devil returns, finds it empty, is swept clean, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first (Matthew 12:43-45). The Lord Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the church in (Acts 2) and became a gift from God to all who accept His salvation and grace.

**Third: The Baptism of Jesus Christ** (*Matthew 3:13-17*)

The Lord Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. But John initially refused, saying that he needed to be baptized by Christ. However, Jesus requested that he allows it now "to fulfill all righteousness"... to accomplish all required goodness... Thus, the Lord Jesus fulfilled all

that was required of Him in the flesh, for He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. When He was baptized by John the Baptist, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus. A voice was heard from above, saying, "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." In that scene, we see God the Father with a voice from heaven, the Son in the waters of the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (i.e., the Holy Trinity gathered), and John the Baptist bore witness to Him. Baptism is not merely washing with water, but it is the confession of spiritual cleansing from sin through true repentance and a sincere desire to leave every evil way so that a person may become a child of God who does what pleases Him. And since we know that John the Baptist came with a spirit of judgment (like Elijah), therefore he testified against King Herod that it was not religiously lawful for him to marry his brother's wife, so Herod threw him into prison. When that woman's daughter danced, the king was pleased and swore to give her whatever she asked, up to half his kingdom. Since she did not know what to ask for, she went to her mother, who asked her to request the head of John the Baptist so there would be no barrier preventing the king from marrying her. This indeed happened, and they brought John the Baptist's head on a platter. Then the disciples took his body and buried it. But during his imprisonment, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask the Lord Jesus if He was the one who was to come, or should they expect another. Perhaps John the Baptist expected Christ to come and free him from prison by the power of God's Spirit or by some miraculous means, or perhaps he doubted that this was the Christ. When we face sufferings and tribulations, we doubt that God is with us. But the Lord Jesus sent a message to him as if reminding him of the prophecies that say the blind will see, the mute will speak, and the sick will be healed—this is what the awaited Messiah does. Some also believe that John sent his disciples to the Lord Jesus because he knew his hour had come and wanted his followers

to transfer their allegiance to following the Lord Jesus, and that he must decrease while Christ must increase. But regardless of the reason John sent his disciples to the Lord Jesus, this was the end of John the Baptist's ministry and the beginning of the Lord Jesus's public ministry.

The Scripture tells us that the Lord Jesus Himself did not baptize anyone, but His disciples were the ones who baptized. For the Lord Jesus's mission was not baptism but offering salvation to humanity. We also know that many who knew only of John's baptism in various regions continued practicing John's baptism for a long time and in many places even after his death. But everyone baptized by John the Baptist needed to be baptized by the Holy Spirit by accepting the atoning work of Christ on the cross. When we read the story found in the book of Acts (chapter 19), when Paul asked twelve disciples about their baptism, they said they were baptized with John's baptism. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. We need to read John 3, to understand the Baptism of Spirit because it will be the key for our Holy Spirit Baptism. It worthwhile to mention that Jesus didn't start his public ministry until he reached thirty years of age.

#### **Fourth: The Lord Jesus Begins His Public Ministry** (*Matthew 4:12-25*)

After confronting Satan in the wilderness, the Lord Jesus returned and settled in the city of Capernaum by the sea. He began His ministry by calling His disciples one after another until their number reached twelve disciples. The Holy Scripture teaches us that Jesus traveled through the towns, teaching about the kingdom of God and healing the sick, the demon-possessed, and those having seizures. His fame spread, and people came to Him from everywhere. The region of Galilee was rich and prosperous because it was a center for several Roman military administrations. Therefore, corruption and evil spread there, and Christ later

criticized it (Matthew 11). In the city of Capernaum, there was a Jewish synagogue where Jesus would go and teach. As for the Decapolis cities, which were cities across the Jordan river, they were non-Jewish cities. Therefore, the Lord Jesus's mission from its beginning was not limited to calling Jews, for He was rejected by His own: "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

**Fifth: Jesus Christ Goes Up to Jerusalem** (*Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45-46*)

The celebration of the Passover feast took place annually in the Temple in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). The Jews would go to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover. The feast usually lasts for one day, and then the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the rest of the week. The entire week commemorated the exodus of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt and their liberation from slavery (Exodus 12:1-13). The temple was built on a mountain overlooking the city. King Solomon built this temple before the Babylonians destroyed it (2 Kings 25). This temple was rebuilt after the people of Israel returned from exile around 515 BC. Then Herod the Great expanded and renovated it. Thousands of worshippers came annually to Jerusalem and to the temple to present their sacrifices. Since the sacrifices had specific requirements, many would come and buy the sacrifices in the temple courts. Those coming from distant lands would exchange their currency at the money change tables at the temple courts, as the temple tax was paid in local currency. Therefore, the money changers charged high fees and were not honest. When the Lord Jesus saw the greed and avarice of the merchants and money changers who were working under the supervision of the chief priests, His anger and holy zeal increased, for they had misused God's temple. It should be a house of prayer, but they had turned it into a marketplace. Therefore, He made a whip out of cords, overturned the tables of the money changers, and drove out the sheep sellers with His divine

authority. However, soon things returned to how they were after Jesus left, and He did not return until three years later at the end of His ministry, where He did the same thing in cleansing the temple a second time. Let us beware lest our worship turns into unfaithfulness and let us beware of using God's house for commerce or making deals. Rather, our going to God's house should be for prayer and offering our worship to Him.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Teachings of Jesus Christ:**

#### **The Sermon on the Mount (1)**

Reading: The Gospel of Matthew 5, 6, 7

**Part One:** The Beatitudes,

**Part Two:** Christian Conduct

The Lord Jesus taught with an authority surpassing that of the chief priests and other teachers. Therefore, the disciples and the crowds were amazed at His teachings and followed Him from place to place. The Sermon on the Mount occupies a primary position in the teachings of Jesus Christ; consequently, it has been the subject of research and interpretation by many commentators and students of the Holy Scriptures. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the "Beatitudes" (the word "blessed" means "Oh, the happiness" or "Oh, the blessing that will come"). The Lord Jesus wanted to reinterpret or restore the original meaning of the commandments of the Torah and the books of the prophets, after many Jewish scholars had exerted effort in interpretation and adding to what the commandments contained. The Lord Jesus also wanted to add a new spiritual dimension to these teachings, not to abolish them but

to fulfill them with what had occurred in the age of grace through the coming of the Holy Spirit. When we read the Sermon on the Mount, we feel perplexed. Are these teachings the highest standard we must attain, and thus the standard by which we must measure ourselves? Or are they the minimum standard a person who wants to follow the Lord Jesus must live by? The answer to this question is not simple, but we can say that the Lord Jesus intended both: it is the highest standard toward which the teachings of the Old Testament looked, which we must strive to achieve and thus live by. Secondly, it is the minimum standard for every person who has accepted the redemptive work and been renewed by the Holy Spirit, who changes the inner life and the inner person of everyone. From the Gospel of John, chapter 3, we can understand that being born from above enables a person to live a different life because it changes a person's inner qualities and will so that Christ may live in us through His Spirit. There are four approaches to understand the Beatitudes:

### **1-What is the Moral Code for those Who Follow Christ**

There was a code, i.e., commandments given by God to Moses for God's people to follow. They govern the relationship between a person and his Creator, between a person and his fellow human being, and between a person and society. But a people might maintain the traditions of the relationship with God while their hearts were far from Him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus wanted to restore the original meaning of these commandments, which is what He spoke about in the Beatitudes.

### **2- They Distinguish Between Values of the World and the Values of God's Kingdom**

Jesus was preaching the values of the kingdom. The world's measures of success differ from the measures of success in God's kingdom. The world evaluates success by wealth, fame, and position, whereas in God's kingdom, true success is fulfilling God's will in our lives.

### **3- They compare superficial, external religiosity with true religiosity**

Jesus is concerned with genuine, sincere religiosity reflected in the lives of believers.

### **4-They are the Expectations and Anticipations of the Old Testament that Will be Fulfilled in God's kingdom in the New Covenant**

After calling His disciples and beginning His ministry calling people to the kingdom of God through repentance and returning to God, He began healing the sick, the paralyzed, the mute, and the deaf. Therefore, His fame spread throughout the region, and crowds came to hear His teachings and see His miracles. His teachings were closely connected to His life, for He lived the message He preached. The crowds came from the regions of Galilee, the Decapolis (Gentile cities), Judea, Jerusalem, and the regions beyond the Jordan (according to Matthew 4:25). Therefore, Jesus went up on a mountainside or likely a hill so the crowds could see Him.

When Jesus declared that the kingdom of God had drawn near, He taught them about:

First: Humility: Who are the "poor in spirit"? Christ promises the kingdom of God to those who are poor in spirit and those who live a life of brokenness and humility before God. They live that life which submits completely to God, through repentance, confession of sin, and acceptance of the atoning work God accomplished through Christ on the cross for us. This humility allows the Holy Spirit to change our lives. Perhaps scholars and dignitaries do not obtain this salvation, but rather those who believe with simple faith and a humble heart in what the Lord has promised. There is no pride or arrogance before God's words and thoughts. Christ confirmed this when He placed a little child in their midst and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven," meaning He was referring to the simplicity of faith. We might recall here the famous

verse, "Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Second: Mourning: The Lord Jesus does not mean mourning the loss of loved ones, but rather mourning or regret and sorrow over our sins and iniquities. He promises that those who mourn over their sins and bring them to the Lord will surely find redemption through the forgiveness that the Lord Jesus gives them, as well as through the work of the Holy Spirit to confirm this forgiveness, as stated in (2 Corinthians 1:4). Thus, after the Holy Spirit grants them redemption, they transition to a life of joy, the joy of forgiveness of sins and fellowship with the Holy Father.

Third: Meekness: The world knows only the logic of power (in its various forms). The world knows only that the strong are the ones who inherit and possess the earth. The weak have no place, and therefore revolutions arise to change the scales for the sake of justice in distributing wealth between the strong and the simple, and crime increases as the poor seek by force to reclaim what the strong took from them. But Christ speaks of another earth, not the perishable earth. It is the earth that remains forever; because this earth will pass away, or we will leave it through death sooner or later. Therefore, we must strive for that eternal earth, that earth which is inherited only by the humble and the meek who accept Christ's words when He said, "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14). And although the Lord Jesus was speaking about the eternal earth, we find that earthly blessings also include the pious. Therefore, despite many difficulties and shrinking opportunities for believers in Christ, we find that the pious also prosper and bear fruit because of their faithfulness in their work and diligence. And since the faithful and pious do not spend money

on whims and evils, they are more likely to preserve their wealth than the wicked, and thus their wealth may increase.

Fourth: Righteousness and Goodness: The Lord Jesus promised those who hunger and thirst for righteousness that God the Father would satisfy them. Since there are a hunger and thirst in every person for goodness and righteousness, those who search with hunger and thirst for God's righteousness and goodness will find them and will find their sufficiency and satisfaction. God answers prayer, especially if a person strives earnestly to know truth and righteousness. As for justice, the standard of justice in the Old Testament was "retribution," i.e., an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But Christ brought a higher and more comprehensive standard, not only forgiveness but "to do to others as we would have them do to us." Therefore, He established a new standard, which is surpassing love that does not seek revenge on enemies but brings them to Christ and introduces them to His overwhelming love. Here, it is worth saying that earthly justice is necessary to establish peace and security for society. Therefore, words of forgiveness are not for escaping punishment but for avoiding injustice or transgression, as He asks us to treat others as we would want to be treated, according to the command, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Fifth: Compassion and Mercy: When the Lord Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer, He knew that God had forgiven us much. Also, that God had shown us great mercy. Therefore, He asked us to pray, forgiving others and those who have wronged us, remembering how much God has forgiven us, and that we show mercy to others as God has shown mercy to us. Thus, the Lord Jesus indicated that life in God's kingdom is a life of forgiveness, mercy, and compassion, not only compassion for sinners but also compassion for the poor, the needy, and the weak, and sharing in the sufferings of the oppressed and demanding their rights. Therefore, we must perform works of mercy by helping the poor, orphans, widows who have no

supporters, and the oppressed. And as a community of believers, we must participate in relieving those afflicted by earthquakes, volcanoes, and various disasters. Works of mercy glorify God and attract sinners and those far from the Lord to a life of faith. Therefore, Scripture says, "...so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." When a person is stripped of feelings of compassion and mercy, he is stripped of the love of God. Love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives... as the Scripture says, "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." (Galatians 5:22-23) Therefore, when we compare the fruits of the Spirit with the Beatitudes, we find they are closely connected, for we cannot achieve the fruits of the Spirit and the Beatitudes except by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Sixth: Pure Hearts:** Many live a life of deceit and fraud, resorting to devious methods to obtain money, power, or other gains, heedless of the existence of the just God who sees everything and will repay every deed. But those who live the life of the kingdom must have purity of heart to be in piety and walk before God in faithfulness. They commit no injustice, no deceit or fraud is on their lips, and no pride is in their hearts. Therefore, the Lord said, referring to the deceit of the Jewish leaders: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." Perhaps the prophet David realized this spiritual depth—that he could not obtain purity of heart unless God created a new heart within him. He pleaded with the Lord, saying, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." That is, purity of heart is given to us by God through His Holy Spirit.

**Seventh: Peacemakers:** Many often accuse Christians of passivity and isolation, but here the Lord Jesus teaches us not to be content with our personal or family peace, indifferent

to the wars and conflicts around us. Therefore, the Lord Jesus first asks that we do not cause divisions, schisms, or disputes, but that we strive to reconcile others and bring peace between adversaries and those in conflict, because our Christ is the Prince of Peace, and therefore everyone who makes peace is called a child of God.

**Eighth: Faithfulness:** Here, the Lord Jesus speaks about faithfulness—faithfulness of faith without hypocrisy, and steadfastness in it despite persecution or in the face of lack of appreciation. Therefore, the Lord Jesus asks us to rejoice when we are persecuted (Matthew 5:11-12). Persecution may be good for us because:

- 1- It directs our eyes away from earthly rewards and makes us look to heavenly rewards.
- 2- It distinguishes true believers from those who follow the faith for personal gain.
- 3- It strengthens the faith of those who endure persecution.
- 4- It provides an example for others to remain steadfast in faith despite difficulties.

Since the world lives by logic other than faith, faith must inevitably collide with unbelief. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you," and, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world," and "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Therefore, we should expect conflict with those who have rejected faith, just as they rejected the prophets.

## Chapter 8

### The Teachings of Jesus Christ:

#### The Sermon on the Mount (2)

In His teachings, the Lord Jesus Christ laid down principles that shape the believer's life, calling, and relationship with the world.

#### **First: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world”**

*Matthew 5:13-16; Mark 9:50*

Jesus Christ likened everyone who desires to follow Him and believe in Him to salt and light, both of which are of great value to life. Yet both lose their effectiveness if they are spoiled or extinguished. Salt that loses its savor—whether by corruption or by absorbing surrounding moisture—becomes useless. Likewise, when a lamp goes out, it gives no light, and darkness fills the place. Therefore, Jesus Christ asks us to maintain our influence with others by keeping ourselves blameless before God and people as indispensable salt, and as a light placed in a high place to give light to others. Likewise, faith should appear to people and perform works of faith so that this may be a reason for the salvation of others also.

#### **Second: The Moral Commandments of Jesus Christ**

- 1- Anger: Anger is a reaction to exposure to insult or diminishment of status, or non-adherence to agreement or prejudice or oppression or injustice or loss of money or disobedience or the like. Jesus Christ does not speak here about the holy anger which He felt when He saw the sellers and moneychangers turning the house of prayer into a house of commerce. But He speaks here about anger as a natural emotion for what stirs feelings. So, when we get angry, we may speak with what is not permissible and

curse with what does not agree with our characters and utter what we may regret later. Anger may develop into a furious revolution or into committing crime, and therefore Christ warns us from the consequences of anger and therefore everyone who says to his brother "You fool" is deserving the fire of hell. Christ obligates us not to surrender to anger; we must resist it and everyone who controls himself and does not get angry is that person who is victorious in the end.

- 2- Adultery: The fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments says: "Do not commit adultery." But Christ sought to address this sin at its very root—lust. Therefore, He said, "Everyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." In this way, He shows that all people stand in need of His salvation, for when measured by God's standard, all fall short.

The human instinct which God created in humans and His good will in the continuation of human existence is a gift from God. And God crowned that by creating a man and a woman, and God blessed marriage, and commanded saying "Multiply and fill the earth." However, we as humans may not be able to control our instincts and thereby man drifts towards adultery. He who commits adultery sins towards himself first and towards others. But the most important from this is that it is a sin towards God and His kingdom. Although the Prophet David sinned against Uriah the Hittite by taking his wife, he prayed requesting God's forgiveness saying: "Against You, You only, have I sinned and the evil before Your eyes I have done." And God responded as He said to him "I have transferred your sin from you." Therefore, Christ expressed that meaning that we are all sinners and in need of God's forgiveness and His salvation.

- 3- Reconciliation: Jesus Christ instructed everyone who follows Him to live in peace with each other, and to strive towards this peace by all possible ways. Even if the person remembers while presenting his offering that his brother has something [against him], then let him leave the offerings on the table and go to reconcile with his brother. So, reconciliation with the brothers is more important than presenting the sacrifices and offerings.
- 4- Divorce: “do not divorce your wife and do not marry a divorced [woman]” The men in the days of Christ were divorcing their wives for the most trivial reasons, or merely for lust for another woman. And in that is a breach of the covenant and the first plan by which God created Adam and Eve and made them one body. Therefore, the word adultery here does not mean the act itself but the breach of the covenant. And when they asked Christ about divorce, He spoke about marriage, so He said to them because from the beginning He created them male and female. And when the man asks to marry a woman and the woman accepts that man then they enter a sacred covenant that lasts for a lifetime. Jesus Christ said that what God has joined together in this covenant, no one can separate.
- 5- Speak truthfully and do not swear: Everyone who speaks truth does not need to swear, and everyone who swears may be a liar. Jesus Christ instructed us not to swear by heaven or what is on earth or by the temple or even by the name of the prophets; that is because we do not own any of them. So, Jesus Christ instructs us to speak the truth always and not lie and not be forced to swear or take an oath. And in truth [there is] salvation that remains despite circumstances and conditions.

6- Revenge: it is difficult to follow this commandment, but this commandment shows the extent of our human weakness. So, we, as humans, do not know tolerance nor forgiveness but with the power of The Holy Spirit we are able to do that. People often err in interpreting these blessed words, so they become negligent in their rights and the rights of their homelands and the rights of their children. So, these verses do not contradict resorting to earthly justice and to heavenly justice. After that, Jesus continued to teach about love, forgiveness,

After that, Jesus gave the hardest command to love you enemy. How can man love his enemy? And how can man ask for good and blessing for those who intend for him evil or harm? And how can man do good to those who cause him evil, loss, insult, humiliation or distress? The words of Christ provoke confusion, even rejection. But He wanted us to share in the attributes of the children of God who must take from the attributes of The Father in His infinite unlimited love. That love which seeks to building not destruction, which wants to attract the enemy to the knowledge of God and to spiritual fellowship so that he may also become a son of God. There is nothing greater than love to attract the enemy so that he becomes a friend and so that he becomes also a son of God. Jesus challenged his disciples about charity saying that charity is not an exchange of interests or cooperation to achieve profits, but charity is benevolence that hopes for nothing. Jesus Christ addresses the method and motive of presenting charity so that "people do not see us to praise us." And therefore, He requested that charity be hidden and unknown to people. It should originate from a sincere heart that loves giving awaiting the reward from God alone and not from people

7- Prayer: Jesus Christ instructed us to examine our internal motives in three matters: charity, prayer, and fasting. And each of these good practices is for the glory of God and not for the glory of man. Not so that people praise us. A person should pray to

God within a personal and intimate relationship with Him. This special relationship strengthens the life of faith and builds the person spiritually. Perhaps some may incite, by using these blessed words, against not going to places of prayer where disagreements or stumbling blocks may abound. But Christ was going up regularly for prayer in the temple and Christ never instructed at all that we do not go to the public meetings for prayer.

All believers need collective prayer for teaching and fellowship. But in these lines, Christ spoke about the importance of the secret and private fellowship life between man and God through prayer. This personal relationship does not cut off after the prayer ends, and is not merely a performance of duties, but it results from love and a genuine desire to worship God. Christ also taught that repeating the words of prayer brings no benefit, for God knows everything. So, we do not use prayer as an incantation to obtain what we desire, or it becomes a hollow prayer without understanding or awareness. Prayer does not include only the requests but includes thanksgiving and praise, supplication and requesting help for God's people and for the leaders and rulers, and for peace, and forgiveness, and also for the sake of the expansion of God's kingdom.

- 8- Fasting: Christ did not condemn fasting, but He condemned hypocrisy. Fasting is dedicating times for abstention from food to devoting oneself to prayers and petition and supplication for general or specific requests. And it was upon the Jew to fast once a year which is the Day of Atonement, but the leaders of the Jews made it two days a week obligatory upon every Jew. And they were fasting to show people that they were fasting. And to display their piety before people. When Christ told the parable of the tax collector, He meant to teach that justification—that is, forgiveness—comes from God, not to those who consider themselves better than others, but to those who repent

with genuine repentance. The parable says that two men went up for prayer, one of them a Pharisee and the other a tax collector from those hated by the people. Many were believing that God does not hear the prayer of the tax collectors or their requests. The Pharisee said, "I thank You God that I am not like the rest of people the plunderers the unjust nor like that tax collector for I fast twice a week and I give from my money to the poor." But the tax collector beat upon his chest and said "God have mercy on me the sinner" so the tax collector went out justified, not the Pharisee.

- 9- The true treasure: Man directs his money where his heart is, someone said: Give me your account book, I tell you where your heart is.

Many may misunderstand what Christ said in this verse, as Christ spoke repeatedly about the agency of money. So, money is a gift and a deposit from God, and we must not misuse it, but that we work hard to acquire it and use it in the correct form and invest it according to the parables of Christ. So, the difference is great between he who possesses money and he who is possessed by money. Christ directs us to what is remaining and will not vanish forever, heaven.

- 10- God and money: Jesus Christ was comparing between the spiritual values and the earthly values. So, when He asked us what the true treasure is, its heaven or the perishing possessions of earth, He wanted to get our attention to what will remain forever. As for the earthly values, they are confined to matter and life limited to earth including positions and fame and social status and influence. But the permanent heavenly values are our relationship with The Heavenly Father and our eternal salvation and complete forgiveness. How many people went after money and the money was lost and their life became without meaning and even became ruins. How many people sought after fame and social status and this was lost also, and they became in deep

sorrow. But the divine will is that we enjoy what we have of money, and that we achieve with our money what God wants from us for the glorification of His holy name, because God created man for His glory and for the declaration of His blessed name in this life.

11- The eye [is] the lamp of the body: Jesus Christ transfers us from the idea that the eye is what leads man, so without his eyes he cannot do anything, to another idea which is our spiritual vision in this world, so when our hearts are filled with evil and sin then inevitably our eyes and our hearts will be led after evil. But if our hearts are filled with God's righteousness and His goodness then our eyes will be led to simplicity.

12- God takes care of us (Contentment): When we read these verses, we may feel that there is no value for what we do, or what we toil for, for the birds eat and live and God takes care of them, and that the end of life is death. So why do we work and toil. But this is not what these verses teach us, they teach us that God takes care of us so there is no need for us to be grieved and worry. So, if God cares for the smallest birds, how much more we His children, He certainly takes care of us. These verses do not teach us laziness or indifference, but they teach us contentment and not worrying regarding the future or tomorrow; because God will take care of us and arrange our needs and accompany us in the journey of life. So, as He was faithful to us in the past He will remain faithful to us in the present and the future also because He does not change. So, worry does not benefit man but hinders him from thinking and may deprive us from sleep and reduces our ability to work and think and produce. Christ instructed that we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these will be added to us. Seeking the kingdom of God begins with accepting this kingdom and

striving for its spread and expending effort and money so that others may know God and His Savior Christ.

- 13- Do not judge: There are two types of judgements – one builds and the other destroys. And here you find that Jesus Christ points to the first type which destroys, and does not help others, and may even result in bad relationships between people. Jesus Christ directs our gazes not to direct judgement to others so we find the same faults in us, and perhaps they are much more than the faults we criticize in others. And the summary of the saying is we must treat others exactly as we want them to treat us according to what The Master Christ said.
- 14- Do not cast your pearls before swine lest they trample them with their feet: Pigs were in the Jewish custom "unclean" animals (Deuteronomy 14:8) so whoever touches this animal becomes unclean and must be purified (ritually), and the Jews considered the other nations as unclean animals and dealt with them considering that despite that God did not command that. Rather, the choice of the Jews as a people of God, was to lead others to the knowledge of God. And they had to know that the true impurity is sin and distancing from God. Jesus Christ teaches us to distinguish between those who waste time and effort in stupid discussions that are not useful and those who want knowledge. This does not apply to evangelism as all the apostles went out from the circle of Judaism to evangelize among the nations and they offered their lives for the sake of that. But Jesus Christ teaches us here not to waste time with those who multiply trivial arguments and the frivolous who do not want anything except laughter and mockery.
- 15- God gives to the one who asks Him: Jesus Christ reveals to us the truth of the relationship between us and God, so we are no longer slaves but children of God. This

sublime relationship introduces us to the love of The Father for His children, and how He wants to give them every good gift. And therefore, He wants us to ask Him and we must bring our requests to God. All God's gifts are good but there is the most sublime and greatest gift, The Holy Spirit with which we can live for Him and live in His obedience. And without The Holy Spirit we will not be able to live the life which He wants us to live, and we cannot obey His commandments nor witness for Him. And He promised to give the gift of The Holy Spirit to all who ask Him.

16- The narrow gate: How easy is the way of evil and sin, and how easy it is for people to obey a person who is lenient with everything they do. And there came in The Old Testament many of the prophets who allowed the people to disobey God to acquire money, or to please the rulers. But the way which Jesus Christ placed for His followers is not an easy way, therefore He said, "How narrow the gate and constrained the way leading to eternal life." And therefore, without the help of the Spirit of God and His assistance no one can walk in this way despite that it is the guaranteed way to eternal life.

17- By their fruits you will know them: We can evaluate the teachers not by their speech but by the fruits of their lives. "But the fruit of The Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control." Every person is shown by his actions and reactions. So, every good tree brings forth good fruit, and every unhealthy tree does not bring forth good fruit. And although Jesus Christ requested from us not to judge anyone, but at the same time He requested from us to test their fruits and to know whether we follow them or not, whether we make them leaders in our churches or not. And therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

18- Not by speech but by action: Jesus Christ spoke about the duplicity of life for many of the teachers and people, so they may appear to people as pious according to their speech, but their actions differ completely from what we hear from them. Therefore, they say show me your faith by your works (and not by mere words). But this does not mean that we pursue every teacher and instructor and pastor and priest to know everything about their lives for how many persons have sinned, but they returned to live again for The Lord and turned back from their mistakes.

19- The house built on rock: Jesus Christ likened the one who builds his life on His teachings and obeys them to one who built his house on rock, and not to one who built his house on the sand. So, when the winds come, the house built on the sand falls, but the house built on the rock stands firm. Christ is the Rock of the Ages and he who builds his life on the correct faith then he builds a house firm that stands forever.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Teachings of Jesus Christ:**

#### **Christ and The Law (3)**

Assigned readings include Matthew 6–7 in comparison with Romans 2–8.

When Jesus was teaching, it was necessary to correct some erroneous beliefs that had entered the Jewish interpretations of the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ confronted the Jewish leaders and their teachers every day, and many discussions ensued between them. Jesus Christ adopted a specific position toward the Mosaic Law and Jewish laws in general. Thereby, His disciples understood the original divine intent of these laws. And what was the

purpose of Jesus Christ in His teachings concerning the Mosaic Law. However, this only became clear after Christ rose and ascended to heaven and after God spoke to the apostles at that time through some visions and revelations, such as the Lord's appearance to Peter according to the Book of Acts 10. We will address this topic for research later. To understand Jesus Christ's position toward the Law, we must study this subject in some detail. For while Jesus adhered to the commandments included in the books of the Law, He did not adhere to some others. Therefore, we must study that in detail.

**First: The meaning of the word "Law":**

The word "Law" has appeared in the Torah and Holy Scriptures to carry several meanings, not only meaning statutes or laws. It appeared in (Genesis 25:5) as the commandments of God, and it came with the meaning of statutes in (Deuteronomy 34:2), and with the meaning of testimonies (divine words) in (Leviticus 18:4), and God's revelations in (Exodus 34:28), and the word of God in (Psalm 19:8), and the king's laws in Ezra 7:26. The common word is “شرع Shar” (meaning spring or source), signifying guidance, leadership, and instruction.

Therefore, when we speak of the Law as Christians, we are not referring to statutes or punishment such as flogging or crucifixion, but rather to a spring—a source—of God's commandments and His holy Word. The Bible translated into Arabic—from the Greek language—used the word "Nāmūs" instead of the word "Law" (الشريعة - Al-Sharī'a). The word "Nāmūs" الناموس is not Arabic but Greek "Nomos" and it means (the Law). However, the Arabic translation tried to avoid confusion between the "Mosaic Law" and "Islamic Law" and therefore the word "Nāmūs" was used.

So, when you read the word "Nāmūs" in the Arabic translation, you must know that it refers to the word "Law of Moses." meaning the Scriptures or divine sources, commandments, statutes, and ordinances of God. All that falls under the content of the word (Law).

**Second: The three divisions of the Law and Christ's position toward them:**

- 1- *The Ritual Law:* It includes the various rituals and what the priests and Levites perform of offering sacrifices and offerings. And what is obligatory of washing and purification laws which were fulfilled in Him who offered Himself as a sacrifice for the atonement of sins. Also, He established a correct concept for keeping the Sabbath (the day of prayer) and said that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Thereby, He taught the apostles that these ritual laws are not an end in themselves, but they are all matters. From our reading of the Bible, we know that Jesus Christ performed miracles on the Sabbath either to heal a person or what results in good for a person. And thereby, He violated the commandment that says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." But the Jewish teachers persisted in prohibition and legislating obligations and restrictions on the people and did not pay attention to the good of the person, so, Christ asked them, "Does not each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Meaning that the commandment was made for man, and not man for the sake of preserving the commandment. As for the sacrifices that were offered as burnt offerings for sins, the high priest would offer an annual sacrifice for the sins of all the people. He would also offer sacrifices every day for atonement and forgiveness. But Christ came with the perfect sacrifice; He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of everyone who believes in Him. And since the sacrifice

became obsolete with Christ offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice, and He was also the great High Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice, thereby there would be no need for a priest to offer any sacrifice. And the way between man and God became Christ, who became the only mediator for man with God, apart from whom there is no salvation. And thereby, the ritual law was rendered obsolete, or in other words, it was completed after Christ offered Himself on the cross as a living sacrifice (see the Book of Hebrews). Therefore, we—as Christians—do not offer any sacrifice for sins. And if there is no need for a sacrifice, then there is no need for an altar nor a priest to offer the sacrifice. However, the traditional churches like the Orthodox and Catholic churches that affirm and acknowledge the sufficiency of Christ's salvation and the lack of need to offer sacrifices, but they practice (the Eucharist / Communion) or what Christ instructed to do before His crucifixion. “The Eucharist” is that we take a loaf of bread (referring to the body of Christ which He offered as a sacrifice of redemption for sin) and a cup of grape juice (referring to the blood that Christ shed for sinners). Then the priest—after prayer—gives the person coming forward for Communion a small piece of the bread and a sip from the cup. And he gives to all communicants without distinction, whether they are men or women, adults or children. And there are some Christian denominations that do not believe in giving Communion to children due to their lack of understanding of the meaning of Communion and restricted it to adults only. And some others of these denominations entrusted to some believers the responsibility not to give this Communion except to those who belong to them or to their denomination. And this tradition was instituted by Jesus Christ Himself before His death when He took bread and blessed and gave thanks and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you," and likewise He took the cup (grape juice) and

said, "This is My blood shed for you." Jesus Christ added, saying, "For as often as you do this, you proclaim My death—that is, what He did of salvation by His death—until I come." And due to the belief of these churches that this bread and that juice literally transform—like a divine mystery—into the body of Christ (not the incarnate body that Christ came in) but it is the Eucharistic body; therefore, there must be a priest to perform this rite. And these traditional churches believe that this priest receives this authority from the other father priests who have inherited this authority since the disciples of Christ. In addition to the responsibility of shepherding God's people as Christ commanded, and this is what they call the mystery of priesthood. As for the Evangelical churches, they interpret Christ's words as that He was speaking about His real body that He would give up on the cross, and His blood that would be shed on the cross. Regarding Communion or what they call the Lord's Supper, there is no transformation in the elements, but the bread remains bread and the wine (or juice) remains the same. They are nothing but a reminder of what Christ did for us on the cross, and when we come forward to this table, we examine ourselves and our daily conduct and renew our covenants before God. And since there is no sacrifice or transformation into real flesh; therefore, there is no need for a priest. Therefore, Evangelical churches do not bestow the title of priest upon any person but the title of servant of the Lord or pastor. And the pastor is one who has devoted himself to the work of spiritual ministry such as caring for the needs of the congregation, preaching and guidance, and caring for the spiritual conditions of the congregation. And as previously explained; therefore, there is no mystery of priesthood in Evangelical churches, and the pastor is not titled as priest. As for ecclesiastical organization, it differs from one church to another. The Orthodox and Catholic churches have a spiritual head

called "the Pope" who must be a celibate monk. And each region is under the supervision of a metropolitan who is also a celibate monk. These metropolitan heads several churches, and each church has a shepherd called a priest. The ecclesiastical system differs in Evangelical churches. All pastors are equal in rank but are gathered in an "assembly" and periodically elect a president and a vice president for him to organize ecclesiastical administration and the affairs of the denomination. And there are some churches of Evangelical doctrine that do not follow a denomination but are independent churches by themselves. And often these churches are in countries where there is freedom of worship.

2- *The Civil Law*: And it is those commandments that regulate the relationship of God's people with each other and with those around them. Therefore, it includes statutes and commandments, such as statutes of stoning, isolation during illness, flogging, compensation, and so on. And since the covenant of grace came with the coming of Jesus Christ, we find that these laws and statutes were dealt with by Christ "with grace" and not by implementing the statutes "literally." Jesus Christ said, "The letter kills," for He did not order the stoning of the adulterous woman caught in the very act but dealt with her with grace and not with the letter. Jesus Christ dealt with all matters from the standpoint of grace, and not considering obsolete statutes. And among the most important things Christ established was the principle of "freedom of conscience," where society leaves freedom for the individual to act with what may build his life and others, but his freedom ends with the freedom of others and not harming them. Therefore, Jesus Christ left to every society the organization of its conditions and statutes with what it sees fit for its time and place, but the fundamental principles governing

society are respect for individual freedom and respect for the humanity of every person. Therefore, society may enact its statutes not to exact punishment or revenge on the one who erred, but society must commit to correcting the wrongdoer and restoring him to be a useful member in society. Christ fulfilled these commandments in a covenant of grace and did not abolish them, for Christ brought them so that everyone would deal under the shadow of mercy and grace. Not to give an opportunity for doing evil and sin or committing transgressions, but for the love of God to emanate from within the human soul. So, when they brought to Jesus a woman caught in adultery, they wanted to test Him, since the Law required stoning her. But The Jesus said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her," and He began to write on the ground (and we do not know what He was writing, perhaps He was writing the sins of each one of them). Everyone departed, and no one remained, then Jesus turned to the woman and said to her, "Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." He said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." Forgiveness and grace do not grant freedom to do evil and sin, but they are for correcting a person and setting his affairs right. It is worth mentioning that the Jews who brought the adulterous woman did not bring the adulterous man; although the Law stipulated that both the adulterer and the adulteress should be stoned and killed. Some interpreters say that Christ wrote the name of the adulterous man on the ground (and perhaps he was a man of standing or religious authority). Therefore, all those who wanted to stone her and execute the judgment of the Law of Moses departed. But Christ addressed this matter with grace. The sin of the man is in no way less than the sin of the woman, for when the Lord commanded, "You shall not

commit adultery," it was not directed to the woman without the man, but they are equal before God.

- 3- *The Moral or Ethical Law*: It is the commandments that came in the Torah and the books of the prophets, especially the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5) which stipulate that you shall worship none but the one God and shall not worship an idol or image, and you shall not steal, and you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not bear false witness so as not to pervert justice, and honor your father and your mother... etc. We note that these commandments do not include penalties, nor do they place upon society the responsibility of preserving them, but every society should deal with those commandments with grace, and justice. Therefore, The Jesus did not abolish the moral law, but affirmed it and never broke it. Therefore, the life of Jesus was free from every blemish, as He said, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" and said, "The ruler of this world is coming, and he has no claim on Me."

**Third: The fulfillment of the Law** (*Matthew 5:17-20*)

We have reviewed Jesus' position toward each division of the Mosaic Law, and thereby we see that although He violated the keeping of the Sabbath and did not agree with the statutes of stoning and flogging, He did not contradict the Jewish laws but fulfilled them by restoring them to their original state that God brought. Also, He realized and fulfilled them in His crucifixion and resurrection, as He became the perfect sacrifice for sin, so there is no longer any need for a sacrifice or for what symbolizes the sacrifice for the redemption of man. Not only that, but He established the fundamental principle so that there is no longer any opportunity for independent reasoning or interpretation for every teacher of the Jews. When we read the

Epistle to the Romans and the rest of the epistles of Apostle Paul, we can summarize that in several points:

1. The Law must exist because it is the mirror in which man sees his face. If there were no commandment against killing, we would not know that this is not permitted religiously and ethically as well (Romans).
2. The Law doesn't treat sin but testifies against it and reveals it, and thereby it condemns us but does not provide us with righteousness or a remedy (Romans 3:20) .
3. The law and sacrifices were a shadow of what was to come, as mentioned in the Book of Hebrews that sacrifices will not save a person but were a sign of the coming of Christ the Savior who would be the perfect sacrifice.
4. The Law was our guardian until Christ came, that is, it led us until that day when Christ came.
5. Keeping the Law will not save a person from the coming wrath of God, because our justification is based on faith and not from works of keeping the Law (Romans 5).  
And there is no righteousness in keeping it. We are not justified by the law, but by Grace. Therefore, when Christ was crucified, He thereby accomplished redemption so that He might become the "Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world; He is the perfect sacrifice, and everyone who believes in Him will receive eternal life.

Christ fulfilled the Law in general and did not abolish it, but He added a new dimension, which is that the covenant of grace has come and humanity must rise above the literalism of statutes and ordinances that will not stop the action of sin or evil. Christ did not abolish the moral law but fulfilled the ceremonial law which we are not to observe anymore.

#### **Fourth: Christian Freedom and its Limits**

Jesus Christ said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," emphasizing that true freedom is liberation from the bondage of sin that leads to eternal destruction. Christ is the one who transfers us from the slavery of sin to "the freedom of the glory of the children of God." This freedom is not a license to do evil and sin, but quite the opposite; it is what frees us so that we may follow God and have fellowship with Him and serve Him also. But Apostle Paul warns us lest "this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak..." meaning that freedom should not become a liberation from the constraints of the ritual Law to be an opportunity to commit sin. Freedom ends when we harm others or even harm ourselves and our testimony for Christ. Therefore, we have "freedom of conscience," meaning we have a private freedom to be led by the Spirit of God to do His good pleasure and not to commit sin. Someone asked, when Jesus forgave the adulterous woman, does that mean He permits adultery? To answer that, we must follow the story to the end. When the crowds who wanted to stone the woman caught in the very act departed, Christ said to her, "Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, Lord." He said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." Meaning that Christ's forgiveness for her was linked to His command not to return to the same sinful behavior.

#### **Fifth: The Lord's Day "the Sabbath"**

Did Jesus break the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God"? The frank answer to that is "Yes." Many discussions occurred between the Jewish leaders and Jesus about keeping the Sabbath from those who cared more about applying the commandment than caring about the person. Therefore, when the

disciples were hungry and plucked heads of grain in the field to satisfy their hunger, they criticized them (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). But Christ answered them by asking them about what the prophet David did when he was hungry. He ate from the showbread of the temple, which was not lawful for him at that time, and that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. And here He indicates that He Himself is Lord of the Sabbath, meaning that He is the one who made the Sabbath day and has the right to do good in it. As for the second event that aroused their anger and they wanted to arrest Jesus for it... and it was their chance to condemn Him, was that He broke the Sabbath and healed a man with a withered hand... but Jesus replied them by asking them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm? To save life or to kill?" And thereby He healed this man on the Sabbath, confirming that the Sabbath was made for man and not to keep the Sabbath merely for the sake of preserving tradition.

Again, Christ said to them, if a donkey falls into a pit on the Sabbath, is it lawful to rescue it or leave it to die. And thereby, He gave a new standard for the Lord's Day. When Jesus ascended and the disciples went about preaching His message, they would gather on the first day of every week, and this is Sunday, which the church established as the Lord's Day, on which believers in Christ gather to learn the Holy Word and partake of the Holy Table to remember His death and His atoning redemption. And thereby they remember His death until He comes and tell what Christ did for sinners. We may find some Christian denominations gathering for worship on Saturday instead of Sunday. But this does not change the validity of their doctrine if they believe in the Apostles' Creed, which is the general rule of the Christian faith. As for differences in style of worship, it will not change the credibility of this denomination. Therefore, if necessity requires Christians to worship on a day other than Sunday, this

will not be rejected by God. Therefore, many churches in the Islamic world perform prayers on Friday (the public holiday) as well as on Sunday.

**Ritual Washing** (*Mark 7:1-13*)

The elders of the Jews asked Christ: "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He said: "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" And added that "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. As for washing the body, it may benefit a person health-wise, but it does not bring him closer to God. Therefore, the disciples understood Jesus' intent and pointed out that true washing is washing by the word of God that purifies a person from the real filth, which is sin, for water only washes the external body. (See the epistles of the Apostle Peter).

## **Chapter 10**

### **The Teachings of Jesus Christ:**

#### **The Lord's Prayer (4)**

The disciples asked Jesus Christ to teach them to pray, just as John the Baptist taught his disciples. Therefore, Jesus Christ taught them this prayer. This does not mean that this prayer is an obligation that every believer must recite, but rather it serves as a model for prayer. Many beginners in faith have learned to pray by reciting this prayer. Indeed, Christ prayed all night in a special and private relationship with God in the Garden of Gethsemane. Also, Jesus Christ would go to solitary places to pray alone. This means that the Lord's Prayer is not an obligation that a person merely recites, but a model to be emulated. The Lord's Prayer is the

most widespread prayer among Christian denominations, and Jesus Christ spoke it to His disciples to serve as a model for prayer. It is characterized by its simplicity and ease, but it is not the only prayer a believer prays. Therefore, many have preferred to conclude their collective or individual prayers with it. However, some repeat it automatically, repeatedly, without awareness or reflection, as if it were a charm or merely the conclusion of an obligatory rite prescribed for them. Thus, it becomes devoid of value. Indeed, there are some who do not even believe in reciting it.

### **The Spirit of the Lord's Prayer**

When we pray this prayer, we must pray it in the spirit of sonship ("Our Father"), in the spirit of brotherhood ("Our Father"), in the spirit of reverence and affirmation of God's loftiness and majesty ("Who art in heaven"), in the spirit of submission ("Who art in heaven"), in the spirit of love for God's kingdom and longing for the extension of His work on earth ("Thy kingdom come"), in the spirit of surrender to God's will ("Thy will be done"), in the spirit of anticipation of eternal life ("on earth as it is in heaven"), in the spirit of contentment ("our daily bread"), in the spirit of confidence that God cares for us ("give us this day"), in the spirit of asking for forgiveness ("and forgive us our debts"), in the spirit of remembrance to forgive others as the Lord has forgiven us ("as we also have forgiven our debtors"), in the spirit of supplication to God to deliver us from evil and the evil one ("and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"), and finally, in the spirit of certainty ("for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory")... Amen. Whenever we look at these verses, we feel that it is not only prayer for today but a prayer for every day (i.e., a perpetual prayer) that we need to pray daily. It comprises six petitions: three directed toward God and three concerning our relationships with others or our human needs. Here are some glimpses into these verses:

## **Our Father**

We address God in the language of children: (“Our Father”) because we are no longer slaves but sons, as Jesus Christ said, “No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends” (John 15). And the Scripture says, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Christ freed us through His death and redemption, therefore Christ said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (from the dominion of sin). And Paul, the apostle of Christ, says, “So then, we are children; therefore, we are heirs, and we have the right to approach God with the boldness of children, not as beggars but as those to whom God has given the gift of adoption as children of God, so that they may walk and pray as children of God.” We also address the father as a community: When we say, “Our Father,” we also say that we are brothers, as we say (“Our Father”). That is, we know well that we have brothers in Christ. Jesus Christ said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” He also said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” And Jesus Christ prayed that the brothers would be one, i.e., united just as He and the Father are one (John 17).

## **Who Art in Heaven**

We address God the Father who dwells in the heavens: (“Who art in heaven”) God does not dwell in idols or temples, but the dwelling place of God is in the heavens. Therefore, He is exalted above every human and above all dominion and authority. Jesus Christ said that no one has ever seen God. Therefore, He sent His Word (Christ) to tell us about Him: “but the only Son, he has made him known.” And if He dwells in heavens, then the earth and its fullness, the world and all who dwell in it are His (Psalm 24:1). And since He dwells in the heavens, we do not see Him except with the eyes of faith. Therefore, the Scripture says, “Without

faith it is impossible to please him.” His dwelling in the heavens does not mean that He does not see us, for the Scripture says that He “fills heaven and earth.” And it is not hidden from His eyes.

### **Hallowed Be Thy Name**

God is holy (wholly holy): And the word “holy” means that He is separate from all evil; that is, there is no evil in Him. His eyes cannot behold evil. He is the pure God, wholly pure and clean. Therefore, when the prophet Isaiah stood before the holiness of God, he trembled and fell, then said, “Woe is me! For I am lost,” as he heard the praises of the angels saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6). And because God is holy, He asked His people (of whom we are a part) to also be holy “through complete obedience to God.” Rather, “like the Holy One who called you, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16). Therefore, let us come to Him with sincere repentance, asking Him to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all iniquity. And when we pray saying, “Hallowed be thy name,” we call for God’s holiness to prevail, not only upon us but upon every place where his blessed name is known. And when we speak of the dominion of His holiness, we speak of His absolute authority over God’s people and their submission to Him and to His holy Word. Therefore, whenever we pray “Hallowed be thy name,” we remember that we must separate ourselves from evils and sins because we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

We seek “the kingdom of God” and love it: That is, we long to see the kingdom of God spread and the number of believers in His name increase from all peoples and nations (“on earth as it is in heaven”). Thus, we participate in the extension of this heavenly kingdom here

on earth, which will last forever, and we want to contribute to it, whether with our money, our works, or our service. And when the kingdom of God spreads, He will be the King to whom all submit and to His holy words. When Jesus Christ came, He came preaching the message of the kingdom—the kingdom of God—through repentance and forgiveness. The kingdom of God means that God reigns over human life and one's entry into the flock of Christ. It is not merely being called a Christian but obtaining eternal life through the second birth, which Christ expressed by saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3.)

### **Thy Will Be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven**

When the hour of crucifixion approached, Jesus Christ went to pray in a garden called Gethsemane. And as we know, Jesus Christ prayed for this cup to pass from Him, but He said, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done," knowing that this was God's will for the salvation of humanity. And when we say, "Thy will be done," we submit our will to God's good will. Thus, obedience to God becomes easy, as we have accepted to submit to His will. And when we say, "Thy will be done," we relinquish our choices and accept what the Lord brings. How many people have lost loved ones, and we thought they would not overcome this ordeal, but their surrender to the heavenly will was the direct cause of their comfort and acceptance of this loss. And perhaps we also know others who lost vast sums of money but surrendered (not to the fait accompli) but to the heavenly will that permitted this loss.

### **Give us Our Daily Bread**

God is the one who meets our needs: ("Our daily bread") means that we realize that God is the one who provides for our needs and gives us the bread by which we live. Thus, the Scripture says: "You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing." And Christ also

said, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.... Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” And He also said, “Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.” And when we say, “our daily bread,” we express our gratitude to God for His care for us, and we feel confident that despite the harsh circumstances we may go through, He will arrange our livelihood. We move from a state of greed and desire for more to a state of contentment, satisfaction, and thanksgiving. For we know that God wants us to work, bear fruit, and invest, and that every spiritual and material blessing is from God Almighty. There is no fault in desiring material blessings, but we must know that it is He who gives success and that our affairs are in His hands. A person may change, but God does not change; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And if God was with us yesterday, He will be with us today and tomorrow. A person always needs to feel secure. This feeling comes through trust in his circumstances and capabilities. But when we repeat these words, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we remind ourselves that God alone is the one who gives us, and that it is not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. How difficult it is for a person to trust, no matter how deep his faith, in what he does not see, and how difficult it is for a person to trust a leader he has not seen. Therefore, Christ said, “Blessed—i.e., oh the happiness—are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

### **Give Us This Day**

We ask to be in a state of sufficiency: For we know that God provides for today’s needs. Therefore, the Scripture says, “But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be con-

tent.” A state of contentment encourages us to work without anxiety, greed, or injustice toward others. A state of contentment encourages us to be employers capable of treating those who work with us fairly, and naturally, our work increases, our businesses grow, and people’s confidence in us and in our honesty and ability to work competently increases. These verses do not call for indolence, sluggishness, and negligence but for thanking God with our wealth and being content with what we have. I had an employee who, upon receiving his salary, would bow, take the money with both hands, and kiss the envelope given to him. Unsurprisingly, God blessed this simple young man, and he advanced in all his works.

### **And Forgive Us Our Debts**

We ask God for the forgiveness of our sins: Thus, we realize that we are sinners and our souls are prone to evil, and we need His salvation and redemption. Also, we affirm our knowledge that He is the only one who can grant us complete forgiveness. When David sinned against God, he said, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin!” (Psalm 51). So, there is no forgiveness without God’s mercy; therefore, it is said of Him that He is the most merciful of the merciful, and it is also said of Him that He is (Ar-Rahman), for a person may possess the attribute of mercy, but the attribute (Rahman) is applied only to God alone. And the writer addresses God, saying, “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression.” Therefore, the Scripture says, “He abundantly pardons.” But if we assume that every action has a reaction and that everything has a price, therefore the Scripture says that the wage of sin is death. That is, the consequences of sin are spiritual death and separation from God, as well as physical and eternal death. Humanity had to pay this wage; therefore, God could not simply pardon a person

merely because of repentance, even if sincere. Therefore, God first arranged the blood without which there is no forgiveness, establishing the system of sacrifices as atonement for sins. And when we read Hebrews 9, we find that God commanded that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Therefore, He made the people offer lambs and calves for “forgiveness.” That was a symbol of the One who would offer Himself for the people as a complete sacrifice, and thus He says, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you” (Hebrews 9:20). But when we recite this prayer, we know that God has forgiven our trespasses and sins if we have believed in Christ. However, we need daily forgiveness because we sin every day, whether in deed or word, and if not in these, then we sin by our failure to do good or our negligence in defending the oppressed or not defending the truth. For the Scripture says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James)

#### **As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors**

We must also forgive those who have wronged us: When we contemplate these words, we find that they are for our benefit and advantage. When we forgive those who have wronged us, we free ourselves from the effects of feelings of hatred and the desire for revenge, and it also helps us to spread peace between us and our enemies and those who wish us harm. When we free ourselves from these grudges, we give God an opportunity to convict them so that they may return to Him and to a relationship with Him. Also, to establish peace between us and them, and how many enemies have become friends and exchanged interests and blessings.

Forgiveness liberates us from the grip of the desire for revenge and the love of victory, which may not be constructive in many cases. When we strip ourselves of our hidden

feelings of revenge and defeating others, we can see them as God sees them: sinful and wicked people whom God wants to repent and return to Him. Therefore, Jesus Christ said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). When we remember that God has forgiven and pardoned us, we also pardon others. Not only that, but we seek peace with them, as Christ said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” As for how to do this, we need to draw closer to God, the source of forgiveness, so that we can forgive others. And if we are struggling within ourselves with a desire for revenge, we must resort to God, asking for His help to enable us to do so.

### **And Lead Us Not into Temptation, But Deliver Us from Evil**

The devil opposes the kingdom of God and seeks to tempt us: God does not tempt with evil, for the Holy Scripture does not teach us that every evil or good is from God. Nor does it teach us that the source of good and evil is one, namely God. Rather, it teaches us that God may permit evil, but He is not its source. For God does not tempt anyone with evil, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, and the devil is the tempter (who also tempted Christ). The Holy Scripture calls Satan the adversary. He does not speak the truth to deceive humanity, because he opposes the kingdom of God and opposes the extension of God’s kingdom. God may allow us to experience evils and their consequences because they result from our mistakes and unfaithfulness. Or, if they are not from our evils, they may be the product of the evils of others. Satan’s primary purpose is for us to turn away from God and not do His will. Therefore, when we pray, asking God to deliver us from the evil one, we ask Him for continuity in closeness to Him. And when we ask God not to lead us into temptation, we acknowledge its existence and thus try to avoid it. And when we ask God to deliver us from the evil one, we acknowledge his existence and his work against the kingdom of God and against the children of this kingdom.

**For Thine Is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, Forever**

To God belongs the kingdom, power, ability, and glory in every age and forever: The Jews always concluded their prayers with this phrase, that to God belongs all kingdom and power forever and ever. And the church preserved this conclusion, as Christ also concluded His prayer with it. Therefore, when we pray, saying that to God belongs the kingdom and glory in heaven and on earth, we worship God and glorify Him. With this phrase, we affirm to ourselves that God is the sole King who is above all kings of the earth. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore, we do not submit to rulers who command us to disobey God, nor do we submit to any will other than God's will. And when we pray, saying that to God the Father belongs the power, we affirm first to ourselves and then to others that God's power and might are greater than our power. And that He can preserve, sustain, protect us, and do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. When we pray, saying that to Him belongs the glory, we affirm to ourselves that God's glory is our goal, and we do not seek our own glory. And that all glory will fade, but the glory of the one and only God, who remains, will endure.

**Amen:** The word "Amen" has spread with the spread of the worship of God throughout the world and in all languages. It is a word meaning "agreement" or "so be it." And when all the people praying respond with the word "Amen," they agree and affirm their requests and supplications to God.

**Summary:** The Lord's Prayer teaches us:

1. To offer thanks and praise to God for all His works and to accept His good will.
2. To beseech God so that we do not stray from Him by not stray from Him by falling into the temptations of the devil.

3. To ask for forgiveness for our sins and for help to forgive others who have wronged us.
4. To ask for assistance in the works of the day so that we may work with confidence and reliance on God.
5. To pray for the extension of the kingdom of God and the spread of the gospel message.
6. To be submissive to God, the King of kings, and to His commandments and statutes.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Christ Proclaims the Kingdom of God:**

#### **Jesus' Parables About the Kingdom of God**

In this chapter, we will examine Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God. In subsequent chapters, we will examine the remaining parables.

#### **Introduction:**

Jesus Christ used simple parables to simplify spiritual truths and sublime teachings in a way that an ordinary person could understand. When His disciples asked Him why He taught them in parables, He told them so that what was prophesied by (the prophet Isaiah) about Christ might be fulfilled: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world." Often, the motivation for these parables was to correct some misconceptions among the Jews, to direct their attention to a specific truth, or to answer a question they asked. We must be careful not to load the parables with meanings beyond what Christ originally intended, unless Christ said otherwise. There are many who try to give a deeper interpretation of these parables, thereby losing the simplicity of meaning and purpose.

The Jewish people and their leaders were expecting divine intervention (through that awaited one - the Messiah) who would lead the people of God to victory and honor, and establish that religious state in which God, His laws, commandments, statutes, and His pious ones would control the affairs of that state, thus establishing justice and eliminating evil. And if this state pleased God, it would be guaranteed victory, dominance, stability, and prosperity. Therefore, the term "Kingdom of God" was closely linked to earthly kingship. When this hope was not realized in the person of Jesus Christ—who taught with heavenly authority, healed the sick, made the blind see, the mute speak, and the lame walk—the crowds turned away from Him, as He did not fulfill their hopes. But He declared that the "Kingdom of God" is not about eating or drinking, not about victory or defeat, and not about the elevation or status of a nation. Rather, it is God's possession of a person's being and the person's entry into a special relationship with God, beginning with salvation and complete transformation, and not ending with death, as it is eternal life. The Lord Jesus began His ministry by calling for repentance, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus Christ taught extensively about the Kingdom of God, explaining that this Kingdom's standards differ from human measures, and that this Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one in which God reigns over the hearts of believers, to last for eternal life; therefore, it is not a temporary kingdom but an eternal one. And because His Kingdom is different, strength in it is not for the strong, honor is not for those in authority, and wealth is not for the rich, but those who inherit it may be among the simple and among the rich. It is not necessarily that the one who excels in it is the most knowledgeable, wealthy, or influential. It may be among the humble and not those in authority. Through the parables we will present, we can discern the following truths:

1. The Kingdom of God may be born small, i.e., with simple faith, but it grows by itself.
2. The Kingdom of God may seem small but is great in its influence (like yeast that leavens the dough).
3. The Kingdom of God has great value for those who know its worth, and the one who recognized its worth went and sold all he had to acquire it.
4. The Kingdom of God gathers all kinds of people and does not distinguish between one and another (like the net) that does not differentiate between types of fish.
5. Despite the presence of unbelievers, God will separate between them on the last day.

### **Parables of the Kingdom of God:**

The parables of the Kingdom communicate deep spiritual truths through simple, everyday images. Through them, the Lord Jesus revealed the nature of God's Kingdom and the response it requires from those who hear.

#### *1- The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-8; Mark 4:4-8; Luke 8:4-15)*

In this parable, Christ likened the Kingdom of God to a Sower (God or one sent by God), the field is the human heart, i.e., the soil upon which the seeds fall, and the crop is (the word of God, which needs nothing to bear fruit except to fall on good soil and a suitable climate).

Therefore, every person must prepare his/her heart to hear the word of God so that it may bear fruit. Therefore, it is noted that some heard the word of God and were not affected by it at all, like the seeds that fell on the path (like rocky ground). Some responded, and the word

bore fruit, and some characteristics of faith appeared in their lives, but they became preoccupied with the world and its worries and gave no consideration to the life of faith. Thus, it is like one whose crops bore fruit, but thorns came out and choked it, so the soil no longer bears fruit. But there are those on whose heart's soil the seeds fell, and it responded to the word of God and yielded fruit according to its capacity (a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold). Therefore, everyone who hears the message of the Kingdom of God must prepare their heart, as well as the environment in which the seed will grow, so that it may yield abundant fruit.

*2- The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30)*

Here, Jesus Christ tells of a man who planted good wheat, but his enemy (Satan) came and sowed weeds (i.e., another crop that looks similar but bears no fruit). The problem lies in preserving the wheat crop, not in the general appearance. To preserve the wheat crop, the wise Sower refused to gather the bad crop until harvest time. This points to the day of judgment when He will separate them, gathering the weeds first because they have no visible fruit, while the wheat with visible fruit will be gathered into His storehouses. Thus, this parable answers the question: Why does God leave the believer, and the unbeliever unpunished in this age? The answer is that out of God's mercy, He leaves all—believer and unbeliever—to have the full opportunity to know Him and repent. Someone said that God leaves them in one place so that the fruits of true faith and the fruits of unbelief may become evident.

*3-The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)*

Jesus Christ wanted to express that the Kingdom of God starts very small (like a seed smaller than all seeds, perhaps you cannot see it) but it grows in the heart of a person who is prepared to accept it. Thus, it becomes a large tree and a refuge for the birds of the sky, where they

come to take shelter. He meant that the Kingdom must grow and multiply. After being a small seed, it grows to become a large tree. This is a reality, not merely an assumption.

*4-The Parable of the Yeast (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21)*

Jesus Christ wanted to inform us that Christian faith and the Kingdom of God have a positive influence on others, even if we do not realize when or how this happens. Like the spread of a small amount of yeast so that all the dough becomes leavened and suitable to become bread. Although the Old Testament used the word "yeast" to signify evil and sin, Jesus Christ mentioned "new yeast," which is the Kingdom of God that will give good bread.

*5-The Parable of the Treasure and the Pearl (Matthew 13:44-46)*

Jesus Christ wanted to express the true value of the Kingdom of God and what the priority is to obtain this Kingdom. In the parable, He speaks of a merchant (or a wise person) who recognized the true value of a field containing a precious treasure or a very valuable pearl. So, he went and sold all he had to acquire that field or that pearl. His limited resources did not hinder him, and he let nothing prevent him from obtaining that field and that precious pearl, thus he was wise. Every person must evaluate their life considering the true value of this life. Is it of eternal value, or is it a fleeting life no matter how long it lasts? Therefore, let every person realize that the great treasure of immense value is entering the Kingdom of God, where one is in a relationship with the Heavenly Father.

*6-The Parable of the Fishing Net (Matthew 13:47-50)*

This parable resembles the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, as the sower or fisherman is the one who sown the seeds or casts the net, but the final harvest or the fish caught in the net is not all good. Therefore, when the harvest is completed, the corrupt crop will be burned, or when the nets are drawn in, the fisherman will take the good fish and throw the bad away.

This confirms the truth of the coming judgment upon all people, where each person will give an account of their life and their works.

*How to Enter the Kingdom of God*

The Lord wanted to draw the attention of the Jewish teachers who wanted to know more, so He told him that if he wanted to enter the Kingdom of God, he must be born again.

*The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*

Thus, the condition for a person to enter the Kingdom is to be born again, born of water and the Spirit. Being born again, i.e., from heaven, is being born of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ likened it to fire, meaning it purifies and removes impurities. Likewise, being born of the Spirit purifies a person and gives them new life. They are no longer without God in this world, but they walk in the fear of the Lord and in pleasing Him. Jesus Christ told Peter that He would give him the keys of the Kingdom. Many understood that the church that Peter would establish is the Kingdom or is the guardian of this Kingdom. But what about the other churches established by other disciples, such as Mark, Paul, or Matthew? That superficial understanding led to the denial of other churches and deprivation of the highest meanings of Christian fellowship, given that Christ came for all. The Lord declared to Peter that He would give him the keys of the Kingdom for two reasons:

*The First Reason*

When Jesus Christ asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" they gave several answers, including that He is Elijah, that He is John the Baptist. But Peter answered correctly, saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ answered him, saying, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

That is, on the rock of this faith. Christ is not merely a prophet, but He is the Christ whom God anointed for the work of redemption. This Christ is the Son of God who became incarnate, taking on our human flesh to accomplish our redemption. This was the first key without which no one can enter the Kingdom of God.

### *The Second Reason*

It was revealed to him (i.e., to Peter) in a vision after Jesus' ascension to the heavens, that the door of grace had been opened to the Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews). This is mentioned in Acts 10 and Acts 15, where the apostles gathered and blessed God's revelation to them through the vision Peter saw, that the door had been opened to the Gentiles, i.e., to non-Jewish peoples, so that they might accept the message of Christ. In this vision, Peter saw a large sheet containing animals that Jews considered unclean. An angel of the Lord told him to kill and eat. Peter answered as a conservative Jew that he had never eaten anything unclean or impure in his life. The angel said to him, "What God has made clean, do not call impure." This was an indication that the Gentile nations are not unclean or impure as the Jews considered them. Rather, they are created in the image of God, as mentioned in Genesis, and Christ came to redeem them as well. Through that vision, the disciples were assured that the message was now directed to all nations and not limited to the Jewish people. Thus, they went out preaching to the Gentile nations, and in this way, the message of Christ spread. Without this key, the disciples would not have been able to understand Christ's message, and without it, the nations could not enter this holy fellowship.

### *What is the Message of the Kingdom?*

Jesus Christ said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) The message of the Kingdom is summarized in "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) And Christ prophesied that His message would reach the whole world. Although the message of Christ was threatened with extinction in many eras, and dangers surrounded the preaching and the preachers not only from the outside but also from within through many deviations, heresies, divisions, and ambitions, the Lord established His word, and we now see it spreading to all corners of the earth.

#### *The Present and Future of the Kingdom of God*

Jesus Christ instructs us to come to the Kingdom of God and be concerned with the affairs of the Kingdom. He tells us to seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to us. Although this Kingdom is present, which we live now, it will also be fully realized with the coming of Christ again, as He said: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31–34).

#### **Summary**

1. The Kingdom of God, although it may be born very small (like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds) in a person's heart, then grows to become of great influence, even becoming a refuge for many of the lesser ones, i.e., those of lesser faith (like the tree that shelters the birds). This is if we speak on an individual level, but when we speak on

a collective level, just as faith in Christ began with a small number of people and few disciples, the number of disciples following Jesus Christ is no longer only in the thousands but in the millions from every nation, people, and tongue.

2. The Kingdom of God is like a small seed (which carries the element of life within itself) and does not need any addition to bear fruit. When the sower plants this seed, it grows by itself and becomes food, and fruit, and God is the one who sends workers to sow this seed (Parable of the Sower).

3. The Kingdom of God grows and spreads without us realizing it, and it influences others even without us being aware of the depths of it—how the seed is transformed into fruit is the reality of the life that God gives (Parable of the Yeast).

4. The Kingdom of God has immense value; indeed, it is the most precious thing in this universe and deserves that we leave everything to acquire it, because it is richer than any treasure that can be obtained (Parable of the one who sold his field to acquire the field containing a precious treasure).

5. God's mercy is endless; He leaves believers and unbelievers together (even despite their rejection) in this life until the day of judgment when He will separate them. And in His patience and forbearance, He keeps the door open for unbelievers to enter the Kingdom of God so that they too may be saved (Parable of the Wheat and the Tares).

6. The values and standards in this Kingdom differ from the values and principles that govern the earthly world. Where the master is the one who is served. But the Master in the Kingdom of God is the one who serves. The first are last. And those who humble themselves are the ones God exalts. From our study of Christ's teachings, we discover these teachings one after another.

7. The Kingdom is like a net that gathers from every race, language, and tribe, and gathers those who will stand before Christ's throne in eternal judgment. At that time, those who believed in Him and followed Him will enter eternal life, while the others will be cast out.

8. The invitation to this Kingdom has been extended to many, but many have rejected it and have no (excuse).

## **Chapter 12**

### **Jesus' Parables About God's love and mercy and Christian Conduct**

As mentioned earlier, Christ used the method of narrating parables and stories to clarify to the crowds what He meant in a simplified and easy-to-understand manner. The following are examples of parables used by Jesus Christ, some of which will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **A. Parables about Service and Obedience**

1. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
2. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
3. The Parable of the Servants of the Nobleman (Luke 19:11-27)
4. The Parable about the Role of the Servant and Humility in Service (Luke 17:7-10)

#### **B. Parables about Persistence in Prayer**

1. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8)
2. The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

**C- Parables about Loving Enemies or Those We Disagree With**

1. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

**D. Parables about Humility**

1. The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:7-11)
2. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

**E. Parables about Wealth**

1. The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)
2. The Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24)
3. The Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-9)

**F. Parables about Values Taught by the Gospel**

*(a) God's love*

1. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7)
2. The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
3. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

*(b) Gratitude*

1. The Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43)

**Introduction**

Jesus Christ wanted to convey God's love for sinners and the distant, and His constant search for the sinner until He finds him, and heaven rejoices at his repentance. Therefore, He gave

three parables about lost things: the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, and the Lost Coin. When the Pharisees or the meticulous Jewish teachers came to ask Jesus Christ why He ate, drank, and associated with sinners and those who did not care about religion—the non-praying, adulterers, and irreligious—they thought this proved He was not a prophet or a religious man. For this reason, Jesus Christ mentioned these three parables:

1. The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7)
2. The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
3. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)
4. And finally, a parable about Forgiving Debts (the Two Debtors) (Luke 7:41-43).

Therefore, when reading these parables, one must consider that Christ's primary goal was to convey an important truth: that He came for these sinners. In comparing them to the Pharisees who boasted of their piety, these sinners accepted Christ's message and salvation, while the meticulous Jews did not accept it. The Gospel is the "Good News." Christ's first coming, His redemption, and His atonement were the Good News that presented God's salvation to us. After returning from exile and slavery, the Jews were waiting for that "Savior" who would lead them to complete victory until they dominated their enemies. But Christ was a different kind of savior... What He did for us is the Good News in the Christian concept. The Jewish leaders and priests blamed Jesus Christ because He was a friend of sinners, adulterers, and the irreligious. They thought that if He were religious, He would avoid them. It was more appropriate for Him not to associate with them but to rebuke and condemn them. Therefore, Christ wanted to clarify to them the truth of God's love for sinners and the truth that they did not love others. The following are the truths Christ wanted to clarify in these examples:

1. God's supreme, searching love for the distant sinner.

2. The sick are those who need treatment, not the healthy.
3. Everyone has gone astray in one way or another; while some stray with apparent and absolute disobedience, others stray without declaring their disobedience, and their disobedience remains concealed in their hearts, and they appear to everyone as religious.
4. Heaven rejoices over sinners who repent.
5. God searches for sinners until He finds them.

### **Parables about God's Love**

#### *The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3–7)*

Jesus Christ likened the sinner who has strayed from God to a sheep that has wandered away and thus is exposed to death away from the other sheep. We know that the Holy Scripture often used the analogy of the "sheep" to represent God's children, and the shepherd is the Lord Himself. Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." The sheep is the only animal that depends completely on humans for its food, drink, protection, and care. Therefore, a person cannot live and find rest away from God. Although this shepherd has a hundred sheep, he left the entire flock to search for this lost one. Therefore, Jesus Christ called the meticulous Jews to love the distant ones with the same love God has for them. God searches for these lost ones to find them and bring them back. This parable expressed the joy that heaven has over one sinner who repents and returns to the Lord more than over hundreds who do not need repentance.

#### *The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)*

Jesus Christ also told this parable to express not only God's love but also the effort exerted to find this small coin (the drachma is a very small coin not worth searching for). Christ said that this woman made a great effort to find this small coin. Likewise, in His love for humanity, especially sinners, God sends messengers to tell them of His love and what He has done for them, to call them to reconciliation with Him. Those who have no value to others have great value to God, and He searches for them until He finds them.

*The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)*

Christ tells a parable about a son who asked his father for his inheritance, thereby openly declaring his disobedience by severing his relationship with his father. He traveled to a distant place and there squandered (i.e., spent) all his money in extravagant living (it does not mean immoral living). When he had spent all his money and found himself in a state of hunger and loss with no one to help, he came to his senses. He remembered the original relationship and his former status with his father, so he decided to return to his father. Feeling extreme guilt and unworthiness, he decided to ask his father to accept him as a servant. But the father (who had been standing, waiting for his son's return all those years) embraced him joyfully and prepared a great feast to celebrate the return of his prodigal son. This provoked the displeasure of the older brother. The older brother felt no joy on the return of his lost brother but accused him without evidence. He was very displeased with his father's generosity towards his brother who had rebelled against him and spent his money on worthless things. Here we find that both sons had strayed. One strayed outside the house and declared his disobedience to the father, and the other strayed inside the house and did not have a son's relationship with the father. Thus, Jesus Christ wanted to tell the Jews who did not love their lost brothers that they should rejoice at the return of sinners to a relationship with God through their genuine repentance, and that they should have a relationship of sonship with the Heavenly Father.

**Conclusion:** These three parables—the Prodigal Son (or the Two Lost Sons), the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin—express that God searches for the sinner until He finds him. He does not want the sinner to die but wants him to return and live. When the sinner returns, he regains his original status as a son, not a slave; the fundamental relationship is restored, and there is great joy in heaven over the return and repentance of sinners.

### **Parables about Humility**

#### *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)*

The tax collector was the person who collected taxes for the Roman state. Tax collectors exploited their positions to collect money for themselves, so the people hated them, they became isolated from people and became examples of evildoers and the irreligious. Two men came to pray in the temple. One stood as if he wanted to tell God and people how religious and righteous he was, and how he had maintained traditions and commandments, so he had not deceived anyone or cheated people (like tax collectors). He was not covetous, did not oppress anyone, was not defiled by adultery, and performed his religious duties by fasting regularly twice a week. Despite all this, Jesus Christ condemned him because he was not humble but arrogant. The other person, the one considered wicked and sinful, was remorseful for his sins, condemning himself for his evil and sins. He asked God for forgiveness with sincere repentance, and therefore he went home justified. The Scripture reminds us that God cares about what is in the heart and does not look at appearances. The Jewish leaders who were arguing with Jesus Christ knew that He was speaking about them, and therefore they sought more to kill Him instead of correcting their mistakes and repenting so that the Father would accept them.

### **Parables about forgiveness**

*The Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43)*

What Jesus Christ wanted to say is that the sinner whom God has forgiven more loves God more. Jesus told this parable when He entered the house of one of the religious Jewish leaders. A sinful woman came and wept at Christ's feet, wetting His feet with her tears (evidence of sincere repentance). She wiped her tears with her hair (which is a woman's crown) as a sign of humility and contrition. But this religious Jew was troubled and said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." Therefore, He told him this parable to make a comparison between what the woman did and what this man did. She did not cease kissing Christ's feet, while that man did not even offer the duty of hospitality and water to wash Jesus Christ's feet from the dust of the road. This means that the sinful person far from God loves God more than others because he has been forgiven more. Therefore, we should not look at sinners as unworthy of forgiveness or the grace of remaining in God's presence. Rather, we should rejoice over them when they repent and receive God's forgiveness.

**Parables about loving our enemies***The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)*

Jesus Christ wanted to clarify to us that there is another law higher than religious laws or social bonds, namely the law of love. We may not err in the law of bonds or the laws of the Torah, but we err in the law of love by not loving our neighbors or those in need of us. A man was traveling on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, a road fraught with dangers and robbers. He fell among robbers who wounded him, took his money, and left him half dead. Two men passed by, one a priest and the other a Levite. They did not care about this wounded man and did not stop to try to help him. But a Samaritan man (intended to be an enemy)

passed by, had compassion on him, treated his wounds, put him on his own donkey, and took him to an inn to care for him. The Samaritans were enemies of the Jews, as they had a doctrinal and religious dispute with the Jews. The Jews saw themselves as pure descendants of Abraham, while the Samaritans were a mixed lineage resulting from intermarriage of some Jews with other peoples in the northern kingdom. This was unexpected from the Samaritan, and thus this Samaritan enemy acted on another principle, the principle of love, and his love surpassed that of those bound by the Mosaic Law. Christ asked, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" They answered, "The one who showed him mercy." Thus, Jesus Christ defined for them that sinners need love, that traditions of the Law do not save people but may hinder them from doing good, and that there is another law that binds humanity, which is the law of love. A neighbor is every person in need of help, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, or religious background. True love is acting to meet the need.

### **Parables about Persistence in Prayer**

Prayer is the personal connection between God and humanity; it is not merely the performance of a duty or obligation. Rather, it is more than that; it is a relationship between a person and his Creator, in which a person declares his submission to God and worships Him. In it, he seeks knowledge not only for himself but also for his family, the society he lives in, and the nation he belongs to.

#### *The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8)*

Here Christ pointed to two truths: The first is that we must ask so that we may find, and knock so that it may be opened to us. We ask God the Heavenly Father, who gives us everything good for us. The Heavenly Father is better than an earthly father, and He knows how to

give to us and respond to us, but we must be earnest in our prayers to Him. The second fact is that the Holy Spirit is God's gift, and we must ask Him to give us of His Spirit, not merely because we have received baptism, practiced a certain ritual, or received a blessing from a minister.

*The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)*

Due to the widow's insistence and persistence, the unjust judge arose at midnight and granted justice to this needy woman. Here, Jesus Christ tells us that if an unjust judge grants justice to those who ask him, let alone the just Judge, God. He is the one who can grant justice to those who persist in prayer to Him. Prayer does not subject God to man, but it subjects man to the divine will, so he awaits His timing, His dealings, and the type of His gifts. The intention here is not to repeat prayers, but to wait patiently, with faith and expectation. Jesus said not to repeat prayers in vain but with a person's faith in the response to his request from God.

**Various parables**

*The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:7-11)*

Emphasizing the characteristic of humility, Jesus Christ instructed that a person should take the lowest place when invited to a celebration, and not take the place of honor, leaving others to give him his appropriate place. The human soul wants to exalt itself. But Jesus Christ asks us to be humble (not outwardly but with sincerity of heart). Here He confirms the truth that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Some try to be humble or pretend to be humble to influence others. But true humility is for a person to know that his ability is limited, and he is limited in many aspects, and that every success is from the Lord's enabling.

*The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)*

Note: This parable was listed in the original Arabic text but was not elaborated upon in the provided section. It is included here as a reference point as it appeared in the initial list.

*The Parable of the Banquet and Awaiting Heavenly Reward (Luke 14:11-14)*

Note: This parable was listed in the original Arabic text but was not elaborated upon in the provided section. It is included here as a reference point as it appeared in the initial list.

*The Parable of the Unworthy Guests (Matthew 22:1-14)*

Jesus Christ told this parable to clarify the truth of the invitation that was offered to the Jewish people through His holy prophets, to return to a pure relationship with the Lord. If they rejected it, the host of the feast (the Lord) would invite other people, who might be considered unworthy of the invitation, such as the Gentiles. Therefore, a person has no excuse for rejecting God's invitation to salvation and the restoration of fellowship with God. When we examine these excuses closely, we find them weak and do not justify their failure to respond to accepting the invitation.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Jesus' Parables About Christian Stewardship, His Second Coming, and the Day of Judgment**

In this chapter, we review some of Jesus' parables concerning stewardship, His Second Coming, and judgment.

#### **(A) Parables about the Second Coming of Christ and Judgment**

##### **1. The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

2. The Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant
3. The Parable of the Master of the House Traveling
4. Christ is the Judge
5. Equality of Reward

**(B) Parables about Doing the Will of God**

1. The Parable of the Two Sons

**(C) Miscellaneous Parables with Various Teachings**

1. The Parable of the Wedding Feast of the King's Son
2. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

**(D) Parables of Jesus Christ about Christian Stewardship**

1. The Parable of the Rich Fool
2. The Parable of the Talents
3. The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

What did Jesus Christ say about the Last Days, Judgment, and His Second Coming? Christ will come a second time to gather the children of His kingdom into eternal life. That hour is unknown to anyone and will come suddenly. There will be great tribulation, wars, earthquakes, and famines. Believers must endure. Every person must be in a constant state of readiness. Christ's message will spread throughout the whole world. His coming will be preceded by many false prophets who will mislead many. He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and all will know that it is Christ and will worship Him. That day is near and will come without a doubt and the believers will suffer persecution.

## **(A) Parables about the Second Coming of Christ and Judgment**

### *1- The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)*

Jesus Christ gave a vivid picture of the importance of being prepared for the Second Coming, in which He will declare His judgment upon all humanity. His first coming was to offer salvation and redemption, while his second coming is for judgment. No one knows the timing of this coming. Therefore, when Jesus Christ comes again to take believers to heaven, we must be ready and prepared. Spiritual preparation cannot be acquired at the last moment, as the parable illustrated with the oil running out. Therefore, the opportunity is now for a person to prepare to meet Christ when He comes again. According to Jewish custom, the betrothal period could last a long time before the wedding, and the betrothal covenant was as binding as the marriage covenant itself. On the wedding day, the bridegroom comes to take his bride and goes to the bride's house for the wedding celebration where the feast is held. Lighting was necessary on that day, so the young virgins, friends of the bride, would come with their lamps. In this parable, Jesus Christ tells that five of them were prepared despite the bridegroom's delay. But the other five let their lamps go out, and they went to buy oil. When they returned to the wedding, they found the time had passed, the bridegroom had taken his bride, and they had gone in the wedding procession. Here Christ emphasizes the necessity of preparation for the Second Coming. A person prepares for this meeting by following Christ faithfully and sincerely throughout his life and by being among the believers who keep His commandments, whom He will take to heaven at His second coming.

### *2- The Parable of the Faithful Servant (Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-48)*

Jesus Christ presented many examples to clarify to us the meaning of being prepared for His second coming and how we should live until He comes. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins

(Matthew 25:1-13), we learn that each person is responsible for his spiritual condition and personal readiness to meet Christ at His second coming. Then Christ presented the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). The capabilities the Lord has given us must be used because He has entrusted them to us. Since the relationship between us and God is personal, each person must prepare and not rely on others. He also told the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46). In this parable, Jesus Christ mentions that He will come on a day people do not expect, and therefore every person must be prepared to meet Christ and give an account of his stewardship. That is, the accounting will be personal. Therefore, He will separate His followers from those who rejected Him.

### *3-The Parable of the Master of the House Traveling (Mark 13:34-37)*

This parable serves two meanings. The first meaning: The traveling master will come at a time no one knows, and everyone must be prepared for his coming—that is, for the coming of Jesus Christ again, when He will give each one his reward. The second meaning: Everyone who invests his talents, gifts, and what the Lord has given him will receive more, as the Lord will say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." But whoever does not invest his talents, what he has will be taken from him. No one among people or angels knows that day or that hour when Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Therefore, believers must watch like a servant serving his master faithfully until he returns. If the master returns and finds this servant faithful, he will entrust him with greater responsibility, and if he does not watch, what he has will be taken from him.

### *4-Parable of the Tenants (Matthew 21: 33 – 44)*

The teachers and meticulous Jews did not want to accept Christ's message, so Christ told them this parable about a man who planted a vineyard (the vineyard often refers to God's people, the Jews), but each year he came to seek fruit in this vineyard and found none. Finally, he thought to send his son to them (meaning Christ himself), thinking that those in charge of the vineyard would respect him, but they killed him just as they killed the prophets before him. Therefore, He said, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." That is, Christ, though rejected by the Jews, is the rock upon which the kingdom of God will be built in the New Covenant.

*5-Laborers in the Vineyard - Equality of Reward (Matthew 20:1-16)*

Christ wanted to declare that there is no difference between those who come last into the kingdom of God and those who come first; both will receive the same reward, which is eternal life. Therefore, we have no right to object if we come first and discover our reward is equal to those who came last. This is like those who board a train; some board first and some board last, but all will arrive at the same place. Our main joy should not be in the reward we will receive but let us rejoice in the community of believers and their fellowship.

**(B) Parables about Doing the Will of God**

*The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-33)*

Two sons; their father asked them to go work in the vineyard. One refused to go to work in his father's vineyard, and the other came and heard the command and said he would go. But the first one later went to the vineyard, while the second one, who said he would go, did not go. Therefore, those sinners who repented and returned to the Lord will precede the Jewish teachers in entering the kingdom because they repented, while the teachers did not repent.

**(C) Parables of Jesus Christ about Christian Stewardship**

*1-The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15-21)*

Jesus Christ declares that death is a certain reality and that after death there is eternal life. A person must choose where he will spend this eternal life. This rich man did not commit any sin or wrong in his love for money, but the mistake was in confining his life and goals to accumulating wealth, unaware of the reality that the continuation of life is not guaranteed. Indeed, death may come at a time a person does not expect. This rich man relied on his wealth to secure his future and did not rely on God's love and power. He did nothing for this man that pertained to eternal life; he did not give to the poor and needy, did not care for God's work, and was not faithful in his stewardship.

*2-The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)*

In this parable, the master distributed money among his servants according to their abilities; none of them received more or less than his capacity to invest. If any failed in the task assigned to him, his excuse would not be that he was burdened beyond his capacity but that he failed due to his unfaithfulness in using his talents. Jesus Christ wanted to indicate that all who use their talents wisely and faithfully will increase, but whoever does not use his gifts will have them taken away, and there is eternal judgment.

*3-The Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-13)*

Interpretations of this parable vary; it is one of Christ's most difficult parables, but we can summarize it in four basic points:

1. Money is a trust (or stewardship) from the Lord, and we will give an account of this stewardship. Therefore, we must be faithful in managing this money: not spending it on extravagant living, not squandering it on frivolous living or our own pleasures, but spending it wisely according to God's will. The "wealth of unrighteousness" mentioned here is the money

of this life; it is not his own but the master's money. Therefore, it concludes by saying, "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."

2. We must use our financial resources as if we are building and making friends for ourselves in eternal life (i.e., for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom).

3. Your financial resources are not yours but belong to God. Money has power and authority over a person; it can remove God's place from our lives and can dominate us so that we become slaves to it and not to the Lord. We may stop going to the Lord's house, stop doing good, contributing to the extension of God's kingdom, and caring for His servants. Money is a gift from God and not a curse.

4. A person cannot serve two masters. He will either serve God or money. If the master is God, he will serve Him with his money and time and manage his finances as one who pleases God.

#### **(D) Miscellaneous Parables with Various Teachings**

##### *1-The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14)*

There was a special garment that the king prepared for every guest invited to the wedding. This garment was freely given to all whom he invited. However, the invited guests—the Jews—refused to come to the wedding, despite the king's generosity and repeated invitations. So, he sent his servants out to invite everyone they found, despite their unworthiness, and he gave them the wedding garment. But he saw one person not wearing the wedding clothes and said to him, "How did you get in here?" Then he ordered that he be taken and thrown outside (using the same expression for the punishment of those who will meet eternal torment). The wedding garment is made by the Heavenly Father, and no one can attend this wedding except

those who have put on this robe—those who have received the salvation given by Christ. God knows those who will accept Him, so no one can attend this great wedding feast unless they are among those given the wedding garment.

*2-The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Mark 11:11-14)*

The fig tree symbolized God's people. Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree, but when He came to it, He found no fruit. But one asked to leave it for one more year and give it a final chance; otherwise, when the next year came, it would be cut down. This signifies the successive opportunities God gives to the sinful person to repent and return to Him. We know that Jesus Christ raised the dead and thus gave life. But He is also the one who takes life. However, He did not take a human life, for He came so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but He withdrew life from the fig tree where He found no fruit, as a metaphor for the Jewish people's rejection of His message, redemption, and forgiveness.

## **Chapter 14**

### **Miracles of Jesus Christ (1):**

#### **His Authority Over Nature and Sickness**

History acknowledges that Jesus Christ performed many miracles, not all of which were recorded. However, what was written is sufficient for our instruction. The primary purpose of performing miracles was not to prove His power, but to prove His identity, person, and attributes. Someone once asked, "Are you a professor or a teacher?" The other replied, "Yes, but how did you know?" He said, "What you write and what you say reveal you." What Jesus

Christ said and did reveals Him and introduces us to His person. The supreme purpose of Jesus Christ's miracles was to express His divinity and His eternal (i.e., everlasting) power. Therefore, Jesus Christ possessed absolute authority over nature, over sickness, over the spiritual forces of evil (i.e., Satan and his forces), and finally, authority over life and death. No one can be such except the Word who became flesh.

### **Miracles that Demonstrate His Authority Over Nature**

Jesus' miracles over nature—such as calming the storm and walking on the sea—demonstrate His divine authority over creation itself. These acts reveal that the forces of nature obey Him, confirming that He is not merely a teacher, but the Lord of all. Below, are few examples of these miracles.

1. Feeding the Five Thousand (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-14)
2. Calming the Storm (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)
3. Christ Walks on Water (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:17-21)
4. Feeding the Four Thousand (Matthew 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9)
5. Christ Commands the Catching of a Fish to Pay the Temple Tax (Matthew 17:24-27)
6. The First Miraculous Catch of Fish (Luke 5:1-11)
7. Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1-11)
8. The Second Miraculous Catch of Fish (John 21:1-14)

**Note:**

Jesus Christ said that what enters a person's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth does. Therefore, there is nothing inherently forbidden (haram) or permissible (halal) because wine does not defile a person. However, we find many other verses, especially in the Book of Proverbs, warning us against intoxicants or reaching a state of unconsciousness or drunkenness, and consequently, addiction as well.

### **Miracles that Demonstrate His Authority Over Sickness**

1. Healing the Woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood (Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48)
2. Healing the Paralytic (Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26)
3. Cleansing a Leper by the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–15)
4. Healing Peter's Mother-in-Law (Matthew 8:14–17; Mark 1:29–31; Luke 4:38–39)
5. Healing a Man with the Withered Hand (Matthew 12:9–13; Mark 3:1–5; Luke 6:6–11)
6. Healing Blind Bartimaeus (Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)
7. Healing the Centurion's Servant (Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10)
8. Healing a Mute Man Possessed by a Demon (Matthew 12:22 - 37; Luke 11:14 - 23)
9. Healing Two Blind Men (Matthew 20:27-31)
10. Healing a Mute Man (Matthew 9:32–33)
11. Healing the Deaf and Mute Man (Mark 7:31–37)

12. Healing a Blind Man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26)
13. Healing the Bent-Over Woman (Luke 13:10–17)
14. Healing a Man with Dropsy (Luke 14:1 - 6)
15. Cleansing Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11–19)
16. Healing the Ear of the High Priest's Servant (Luke 22:49–51)
17. Healing the Royal Official's Son (John 4:46–54)
18. Healing the Lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–16)
19. Healing the Man Born Blind (John 9:1-7)

## **Chapter 15**

### **The Miracles of Jesus Christ (2):**

#### **His Authority Over Supernatural Forces and Death**

Continuing from the previous chapter, this chapter presents readings on the miracles of Jesus that reveal His authority over supernatural powers and even over death itself.

#### **Miracles Demonstrate Jesus' Authority Over the Unseen Supernatural Forces (Satan and His Powers)**

- 1- Casting Out Demons (Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39)

Note: The indwelling and domination of demons over a person occurs when a person surrenders his/her will to Satan. Satan has no authority over those who believe in Christ.

- 2- Healing a Boy with an Unclean Spirit (Matthew 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–42)
- 3- Casting a Demon out of the Canaanite Woman's Daughter (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30)
- 4- Casting an Unclean Spirit out of a Man (Mark 1:23–27; Luke 4:33–36)

### **Miracles Demonstrate Jesus' Authority Over Death**

- 1- Raising Jairus's Daughter (Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:22–24; Luke 8:41–42, 49–56)
- 2- Raising the Widow's Son at Nain (Luke 7:11–16)
- 3- Raising Lazarus (John 11:1–44)
- 4- Cursing the Barren Fig Tree (Matthew 21:18–22; Mark 11:11–14)

Note: Some interpret that the fig tree symbolizes the people of Israel, and by their rejection of Christ, He also demonstrated His rejection of them. However, Jesus Christ did not come to bring death but to give life.

### **The Miracles and the Cross**

It would not have been difficult for Jesus Christ to perform a miracle and escape the cross, but He knew that the cross was God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

### **Summary**

The disciples asked: "Who then is this?" But they knew that Christ was an extraordinary person. He is not a sorcerer, nor did He perform miracles merely because God was with Him, but to show His disciples and everyone that He is "the Incarnate Word—God who appeared in the flesh." Out of His abundant love, He came to free us from the dominion of sin and give us eternal life. The miracles of Christ confirm the truth of His divinity. For whom is this who

can command nature, heal diseases, and cast out demons by commanding them, and they obey?

Finally, who is this who has authority over death, giving life and bringing death? He commands life, and a person lives; He commands death, and a tree dies. A person may not comprehend this because it is beyond human limits. But all things that are impossible for man are possible with God. Therefore, the element of faith is indispensable. We must not focus our attention on the miracles themselves, but on understanding the Holy Scripture, because it helps us understand God's purpose for our lives and how to face trials. We must also not attribute everything to the work of Satan or hidden forces, for not every illness is an act of Satan, and not every trial is from Satan. Thus, we should not fear doing the will of God out of fear of evil forces, nor should we neglect doing good to appease the enemy of good. “And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' Amen.” (Matthew 28:18–20) The Lord taught His disciples that they have authority over the forces of Satan through prayer and fasting, and in the name of Christ and His power, as His disciples did after His resurrection.

## **Chapter 16**

### **Sayings and Teachings of Jesus Christ (1)**

Many Christians—and even non-Christians—are familiar with some of the well-known sayings of Jesus Christ, yet these sayings are often misunderstood or misused. One example is Christ's statement, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto

God the things that are God's." Some misuse this saying to justify sinful behavior or indifference to God's will, ignoring its true meaning. Christ taught that one should fulfill civic responsibilities, such as paying taxes imposed by the state—even when they seem unfair—while also remaining faithful to God by giving Him what belongs to Him, including tithes for the care of God's house and His servants. We will examine some verses as they appear in the Holy Bible.

### **Fulfilling the Law**

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him." (Matthew 3:15). "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law by offering the perfect sacrifice and gave grace through His salvation. "And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:7-8). Christ did good and healed the sick on the Sabbath, breaking the commandment to keep the Sabbath. To those who criticized Him, He said that He desires mercy, not sacrifice, and that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

### **The Importance of Man's Spiritual Life**

"But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

### **Do Not Tempt the Lord**

“Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"” (Matthew 4:7 The Holy Bible repeatedly instructs us not to tempt the Lord our God, except in one matter only: presenting tithes to God, as it says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and try Me now in this... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven."

### **Worship God Alone**

“Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" (Matthew 4:10. Worship here means adoration. Therefore, we do not offer sacrifices, nor do we bow to statues or images to worship them. We worship only the one God, who is one God in three Persons.

### **The Call to Serve God**

"Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" (Matthew 4:19. You cannot be a servant of Jesus Christ before you follow Him, keep His commandments, and act upon them.

### **The Role of Believers in the World**

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt gives food its taste and preserves it. Without faith, evil spreads on earth. Light is that without which man stumbles in darkness.

### **Good Works Are a Living Testimony to Non-Believers**

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16). When non-believers see our good works, it leads them to faith and knowledge of God.

### **Christ's Teachings in the Sermon on the Mount**

#### *Christ's Teachings on Adultery*

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28). In Christ’s teaching, the one who commits adultery is no different from the one who does not commit the act but harbors lust in the heart. Since the root of evil lies within the human heart, every person stands in need of God’s forgiveness and Christ’s redemption.

#### *Christ's Teachings on Divorce*

When they asked Him about divorce, He began by answering about marriage, its origin, and the supreme purpose of creation. In the beginning, there was no divorce, because God created them male and female from the beginning. The goal was for this relationship to last a lifetime. “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:32).

#### *Always Speak the Truth*

“But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:37).

#### *Do Not Avenge Yourselves*

“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.” (Matthew 5:39). This means that a person should not seek revenge but should leave matters to justice to take its course, and to God who rewards.

*Love Your Enemies*

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44). This is a difficult command, for how can a person love his enemy. We cannot do this except by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

*Be Perfect*

“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48).

*Let Your Inner Motives in Prayer or Charity Be Pure*

“So that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:4). “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.” (Matthew 6:6-7). Prayer is the connection between man and his Creator; it is not an obligation imposed on man. It deepens the relationship between man and God. Repeating prayer words is not effective.

*Fasting Is Not an Obligation*

“And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,

and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.” (Matthew 9:15-16).

*The Lord's Prayer*

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom comes. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and power and the glory forever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:9-13).

*The True Treasure That Lasts Forever*

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21. This means a person should strive to give priority to the relationship between him and God and not make perishable earthly treasures the priority in his life.

*The Lamp of the Body Is the Eye*

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23). A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

*Love of God and Love of Money*

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24). Here He speaks about lordship in life. Who is the lord in your life? We serve God, obey Him, and seek His guidance; He becomes our Lord. This does not contradict the importance of work and material advancement in life.

*God Provides All Our Needs*

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:33-34).

*Do Not Judge*

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” (Matthew 7:1).

*Bring Your Requests to God*

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7).

*Do Good to Others*

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12). The measure is not the law and regulations, for we may be blameless legally, but there is another law that governs us: the law of love. We treat people as we want them to treat us.

*Other Nations Will Accept Faith in Christ While the Jews Reject it.*

*A Narrow Gate and a Difficult Road, but it leads to Eternal Life.*

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.” (Matthew 7:13). “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14). And as Jesus Christ said, “Take My yoke upon you... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Therefore, when we enter through the narrow gate or pass through a path with hardship, God carries our burdens and makes it an easy path. This is much better than the path of evil and sin.

#### *Bear Good Fruit*

“You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.” (Matthew 7:16-20). For every vessel overflow with what is in it, and every tree bears its fruit.

#### *Do Not Build Your House on Sand*

“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24). The firm foundation of a person's life is obedience to God's commandments.

#### **The Cost of Following Christ**

Do not imagine that by following Christ you will live a life of luxury; the cost may be high.

“And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' ” (Matthew 8:20).

#### **Your Household and Relatives May Become Your Enemies**

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'” (Matthew 10:34-36).

### **Take Up the Cross of Christ**

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and “Follow Me” is not worthy of Me (Matthew 10:37-38). We might think we will bear the cross—that is, face troubles—but we discover that Christ helps us.

### *Whoever Thinks He Loses His Life When He Comes to Christ Is Mistaken*

“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:39).

### **Whoever Honors You Honors Me**

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:40-42).

### **Christ Can Calm the Storm**

“But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” (Matthew 8:26).

### **Christ has all authority on earth and in heaven and can help us**

### *Christ Can Forgive Your Sins*

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” (Matthew 9:6). But before these words, He said to him: "Your sins are forgiven you." If you want forgiveness, come to Christ so He may forgive your sins before you ask for healing.

### **Why Did Christ Come?**

“When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Matthew 9:12-13).

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10). Christ mentioned that life in the kingdom of God is much better than life outside the kingdom.

### **How Will They Believe Without a Preacher?**

“Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matthew 9:37-38).

### **Nothing Is Hidden**

“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known.” (Matthew 10:26).

### **Trust in God Who Provides for His Servants' Needs**

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold or

silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.” (Matthew 10:8-10).

### **Persecution Is Inevitable, but God Is with Us**

“Behold, I send you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you... Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will revolt against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (Matthew 10:16-23).

### **A Disciple Is Not Above His Teacher**

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore, do not fear them.” (Matthew 10:24-26).

### **Do Not Fear Those Who Kill the Body**

God is in control of matters. “Therefore, whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:27-31).

### **Confessing Christ**

"Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33).

### **You Cannot Convince with Logic Someone Who Does Not Want to Believe**

"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, and you did not lament.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (Matthew 11:16-19).

### **Woe to the City That Rejects Faith**

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." (Matthew 11:21-24). That is, accept the message of Christ and do not reject it, or your fate will be eternal destruction.

### **Faith Is Believing with a Simple Heart**

“At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’” (Matthew 11:25).

### **The Son (Christ) Can Reveal Himself to You**

“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Matthew 11:27).

### **Christ Is the Source of Rest**

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).

### **Christ Is Stronger Than Satan; He Is Able to Bind the Devil**

“But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.’” (Matthew 12:25-29). Do not fear Satan and his forces because Christ can bind him

### **One Spirit**

“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” (Matthew 12:30). Therefore, we should not fight others who preach the Gospel even if we disagree with them—no to the spirit of division and partisanship.

### **Complete Rejection of the Holy Spirit Is an Unforgivable Sin**

“Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will have forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32).

### **When Christ Cleanses Your Heart, Your Life and Actions Change**

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word man may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words, you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:33-37).

### **Christ's True Family Are Those Who Do the Will of God**

“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:50).

### **A Special Privilege: To Believe Even Though We Have Not Seen**

“For assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (Matthew 13:17; cf. John 20:29).

### **When We Understand the Scriptures, We Possess Many Treasures**

“Jesus said to them, 'Have you understood all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.'” (Matthew 13:51-52).

### **Food and Drink Do Not Defile a Person**

“When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So, Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'” (Matthew 15:10-20).

### **The Source of Faith Is That Christ Is the Son of God**

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So, they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.” (Matthew 16:13-20).

### **A Person's Value Is Not Measured by All the Riches of the World**

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.’” (Matthew 16:24-27). The Lord Jesus compared the wealth of the world with the wealth of a person's soul, as if they were on a scale. We find that the scale of a person's wealth is weightier and higher because a person's soul is precious in God's sight; He does not desire the death of the sinner but wants him to return and repent.

### **The Coming of Christ Is Near**

“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” (Matthew 16:28). That is, the kingdom of God came through Christ, who accomplished salvation on His cross and gave redemption to all who accept Him. Everyone who comes to Him enters this eternal kingdom.

### **Faith Makes the Impossible Possible**

“So, Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'” (Matthew 17:20). Do not tempt the Lord your God with signs; you just need to walk by the Spirit and obey His word.

### **Repentance Is the Key to Entering the Kingdom of God**

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2).

“But unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:5).

### **Christ Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

“Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful.” (Matthew 17:22-23).

### **Our Faith Must Be Simple and Firm**

“And said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to

sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:3-6).

### **Offenses Must Come, but Beware of Causing Others to Stumble**

“Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter the everlasting life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” (Matthew 18:7-9). Here Jesus expresses the importance of not causing others or even us to stumble. Rather, the kingdom of God should be before our eyes.

### **God Rejoices at the Return of a Sinner from His Evil Way**

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” (Matthew 18:10-14).

### **Preserving Good Relationships**

“Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him about his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with

you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15-17). Forgiveness is linked to preserving good relationships between people.

### **Forgiveness and Answered Prayer**

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:18-19). Does God answer prayer? When we pray according to His will, He answers our prayers, which may open or close doors.

### **Christ Is Present Wherever We Pray in His Name**

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). The church is not a building but the gathering of believers.

### **God's Plan from Creation, and His Purpose for Marriage**

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.'" (Matthew 19:3-6).

### **Marriage Is a Lifelong Union**

“They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.'” (Matthew 19:7-9).

### **Monasticism Is a Calling from God**

“His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who can accept it, let him accept it.'” (Matthew 19:10-12).

### **Simplicity of Faith**

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

### **The Reward for Following Christ**

“Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?' So, Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.'” (Matthew 19:27-29).

### **Whoever Wants to Be the Greatest Must Serve Others**

“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So, he said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.' And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.’” (Matthew 20:20-27). Serving others is a privilege for us, and whoever wants to be first must be a servant.

### **Christ Came to Give His Life as a Ransom for Us**

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28).

### **God Answers the Prayer of Faith**

“In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” And Jesus answered

them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (Matthew 21:18-22).

### **Christ Is the Cornerstone; No One Can Come to the Father Except Through Him**

“And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So, they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things...” (Matthew 21:23-27) “Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.'" (Matthew 21:42-44).

### **Submission to Authority**

“... He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Matthew 22:20-21).

### **Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures Preserves Us from Error**

“Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'” (Matthew 22:29-32).

### **The Greatest Commandments: Love**

“Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40).

### **The Incarnated Christ Is the Son of David**

“While the Pharisees were gathered, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son, is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him "Lord," saying: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.” (Matthew 22:41-46).

### **True Religion and Hypocrisy**

1- *Good work, not keeping traditions or commandments only.*

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not

do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the market-places, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:2-12).

2- *Acts of mercy.*

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." (Matthew 23:13-14).

3- *Do not swear by God's great name or by holy things.*

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it." (Matthew 23:16-22).

4- *Justice, mercy, and faith are the weightier matters of the law, not just tithing.*

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” (Matthew 23:23-28).

5- *They appear pious to people but persecute God's men and kill the prophets.*

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Therefore, you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” (Matthew 23:29-36).

### **Christ Prophecies about the Destruction of Jerusalem**

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matthew 23:37-39). “Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.” (Matthew 24:15-26). This happened exactly when Titus the Roman destroyed Jerusalem, demolished the temple, and defiled it by offering a pig on it to humiliate the Jews, then killed many of them. Since that time, the people of Israel have been scattered among the nations.

### **Christ Prophecies That Many False Prophets Will Come and Tells the Signs of the End Times**

*1-False prophets*

“And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many.'" (Matthew 24:4-5).

*2-Many wars*

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” (Matthew 24:6-7).

*3-Earthquakes and pestilences*

“And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.” (Matthew 24:7).

*4-Persecutions and tribulations*

“All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:8-13).

*5-The gospel will be preached in all the world*

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14).

*Christ's second coming will be sudden*

“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered.” (Matthew 24:27-28).

### **Signs of the approaching hour**

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:29-35).

### **No one knows when the hour will be**

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.” (Matthew 24:36-41).

### **Therefore, Watch Over Your Spiritual and Eternal Life**

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:42-51). “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming... And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:13, 30).

### **The Lord's Supper in Remembrance of Christ's Death on the Cross**

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.’” (Matthew 26:26-29).

### **Peter Promises to Remain Faithful to Christ, but He Denied Him**

“Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’” (Matthew 26:33-34).

### **Submission to the Father's Will**

“Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.' He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.' Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, your will be done.’” (Matthew 26:38-42).

### **No to the Sword or Violence; The Message of Love**

“...Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?’” (Matthew 26:52-54). Christ was a miracle worker and could have saved Himself from crucifixion, but He went to the cross willingly because this was the will of God the Father to offer the perfect sacrifice for sin.

### **Christ Has All Authority in Heaven and on Earth, and the Great Commandment Is to Preach the Gospel**

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen.”

(Matthew 28:18-20).

## **Chapter 17**

### **The Sayings and Teachings of Jesus Christ (2)**

In this chapter, we will review the teachings and sayings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. John the Baptist said: "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. “Christ is the one who will baptize with the Spirit and with the fire that purifies. Jesus Christ began His ministry by preaching the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God means God's kingdom or His reign. But what is the connection between the kingdom of God and repentance? Repentance is the beginning of the path to enter the kingdom of God, which Christ gave a new definition; it is not eating or drinking or an earthly kingdom, but a spirit and new life and a new relationship with God the Father.

#### **Believe in the Gospel**

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

(Mark 1:15) The gospel is not merely a book or a text, as the text had not yet been compiled at that time, but it is the good news that will change people's lives and tells them that Christ has come to save what was lost, meaning that He has come to accomplish redemption or eternal salvation.

#### **The Call to Serve the Lord**

“Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’” (Mark 1:17).

**Christ has absolute authority over evil forces, so do not fear**

“...What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’” (Mark 1:24–27). And Christ commanded him to fulfill the law by declaring his healing and then re-entering society to work and become a testimony to others. Therefore, do not fear Satan or his agents, for Christ is the one who can protect believers from Satan and his schemes because He is stronger than him.

**Christ can set you free from the dominion of sin and forgive your sins**

“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.' And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, 'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise, take up your bed and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” (Mark 2:5–11).

**If you receive the call, respond quickly**

“As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So, he arose and followed Him. When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Mark 2:14–17).

### **A New Covenant where fasting is not compulsory, but for drawing near to God**

“Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? If they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.’” (Mark 2:19–22).

### **Not about lawful or unlawful, but about what builds up a person**

#### **The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath**

“And He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?' Then He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'” (Mark 2:25–28) “Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” (Mark 3:4–5).

### **A house divided against itself cannot stand**

“And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So, he called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has revolted against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.'” (Mark 3:22–27).

### **Christ has authority over evil powers**

Someone said to one of Christ's servants: 'You deal with Satan; therefore, I do not trust you.' Therefore, we say, as Christ said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Therefore, a servant does not destroy the house of the devil if he is among those they call (possessed—i.e., those owned by the devil). And Christ is the one who binds the strong man and casts him out.

### **Is there an unforgivable sin?**

“Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is subject to eternal condemnation.” (Mark 3:28–30).

### **Who is closest to Jesus Christ?**

“And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are

My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” (Mark 3:32–35).

**So that people may see your faith and be guided by the light within you**

“Also, He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’” (Mark 4:21–23).

**What you do today will come back to you tomorrow**

“Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.’” (Mark 4:24).

**Invest your talents and what the Lord has given you so they may increase**

“For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” (Mark 4:25).

**From Our Limitations to God’s Power**

“On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have

no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'" (Mark 4:35–41).

### **No healing without faith**

“And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction.'" (Mark 5:34). “While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?' As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.'" (Mark 5:35–36)

### **Honor Is Not Always Found at Home**

“But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' Now he could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.” (Mark 6:4–6).

### **Serve Faithfully, Even When Rejected**

“And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts— but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also, He said to them, 'In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!' So, they went out and preached that people should repent.” (Mark 6:7–12).

**You must rest away from work and noise**

“And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’”

(Mark 6:31).

**Trust in the Lord and do not fear**

“For they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’” (Mark 6:50).

**Do not reject the commandments of God to keep the traditions of the elders**

“He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.' He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother"; and "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'—" (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.’” (Mark 7:6–13).

**It is not what enters a man's mouth that defiles him, but what comes out**

“When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to

hear, let him here!' When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So, he said to them, 'Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?' And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.'" (Mark 7:14–23).

### **The Gentiles will also receive healing from Christ/ The door is open to all for salvation**

“For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, 'Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' (as the Jews thought—this statement was to prepare people to change their attitude towards the Gentiles). And she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.' Then He said to her, 'For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" (Mark 7:24–30).

### **Faith does not demand signs**

“But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.'" (Mark 8:12).

### **Malice and hypocrisy are leaven that corrupts life**

“And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the

boat. Then He charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.'" (Mark 8:13–15).

### **God supplies every need**

“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?' They said to Him, 'Twelve.' 'Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?' And they said, 'Seven.' So, he said to them, 'How is it you do not understand?'” (Mark 8:16–21).

### **The Rock of the Christian faith: Christ is the Savior, the Son of God**

“Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So, they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.' Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.” (Mark 8:27–30).

### **He must go through a stage of crucifixion and rejection**

“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” (Mark 8:31).

### **Thinking that denies the crucifixion is not in accordance with God's will**

“He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'” (Mark 8:32–33).

#### **Self-denial and following Christ**

“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.'” (Mark 8:34–35).

#### **The value of the human soul**

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36–37).

#### **Do not deny Christ nor be ashamed to follow Him**

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38).

#### **Christ corrects a wrong concept**

“And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.'” (Mark 9:11–13). Jesus' spoke of Elijah who came in the spirit of judgment to prepare the way before Christ

**All things are possible for the believer, if it is within God's will**

“Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'” (Mark 9:23)

**Prayer and fasting are necessary to cast out demons**

“So, he said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'” (Mark 9:29).

**Christ foretells His crucifixion and resurrection**

“For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.'” (Mark 9:31).

**A new measure for the greatest in the kingdom of God**

“Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house, He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him during them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.'” (Mark 9:33–37).

**He who is not against us is for us**

“Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said,

'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us.'" (Mark 9:38–40).

**God does not waste the reward for an act of mercy**

“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41).

**Do not cause others to stumble, and guard your life of grace**

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched, where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'” (Mark 9:42–48).

**You are the salt of the earth**

“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another.” (Mark 9:50).

**What God has joined together in marriage, let not man separate**

“The Pharisees came and asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' testing Him. And He answered and said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God "made them male and female." "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"; then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.' In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So, he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'” (Mark 10:2–12).

### **Receive the kingdom of God with the simplicity and trust of children**

“... But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:14–16).

### **Not by works, but by faith and accepting salvation**

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' So, Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but one, that is, God.' (Christ did not deny that He is good, but to confirm to this person the truth of His unity with God the Father). And He wanted to move this person to a new concept—that works does not save a person but are a sign of faith.

'You know the commandments: "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not bear false witness," "Do not defraud," "Honor your father and your mother.'" And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.' Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.'" (Mark 10:17–22).

### **With God All Things are Possible**

“Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.'" (Mark 10:23–27).

### **Await the heavenly reward**

“Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" (Mark 10:28–31).

### **Christ foretells the details of His crucifixion, suffering, and resurrection**

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” (Mark 10:33–34). Christ knew God's plan of salvation and that He would die to save all who believe in Him.

**Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and give Himself for others**

“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.' And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So, Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.' And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one's exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'” (Mark 10:35–44). True humility, not false humility, is the basis of exaltation.

**No healing without faith**

“Then Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.” (Mark 10:52). When we believe in Him, we receive the promises God made to believers, that they will receive eternal life.

### **Christ gets ready to enter Jerusalem**

“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord has need of it," and immediately he will send it here.' So, they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they untied it. But some of those who stood there said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So, they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"’ (Mark 11:1–10). He entered riding a colt, not like conquering kings who come on horses. This was to remove the idea that He would rule as an earthly king. He came to establish a heavenly kingdom that endures forever, not a temporal earthly one.

### **My house shall be called a house of prayer**

“So, they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the

temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a "den of thieves."' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching." (Mark 11:15–18).

**Faith works miracles, but do not put the Lord your God to the test**

“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So, Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.'” (Mark 11:20–23).

**The prayer of faith is very powerful in its working**

“Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” (Mark 11:24).

**When you pray, you must have forgiven others**

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25–26).

**May you have the wisdom of Christ**

“Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered

and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men"'—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'" (Mark 11:27–33).

### **Rejected by Men, Established by God**

“What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.” (Mark 12:9).

### **The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the building**

“Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" (Mark 12:10–11).

### **Render to God what is God's, and pay your taxes to the state**

“Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So, they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him,

'Caesar's.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him." (Mark 12:13–17).

**Read the Holy Scriptures so you do not go astray**

“Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.” (Mark 12:24–27). That is, there is no marriage in eternity nor sexual relations, but they will be like the angels of God, praising Him and enjoying the heavenly existence in His presence.

**The first commandment: Love**

“Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:28–31).

**Not by knowledge alone**

“So, the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more

than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him." (Mark 12:32–34).

### **Christ is Lord of David and his Son**

“Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: "The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." Therefore, David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly." (Mark 12:35–37).

### **True religion and false religion**

“Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'" (Mark 12:38–40).

**She gave more than all.** Give to the Lord, for He values your gifts

“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'" (Mark 12:41–44).

### **Christ prophesies the destruction of the temple**

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'” (Mark 1:1–2). If you meditate well, you will find that Jesus did not give a clear answer, as this destruction happened about forty years after His death. But He told them something more important: many false prophets will come and deceive many. However, He gave the sign later when He said that the temple would be desecrated, which happened when Titus the Roman offered a pig on the altar of the temple.

### **Many false prophets will come after Christ**

“And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many.'” (Mark 13:5–6).

### **Signs of the last days**

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

### **Persecution must come**

“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.” (Mark 13:9).

### **The gospel message will spread**

“And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.” (Mark 13:10).

### **God will be with you**

“But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will revolt against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Mark 13:11–13).

### **The sign of the temple's destruction**

“So, when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter.” (Mark 13:14–18).

### **The tribulation that will precede the last days**

“For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” (Mark 13:19–25).

**Christ will come again**

“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!” (Mark 13:26–29).

**The Lord's coming is near**

“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” (Mark 13:30).

**The words of the Lord endure forever**

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

**No one knows the day or hour**

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.” (Mark 13:32–34).

**Pay attention to your spiritual life**

“Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he finds you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13:35–37).

### **Honoring Christ has its reward**

“..., the poor are with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” (Mark 14:7–9).

### **A disciple will betray Christ to His enemies**

“Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.'” (Mark 14:18–21).

### **In memorial of Christ's crucifixion and redemption**

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'” (Mark 14:22–25).

### **Jesus tells Peter he will deny Him three times**

“Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet

I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!'" (Mark 14:27–31).

### **Not my will, but Yours be done**

"Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:34–36).

### **Watch and Pray**

"Watch and pray, lest you enter temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:38).

### **The trial of Jesus**

"Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled. And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes." (Mark 14:48-50).

### **False Witnesses**

"And Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death but found none. For many bore false wit-

ness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" But not even then did their testimony agree." (Mark 14:54–59).

### **Peter denies Jesus three times**

“And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept.” (Mark 14:66–72). And yet, when Peter repented of this sin, Jesus forgave him and asked him to feed His sheep.

### **Sometimes silence is the best answer**

“Then the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing.” (Mark 14:60-61).

### **Christ confirms that He is the promised one from God**

“Again, the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” (Mark 14:61–62).

### **Pilate confronts Christ, or does Christ confront him?**

“Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.' And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So, they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out even more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.” (Mark 15:2–15). Despite Pilate’s numerous attempts to release Jesus, he did not resist the wishes of the chief priests and the people. Pilate was completely convinced of Jesus' innocence, but he failed to uphold justice and protect the citizen. All he cared about was ending this case without shaking his throne.

### **Jesus' final moments on the cross**

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So, when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!'” (Mark 15:34–39).

### **The resurrection of Jesus Christ and His final commandment**

“And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'” (Mark 16:15–18).

## **Chapter 18**

### **The Sayings and Teachings of Jesus Christ (3)**

In this chapter, we will review some of the sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

#### **He must be in His Father's business**

“Then He said to them (to Mary and Joseph), 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" (Luke 2:49) His true Father is the Heavenly Father, for He was not born of the will of a man, but of the will of God the Father.

### **The Anointed of God**

“And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Then He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' So, all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:17-21)

### **No prophet is accepted in his own country**

“... and they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, “Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.” Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’” (Luke 4:22-27)

### **Christ's authority over the kingdom of Satan**

“Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.' And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!' And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ.” (Luke 4:33-37)

### **Christ seeks sinners, and you too**

“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.' And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.” (Luke 4:42-44)

### **Obedience Brings Abundance**

“... When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net.' And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.” (Luke 5:4-6)

### **A higher calling**

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish

which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.' So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.”  
(Luke 5:8-11)

### **I am willing; be cleansed**

“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one...” (Luke 5:12-14)

### **Fulfilling the Law**

“... but go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.' However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.” (Luke 5:14-15)

### **No healing without faith**

“When He saw their faith, He said to him, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you.' And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, 'Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Rise up and walk"?'” (Luke 5:20-23)

### **Christ has authority to forgive sins**

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.” (Luke 5:24-25)

### **A holy calling**

“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So, he left all, rose up, and followed Him.” (Luke 5:27-28)

### **Those who are well have no need of a physician, but the sick does**

“Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Luke 5:29-32)

### **Fasting is not an obligation**

“Then they said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?’ And He said to them, ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.’ Then He spoke a parable to them: ‘No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise, the new makes a tear, and the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new

wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, "The old is better."(Luke 5:33-39)

### **He made the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath**

Jesus Christ broke the clear commandment to clarify the higher purpose of keeping the Sabbath, which is for man to rest from work to renew his strength, direct his heart to God, and worship Him not out of compulsion but out of true love. "Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?' But Jesus answering them said, 'Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?' And He said to them, 'The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.' Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So, the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts and said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Arise and stand here.' And he arose and stood. Then Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?' And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. And they were filled with rage and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all." (Luke 6:1-11)

**The kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit**

“Then He lifted His eyes toward His disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.'” (Luke 6:20)

**The hungry will be filled**

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.” (Luke 6:21)

**Those who weep will laugh**

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.” (Luke 6:21)

**Persecution and reward**

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”  
(Luke 6:22-23)

**Do not be deceived by wealth and so drift away from God**

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.” (Luke 6:24-26)

**You cannot please all people**

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”  
(Luke 6:26)

**Love your enemies**

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.” (Luke 6:27-29) “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Luke 6:31-35)

**Be merciful**

“Therefore, be merciful, just as your father also is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

**Do not judge**

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:37-38)

**You must follow trustworthy leaders**

“And He spoke a parable to them: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.'” (Luke 6:39-40)

**Examine yourself and your actions**

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:41-42)

**You will know them by their fruits**

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:43-45)

**Build your house on the rock**

“But why do you call Me "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (Luke 6:46-49)

**The Compassionate Heart of Christ**

“Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' So, he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.’” (Luke 7:11-16)

#### **John sends his disciples to follow Christ**

He must increase, but I must decrease “Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' When the men had come to Him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"' And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blinds He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’” (Luke 7:18-23) That is, Christ said, "Yes, I am the Christ spoken of in the Scriptures."

#### **Christ testifies for John the Baptist, but whoever believes in Christ will be greater**

“When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind. But what

did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments. Indeed, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him." (Luke 7:24-30)

#### **No Logical Reason to Reject Faith**

"And the Lord said, 'To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We mourned to you, and you did not weep." For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" But wisdom is justified by all her children.'" (Luke 7:31-35)

#### **Christ can forgive your sins/ No forgiveness without faith**

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So, he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.'

Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore, I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'" (Luke 7:40-50)

### **Christ calms the storms in your life**

"Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out. But as they sailed, He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, 'Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!'" (Luke 8:22-25)

### **Come to the true source of strength**

"And Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, "Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.' Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared

to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'" (Luke 8:45-48)

### **Death is not the end**

"While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, 'Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.' But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, 'Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.' When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, 'Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Little girl, arise.' Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat." (Luke 8:49-55)

### **Christ sends us with the authority of the Spirit**

"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.' So, they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." (Luke 9:1-6)

### **Who is Christ?**

“And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' So, they answered and said, 'John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God.'” (Luke 9:18-20) That is, He whom the Father promised would come to save His people from their sins.

### **Christ speaks of His death and resurrection**

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” (Luke 9:22)

### **Self-denial**

“Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’” (Luke 9:23-24)

### **The world or your soul?**

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?” (Luke 9:25)

### **Entering the kingdom of God through faith in Christ**

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:26-27)

### **Who is greatest in the kingdom of God?**

“Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, 'Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’” (Luke 9:46-48)

### **We are One in Spirit**

“Now John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.' But Jesus said to him, 'Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.’” (Luke 9:49-50)

### **Christ came to save, not to destroy**

“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.' And they went to another village.’” (Luke 9:51-56)

### **Do not make excuses to reject His call**

“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I

will follow You but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 9:57-62)

### **The harvest is plentiful**

"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Luke 10:1-2)

### **Christ sends us**

"Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (Luke 10:3-9)

### **Woe to the city that rejects the salvation of Christ**

"But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and

Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Luke 10:10-16)

### **Rejoice because your names are written in heaven**

“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'” (Luke 10:17-20)

### **The Simplicity of Faith**

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.' Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.'” (Luke 10:21-24)

### **Choose the good part... The need for one thing - Christ**

“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Je-

sus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 10:38-42)

### **Teach us to pray**

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So, He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom comes. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.'" (Luke 11:1-4)

### **Perseverance in prayer, not tedious repetition**

"And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within and say, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you"? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.'" (Luke 11:5-8)

### **Ask, and it will be given... The gift of the Holy Spirit**

"So, I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him

a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:9-13)

**Do not fear Satan or his forces, for Christ is stronger**

“And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house fall. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoils.’” (Luke 11:14)

**You are either with Christ or against Him**

“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

(Luke 11:23-26) That is, repentance may cleanse the heart, but the Holy Spirit must dwell in it; otherwise, the devil comes and brings others with him, and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

**Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it**

“And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’”

(Luke 11:27-28)

**Miracles are of no avail; what will save is the cross/ The death and burial of Christ in the tomb for three days like Jonah**

“And while the crowds were thickly gathered, He began to say, 'This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed, a greater than Solomon is here.’” (Luke 11:29)

**Your faith will be evident**

“No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light.” (Luke 11:33)

**The darkness and light of the heart**

“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore, take

heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.” (Luke 11:34-36)

### **Outdated traditions do not represent pure religion**

“And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So, he went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.'” (Luke 11:37-42)

### **True humility and fake humility**

“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.” (Luke 11:43-44)

### **Many prophets were killed; why do we not accept the crucifixion of Christ?**

“Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from

the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple.

Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.” (Luke 11:47-51)

### **Hypocrisy is to show the opposite of what we conceal**

“In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.’” (Luke 12:1-4)

### **Do not fear people, but fear God**

“And I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:4-5)

### **God cares for us**

“Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:6-7)

### **Do not deny Christ**

“Also, I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:8-9)

### **The unforgivable sin**

“And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.” (Luke 12:10)

**The Holy Spirit will be with you**

“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:11-12)

**Not to Judge, but to Save**

“Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?'" (Luke 12:13-14)

**Take heed and beware of covetousness**

“And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.' Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So, he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:15-21)

**God cares for you personally, so put your trust in Him**

“Then He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then cannot do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.’” (Luke 12:22-31)

**If you feel you are little, God will give you an eternal kingdom**

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”  
(Luke 12:32)

**Work for what will last forever**

“Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:33-34)

**Always be ready**

“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes,

will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Luke 12:35-40)

**Be faithful in little, and the Lord will set you over much**

“Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.’” (Luke 12:41-48)

**Faith in Christ may lead to division**

“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that

I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”  
(Luke 12:49-53)

### **Discerning the times**

“Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?'" (Luke 12:54-57)

### **Reconciliation is better than dispute**

“When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge delivers you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you; you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.” (Luke 12:58)

### **Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish**

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners

than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:1-5)

### **God is patient**

“He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, "Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?" But he answered and said to him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.” (Luke 13:6-9)

### **Tradition and commandment or man?**

“Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore, come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath.' The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath lose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So, ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound her for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?' And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” (Luke 13:10-17)

**Enter through the door you may think is narrow, but the end is assured**

“And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate...'” (Luke 13:22-24)

**When the door is shut**

“... for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'” (Luke 13:24-27)

**Good works are evidence of genuine faith**

“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, and yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13:28)

**Some will come to Christ whom we think are undeserving**

“They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed, there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.” (Luke 13:29-30)

**When we do what is right, we need not fear the threat**

“On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons

and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless, I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following..." (Luke 13:31-33a)

### **The city that rejects faith, the Lord leaves it to reap the consequences of its actions**

"... for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 13:33b-35)

### **Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?**

"As He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' And they could not answer Him regarding these things." (Luke 14:1-6)

### **Humility**

"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that

when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11)

### **Heavenly reward**

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'" (Luke 14:12-14)

### **Feeble excuses**

"Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yokes of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still, there is

room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:15-24)

**Your faith in Christ may cost you much**

"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.'" (Luke 14:25-27)

**Count the cost**

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.'" (Luke 14:28-33)

**You are the salt of the earth**

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out.'" (Luke 14:34-35)

**Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon**

“He also said to His disciples: 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So, he called him and said to him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward." Then the steward said within himself, "What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." So, he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, "How much do you owe my master?" And he said, "A hundred measures of oil." So, he said to him, "Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty." Then he said to another, "And how much do you owe?" So, he said, "A hundred measures of wheat." And he said to him, "Take your bill, and write eighty." So, the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are shrewder in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" (Luke 16:1-12)

### **The love of God and the love of money**

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.' Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your

hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

(Luke 16:13-15)

### **The word of God is steadfast**

“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”

(Luke 16:17)

### **The Sacredness of Marriage: Not Built on Human Whims**

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.” (Luke 16:18)

### **Spiritual poverty and true riches**

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” (Luke 16:19-25)

### **Heaven and Hell: No Passage Between Them**

“...’And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’ Then 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.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, Father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:26-31)

### **Do not cause others to stumble**

"Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves.'" (Luke 17:1-3)

### **Guard your relationship with others (Forgiveness)**

"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sin seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent," you shall forgive him.'" (Luke 17:3-4)

### **Faith**

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' So, the Lord said, 'If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, "Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea," and it would obey you.'" (Luke 17:5-6)

### **We have no merit**

"And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come at once and sit down to eat"? But will he not rather say to him,

"Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink"? Does he think that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise, you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do." (Luke 17:7-10)

### **Thanksgiving**

"Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' So, when He saw them, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So, Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.'" (Luke 17:11-19)

### **The kingdom of God is within you**

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'" (Luke 17:20-21)

### **Do not go after another**

“Then He said to the disciples, 'The days will come when you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look here!" or "Look there!" Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.'” (Luke 17:22-24)

### **Christ tells of His sufferings and crucifixion**

“But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” (Luke 17:25)

### **He will come at an hour you do not expect**

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.’ And they answered and said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' So, He said to them, 'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.’” (Luke 17:26-37)

### **Repentance truly accepted by God**

“Also, He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'” (Luke 18:9-14)

### **The Simplicity of Faith**

“Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.'” (Luke 18:15-17)

### **Nothing is impossible with the Lord**

“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

### **Reward on earth and in heaven**

“Then Peter said, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So, he said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.'” (Luke 18:28-30)

### **Christ speaks of His death and resurrection**

“Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.' But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.” (Luke 18:31-34)

### **If He is the Christ, He can heal me**

“Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' So, Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.” (Luke 18:35-43)

### **Repentance and restoration**

“Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came

to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So, he made haste and came down and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.' Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'" (Luke 19:1-10)

### **Investment and growth**

“Therefore, He said: 'A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come." But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." Likewise, he said to him, "You also be over five cities." Then another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow." And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with

interest?" And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas." (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.") For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'" (Luke 19:12-27)

### **Preparation for entering Jerusalem**

"When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, 'Go into the village opposite you, whereas you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, "Why are you losing it?" thus you shall say to him, "Because the Lord has need of it.'" So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were losing the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you losing the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of him.' Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' But He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.'" (Luke 19:28-40)

### **Jerusalem did not heed His voice**

“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’” (Luke 19:41-44)

### **My house is a house of prayer**

“Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, 'It is written, "My house is a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves.'" And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.” (Luke 19:45-48)

### **Do Not Let the Worries of the World Make you Forget to be Ready for the Lord's Coming**

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36)

## Chapter 19

### The Sayings and Teachings of Jesus Christ (4)

In this chapter, we will review some of the sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ according to what is stated in the Gospel of John the Evangelist.

**Christ, the Word of God** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1–5). Christ is the “Word of God,” meaning the full revelation of God—of who He is and of His attributes. This reveals to us that Christ has existed from eternity. He declared, “I and the Father are one,” affirming that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal in essence. This is a profound mystery that cannot be grasped by human reason alone but is received through heavenly conviction given by the Holy Spirit. Christ, the Son of God, and the Incarnation of the Word “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:14–17). It should be noted that the verb “became” which follows “the Word” is masculine, not feminine, to indicate that the Word is a man, meaning Christ. We also note the equality between the words “the Word” and “God,” indicating their equality in essence. You can know a person by his speech; therefore, Hebrews 1 tells us that “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in

these last days spoken to us by His Son, Jesus Christ," meaning that God revealed Himself to us in Christ Jesus. In Him, He manifested His attributes and his infinite love for humanity, to the extent that He "became incarnate" to redeem mankind. The Law is the Mosaic legislation that reached us through Moses, but grace, mercy, and redemption were given to us by God through Christ Jesus.

Regarding the resurrection, the Evangelist John writes: "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." (John 3:13).

### **Christ, the Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sin of the World**

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

What do John's words mean when he says that Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"? This expression is closely connected to God's forgiveness through the offering of blood—that is, through the slaughter of a sacrifice. Throughout history, many nations that worshiped idols practiced sacrifices, including human sacrifices, which God does not accept. God wished to teach Abraham—and his descendants after him—that human sacrifice is not His will. Therefore, He tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son as a sacrifice. As we know from the account in the Book of Genesis, God provided a lamb in place of the son; in this way, God redeemed him through the lamb. We also know (implicitly) that God covered Adam and Eve with garments of skin, which necessitated the slaughter of a sacrifice as an indication of forgiveness. We can also infer that Adam's sons wanted to offer a sacrifice as their father had taught them about building an altar for forgiveness. But the Book says that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain by offering a blood

sacrifice, not from the fruits of the earth as his brother Cain did; because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Finally, God commanded Moses to offer sacrifices in the temple to obtain forgiveness. They used to offer a lamb annually as atonement for their sins, and one of the conditions for this lamb was that it be without blemish, as a symbol of that perfect Lamb who would take away the sin of the world, to whom John referred.

### **John the Baptist Points to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

“This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:30–34). As for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is the baptism of complete purification, which resembles fire that refines, and he said that this Christ would baptize with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not only with the baptism of water. When a person comes to God with sincere repentance, seeking forgiveness and believing in the work and sufficiency of Christ's crucifixion, he is baptized by the Holy Spirit, who changes his life to become a new creation in Christ.

### **The First Miracle**

“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what

does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.' Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, 'Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.' And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now!' This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (Gospel of John 2:1–11). This was the first of Jesus Christ's miracles. Many err in interpreting it as Christ performing it to justify drinking wine or to permit it, but it was to prove His power and authority over nature, transforming the element of water into wine. In Jewish custom, wine was not considered permissible or forbidden because the Holy Bible warns against drunkenness, i.e., the loss of human mental control or addiction. As for wine, it always symbolized joy and prosperity.

### **Christ Reveals the Temple of His Body and His Crucifixion**

"Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.' So, the Jews answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said." (John 2:17–22).

Jesus Christ tried to tell His disciples that He would not be an earthly king in the conventional sense, and that He would die, be buried, and remain in the tomb for three days, then rise again. This is what He said when they asked Him for a sign or a miracle to prove His teachings; He told them that this generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. It is known that Jonah remained under the water for three days, then the whale threw him back onto the land. Thus, Christ meant that the true miracle that would benefit humanity is that He would die, be buried, and rise on the third day to accomplish redemption.

### **Birth from Above or the New Birth**

“Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:13). A person must be born of the Holy Spirit, and this birth is from God not a physical birth; without it, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is not enough to know the scriptures or to believe in Christ; one must be born of the Holy Spirit (the second birth).

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'” (John 3:1–8). Jesus Christ mentioned that being born of the Holy Spirit occurs as the wind

blows; no one knows where it comes from or where it goes, but we perceive its effect. Similarly, being born of the Holy Spirit: although we do not know what happened, we perceive the effect of this second birth in changing a sinner's life to become an obedient child of God.

### **Faith is a Fundamental Element**

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, we speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?'” (John 3:9–12). Being born from above is not about becoming a Christian, going to church, practicing religiosity or a formal faith life, or confessing your sins; it is accepting the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, which is an event.

### **Believing in the Son Guarantees Eternal Life**

“Jesus Christ said: 'For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.'” (John 3:34–36). Here we note that Jesus Christ linked giving the Holy Spirit to the authority that God the Father gave Him, and He can grant this life-giving Spirit to man. Therefore, whoever believes in Him receives eternal life and becomes part of His flock. For He said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." And those will inherit eternal life.

### **Christ Declares That He is the "Son of God" and That He Was Sent by the Father**

“For this reason, the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.' Therefore, the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." (John 5:16–18). Jesus Christ always tried to use the title "Son of Man" and not the title "Son of God" because He wanted each person to discover and believe in his heart that Christ is the Son of God. But the Jews understood what Christ meant: that He is the One whom God anointed to perform the work of redemption, whom they had always awaited.

“Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the son, that all should honor the son just as they honor the father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.'” (John 5:19–23). These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come. Christ clearly declared that He is the Son of God and that He is equal to the Father. And as the father can raise the dead, so also the son. And that the father and the son are in complete agreement in every work. And that whoever does not honor the son does not honor the father either.

### **Christ Will Go to the Father**

“Then Jesus said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.' So, the Jews said, 'Will He kill Himself, because He says, "Where I go you cannot come"?' And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from

above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.' They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.'" (John 8:20–29).

### **Christ is the Bread of Life**

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:48–51).

### **Eternal Life**

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the

resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

(John 5:24–29). “For this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:39–40). “The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.' And they said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus therefore answered and said to them, 'Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.’” (John 6:41–47).

### **Christ Speaks of His Crucifixion and Resurrection**

“The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?' Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.’” (John 6:52–58). Jesus Christ was speaking of His physical body that He would give on the cross. As for His symbolic body, it is that bread and cup which we partake of to remember what He did

on the cross. Traditional churches believe that this bread and that cup—after prayer—are transformed into the true body and blood, and this is a sacrament of the church. However, evangelical churches believe that there is no transformation in the essential elements of the Communion. “Therefore, many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can understand it?' When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, 'Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, 'Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.'” (John 6:60–65).

### **Christ Has the Words of Eternal Life**

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'” (John 6:66–69). There must come a time when we face reality: either we completely believe what Christ said even if it is difficult to believe, or we turn away from following Him. But the disciples remained with Him because they had experienced that He alone reveals God's thoughts to them, and no human can do this. No one can give us the words of eternal life except Christ.

### **Christ, the Light of the World**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was

made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1–5). “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.' The Pharisees therefore said to Him, 'You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, my witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.’” (John 8:12–15). “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.” (John 1:6–10).

Jesus Christ manifested God's love for us and His atoning work on the cross, and He also revealed the person of God and His sublime attributes. Thus, He was the Light that shone for us in the darkness of our lack of knowledge of God and our ignorance of His person and His perfect love. Since He was the Light that shone for us, He came to light the way for all who believe in Him, so that they too may become a light to the world; as He said, "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world."

#### **The Father Bears Witness to the son**

“And yet if I do judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." Then they said to

Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." (John 8:16–19).

“Then Jesus said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.' So, the Jews said, 'Will He kill Himself, because He says, "Where I go you cannot come"?' And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.' They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.'” (John 8:21–29).

### **Christ, the Son of Man**

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” (John 3:13). Christ used this expression often to indicate that He came to serve mankind. He also wanted each person to discover for himself and personally believe that He is the Son of God, so that this faith would come from the depths of the individual.

### **Who Has Authority Over Life and Death**

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all

should honor the son just as they honor the father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (John 5:21–23).

### **Living Water Springs from Faith in Christ**

“A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?'” (John 4:7–13). The Samaritans were enemies of the Jews for many reasons, most notably because of religious disputes. As a result, the Jews would take an alternative route to avoid passing through Samaria. However, Jesus Christ deliberately chose to pass through Samaria, because He desired that the Samaritans also believe in the message. Christ not only spoke with a Samaritan but chose to speak with a woman, something no religious Jew would do. But in His love for humanity, Christ wanted His message to reach even enemies so that they might believe in Him and have eternal life.

### **Christ Gives Living Water that Brings Eternal Satisfaction**

“Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.' Jesus said to her,

'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.'"  
(John 4:14–17).

### **Christ Knows the Secrets of Hearts**

“Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, "I have no husband," for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.'” (John 4:17–22).

### **True Worship of God**

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He.'” (John 4:23–26) “And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, 'What do You seek?' or 'Why are You talking with her?' The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 'Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'” (John 4:27–29).

### **Let Him Who Thirsts Come to Jesus Christ**

“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out

of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore, many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, 'Truly this is the Prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?' So, there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.” (John 7:37–44).

### **The Unbelief of the Leaders**

“Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, 'Why have you not brought Him?' The officers answered, 'No man ever spoke like this Man!' Then the Pharisees answered them, 'Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.' Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, 'Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?' They answered and said to him, 'Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.' Then everyone went to his own house.” (John 7:45–53).

### **Sin No More: Healing the Paralytic**

“The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.' He answered them, 'He who made me well said to me, "Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, 'Who is the Man who said to you, "Take up your bed and walk"?' But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See,

you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.' The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.” (John 5:10–15).

Christ revealed a new truth to us: that repentance alone is not enough. When a person sweeps his house clean and leaves it empty and unoccupied, something undesirable happens. Therefore, Christ says that this house must be filled with the Holy Spirit, and God's teaching and commandments must be its guiding principle. Christ said that if the devil comes and finds the house clean and no one dwelling in it, he returns with seven other demons, and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

### **The Story of the Adulterous Woman**

“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?' This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So, when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again, He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw only the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'” (John 8:1–11).

### **The Food of Jesus Christ is to Do the Will of God**

“In the meantime, His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.' Therefore, the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'” (John 4:31–33).

### **It is Time to Work in the Lord's Vineyard**

“Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered their labors.” (John 4:35–38).

### **The Unity Between the father and the Son**

“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” (John 5:30).

### **The Father's Testimony About the son**

“If I bear witness of Myself, my witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father

has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.” (John 5:31–38). Christ wanted to confirm repeatedly that His message is from heaven, from the Father Himself.

### **Search the Scriptures, for They Testify of Christ**

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” (John 5:39–40). When we study the Holy Scriptures, we find that in Christ the prophecies spoken about Him by the prophets have been fulfilled. Therefore, we must know the Holy Scriptures so that we may have a firm faith.

### **The Remaining Glory is the Glory of God**

“I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” (John 5:41–44).

### **The Writings of Moses Testify of Christ**

“Do not think that I shall accuse you to the father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:45–47).

### **I Am the Bread of Life**

“And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You come here?' Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me,

not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.' Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.' Therefore, they said to Him, 'What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.' And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'" (John 6:25–35).

### **Whoever Comes to Jesus Christ Will Not Be Cast Out**

“But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day.” (John 6:36–39). Jesus Christ accepts everyone who comes to Him, no matter how heinous his sins and deeds.

### **Whoever Believes in Christ Has New Life**

“The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.' And they said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we

know? How is it then that He says, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus therefore answered and said to them, 'Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.'" (John 6:41–51).

### **Christ Speaks of Faith in His Crucifixion and Redemption: False Accusations**

“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to Him, 'Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.' For even His brothers did not believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.' When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee... But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, 'Where is He?' And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, 'He is good'; others said, 'No, on the

contrary, He deceives the people.' However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews... Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, 'How does this Man know letters, having never studied?' Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?' The people answered and said, 'You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.'" (John 7:1–24).

“Now some of them from Jerusalem said, 'Is this not He whom they seek to kill? But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.' Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, 'You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.' Therefore, they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. And many of the people believed in Him, and said, 'When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?'" (John 7:25–31).

### **Christ Will Go to Heaven**

“The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come.' Then the Jews said among themselves, 'Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What is this thing that He said, "You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come?"'” (John 7:32–36).

### **True Freedom... Liberation from Sin**

“As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, "You will be made free"?' Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore, if the son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'” (John 8:30–36).

### **Abraham is the Father of All Believers from Every Nation, People, and Tongue**

“I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.' They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.' Then they said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.'” (John 8:37–41).

### **Christ is Without Sin**

“Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God.'” (John 8:42–47).

### **Whoever Keeps My Word Has Eternal Life**

“Then the Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?' Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, "If anyone keeps My word, he shall never taste death. "' (John 8:48–51).

### **Before Abraham Was, I Am**

“Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?' Jesus answered, 'If I honor Myself, my honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, "I do not know Him," I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it

and was glad.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." (John 8:53–59).

### **Not Every Disease or Physical Pain Originates from Sin: Healing the Man Born Blind**

“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. If I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated, Sent). So, he went and washed and came back seeing. Therefore, the neighbors and those who had seen that he was blind said, 'Is not this he who sat and begged?' Some said, 'This is he.' Others said, 'He is like him.' He said, 'I am he.' Therefore, they said to him, 'How were your eyes opened?' He answered and said, 'A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash." So, I went and washed, and I received sight.' Then they said to him, 'Where is He?' He said, 'I do not know.' They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.' Therefore, some of the Pharisees said, 'This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, 'What do you say about Him because He

opened your eyes?' He said, 'He is a prophet.' But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered them and said, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.' His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.' So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, 'Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.' He answered and said, 'Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.' Then they said to him again, 'What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?' Then they reviled him and said, 'You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.' The man answered and said to them, 'Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.' They answered and said to him, 'You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?' And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said, 'Who is He, Lord,

that I may believe in Him?' And Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.' Then he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshiped Him." (John 9:1–38).

### **Who is Blind?**

“And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, "We see." Therefore, your sin remains.'” (John 9:39–41).

### **I Am the Shepherd of the Sheep**

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.” (John 10:1–6). Christ shepherds His people, leads them, and gives them the spiritual food they need.

### **I Am the Door**

“Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may

have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:7–10). No one can come to the Father except through Christ.

### **I Am the Good Shepherd**

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore, My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” (John 10:11–18).

### **The Works I Do in My Father's Name Bear Witness of Me**

“Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.’” (John 10:22–25).

### **Believers Are Preserved in the Hand of Christ**

“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given

them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.' Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.' Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, 'You are gods'"? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.' Therefore, they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. Then many came to Him and said, 'John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.' And many believed in Him there." (John 10:26–42).

### **Whoever Believes in Me, Though He May Die, He Shall Live: The Raising of Lazarus**

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.' When Jesus heard that, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'” (John 11:1–7).

### **He Who Walks in the Light Does Not Fear**

“The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.' These things He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get well.' However, Jesus' spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him.' Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.' So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'” (John 11:8–23).

### **Whoever Believes in Christ Will Have Eternal Life: I Am the Resurrection and the Life**

“Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'” (John 11:24–27).

**The Compassion of Jesus Christ**

“And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, 'The Teacher has come and is calling for you.' As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, 'She is going to the tomb to weep there.' Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.'”  
(John 11:28–39).

**If You Believe, You Will See the Glory of God**

“Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes,

and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'" (John 11:40–44).

### **It is Expedient That One Man Should Die for the People**

“Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.' And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.' Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore, Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.” (John 11:45–54).

### **Christ Goes Up to Jerusalem**

“And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?' Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.” (John 11:55–57).

**Unless a Grain of Wheat Falls into the Ground and Dies, It Bears Much Fruit: Christ Alludes to His Death**

“Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.’” (John 12:20–26).

**All Eyes Will Be Drawn to Christ After His Resurrection**

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.' Therefore, the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.’” (John 12:27–32).

**Who is This?**

“This He said, signifying by what death He would die. The people answered Him, 'We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this Son of Man?' Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer

the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.' These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them. But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore, they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:33–43).

### **Christ Did Not Come to Judge but to Save**

“Then Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.'" (John 12:44–50).

### **True Washing**

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' For He knew who would betray Him; therefore, He said, 'You are not all clean.'” (John 13:1–11).

### **The Humility of Jesus Christ is an Example for Us**

“So, when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.'” (John 13:12–17).

### **A Disciple Betrays Christ and Hands Himself Over to Satan's Plan**

“I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.' And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.' But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, 'Buy those things we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor.” (John 13:18–29).

### **The Glory of Christ**

“Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night. So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and glorify Him immediately. Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me.'” (John 13:30–33). Evildoers may work against the children of God, but no one can harm believers unless God permits it.

### **Love One Another**

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34–35).

### **Peter Promises Jesus Christ Loyalty**

“Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.' Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.' Jesus answered him, 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.’” (John 13:36–38).

### **He Will Go to Prepare a Place for Us in Heaven**

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.' Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’” (John 14:1–4).

### **I and the Father Are One**

“Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own

authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:8–14).

### **He Will Send the Holy Spirit to Dwell in Us to Guide Us**

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:15–21).

### **Christ's Words Are Spirit and Life**

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while being present with

you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:22–26).

### **He Will Give Us His Peace**

“Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.” (John 14:27–31).

### **I Am the True Vine**

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's

commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:1–11). The source of power is not in us but in the true vine; we are only branches, and all we must do is to abide in the vine so that we can bear fruit. But if we depart from the vine, the branches must dry up and have no life or fruit.

### **This is How Christ Loved Us... So, Love One Another**

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.” (John 15:12–17).

### **The World Hates the Followers of Christ**

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they would also persecute you. If they kept My word, they would keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they

would have no sin; but now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'" (John 15:18–25).

### **He Will Send the Holy Spirit**

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:26–27).

### **Christ Prepares His Disciples for Persecution**

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.” (John 16:1–4).

### **The Promise of the Coming of the Helper, the Holy Spirit**

“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you

into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.” (John 16:5–16).

### **Our Joy Will Be Complete**

“Now some of His disciples said among themselves, 'What is this that He says to us, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me"; and, "because I go to the Father"?' They said therefore, 'What is this that He says, "A little while"?' We do not know what He is saying.' Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, 'Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me"?' Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore, you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day, you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from

the father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the father.” (John 16:17–28).

### **In the World You Will Have Tribulation, but He Promises to Be with Us**

“His disciples said to Him, 'See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.' Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? Indeed, the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'” (John 16:29–33). Victory belongs to Christ; just as Christ overcame the devil in all His temptations, He will enable us to overcome Satan and his schemes.

### **The Intercessory Prayer of Jesus Christ**

“Jesus spoke these words, lifted His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, you gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known

surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:1–26).

## **Chapter 20**

### **What Jesus Said About Death and Eternal Life**

This chapter includes the following elements:

- 1- What is life, and what is eternal life?
- 2- How do we obtain assurance of eternal life?
- 3- Eternal punishment (Hell) or eternal perdition.
- 4- The Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

#### **Introduction**

We entered this life not by our own will. Therefore, every person reflects on life and death: How do we enter eternal life, and what happens after death? These questions occupy the human mind and have been addressed by various religions and philosophies throughout history. We also know that God, our Creator, has not left us without revelation concerning what is to come and what has already been revealed. The following reflections may help us contemplate these profound questions.

#### **1- What is Life and What is Eternal Life? The Beginning of Creation**

The Book of Genesis begins by stating that God is the source of life and that He, blessed be His name, created the heavens and the earth, everything upon it, and everything in the depths of the seas—fish, every bird, and every plant. Finally, He created the crown of creation: humankind, creating them male and female. He breathed into (the dust) the breath of life, thus giving them life. However, the Book of Genesis does not explain to us the nature of the spirit. But we know that the spirit will endure forever and does not die; rather, it returns to

its Maker or Creator. What dies is the body, and this was a consequence of humanity's fall and disobedience; for it came from dust and to dust it returns. The word "Adam" means "earthy" or "one created from dust." When God created humanity, He created them in His image in holiness and purity. Humanity defiled this image through its sin and fall. We also know from the Lord's revelation to us that humans were in a complete relationship with God and enjoyed perfect satisfaction and sufficiency in this relationship without shame or constraints. God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling him that on the day he ate from it, he would surely die. The Book of Genesis continues the story of the fall after the confrontation between Satan and humanity, and humanity's choice by its own free will to disobey the Lord's commandment. Therefore, Adam was ashamed and hid from God. Here, humanity reaps the result of its disobedience: the earth was cursed, and the Lord punished humans by decreeing that man would eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, and the woman would give birth in pain, and that enmity would persist between the seed of the woman and the serpent. Adam felt that he was naked, meaning exposed, in the sense that he knew his sin because he had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, God clothed Adam and Eve with skins to cover their shame. Here, we imagine the first sacrifice and the first drop of blood offered as an atoning ransom for sin and disobedience. The Book of Genesis continues to speak of the sorrow and remorse over sin and Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, and that through this, death spread to all people. God did not want humanity to live forever and continue its struggle against sin and evil. Before the fall, humanity had a good nature without blemish. But after the fall, this nature became defiled, and it inherited a fallen nature, and its soul became constantly inclined to evil. There was a necessity for God to do something to change this corrupt nature that humanity acquired after the fall. We will see that the Holy Spirit works to change a person so that they

become a new creation in Christ. This only happens if a person accepts the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their life.

The Bible does not provide a detailed explanation of the beginning of life in the mother's womb. However, through scientific advancement, we have come to understand the process of fertilization and that life begins now of fertilization, from the very first instant. Physical movement does not indicate the beginning of life, since the embryo begins to move only after approximately three months. Moreover, Scripture does not indicate that an angel comes at a specific moment to impart life. As for some people's claim that the egg does not contain life, this is a clear oversight to justify the abominable act of abortion, because a stone does not have the potential to become a child. But that egg (even if it is not yet moving) carries within it the life of a human being. Therefore, abortion is called killing from the very first moment of fertilization.

### *The End of Life*

What is death? Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body, where there is no longer life, and the process of building in the human body turns into a process of decay. For humanity was created from dust and to dust it returns. Spiritual death, however, is the separation of a person from the source of life—God—and thus leads to eternal perdition. We also note that there are some people who cast themselves into destruction, thinking that the day God has appointed for death is fixed and no one can prevent it—not only in wars or defending certain causes but also in destruction resulting from sexual diseases or other diseases. However, God reveals to us in the Bible that "the sinner dies in the prime of life." Therefore, the question must be asked: How does a sinful person die in the prime of life if the day is fixed? The simple answer is that God permits this, but God's will be for a person to enjoy life

until the appointed time comes. Strangely, you may find that religious people often live longer lives and enjoy seeing their grandchildren. I was often puzzled by the commandment that says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the earth." But if we contemplate carefully, we find that those who honor their father and mother literally, meaning those who obey their father and mother (here speaking to God's people), will have their days prolonged on the earth. The Scripture says, "Keep me from harm so that it does not grieve me." Therefore, honoring and obeying parents' leads to a better, more honorable life, and consequently, a longer life. Some people do not accept death or the end of life, so they resort to what modern science has provided in terms of devices and attempts to prolong life as long as possible. However, they will not be able to circumvent God's command when He permits the taking of the spirit, which is its source.

### *The Last Day*

The Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, informs us that at the end of life, there will be no earth or heaven. Metals will melt, and since there will be no earth, there will be no sun. The curse upon humanity will disappear, sin will vanish, Satan will be defeated and cast into eternal perdition, and there will be no more tears or sorrow. But a new earth and a new city will come, with new descriptions. There will be no more death again. Satan and all who lived under his dominion will go to eternal perdition. As for the believers, they will live with God forever because Christ redeemed them with His blood on the cross. This is what we call eternal life.

### **2- How Do We Obtain Assurance of Eternal Life?**

The Lord Jesus said: "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." The Bible informs us that eternal life is prepared for us (John 14:2), that it is

not limited by material characteristics (John 20:19-20; 1 Corinthians 15:23), that we will receive new glorious bodies similar to the resurrection body of Christ (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8), that we will have an amazing experience we cannot describe (1 Corinthians 2:9), a new experience of God's presence (1 Corinthians 13:12), we will experience new feelings (Revelation 21:4), and there will be no more death (Revelation 21:4). All these descriptions do not precisely depict what will be in eternal life, but if we accept the gift of eternal life, we will exist in it not because of our own righteousness but because it is God's gift. The Lord Jesus clarified to us that the entrance to eternal life is narrow: "Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). He also clarified that whoever clings to this worldly life, its pleasures and desires, loses eternal life, saying: "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25). He means that whoever chooses to live far from God, wanting to enjoy sin without life with Christ as His follower and disciple, will not obtain eternal life. Therefore, He added, "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The meaning here is not the literal destruction of the soul, but rather that whoever loves their desires and earthly life more than God loses their soul eternally.

A person's death for Christ does not mean fighting for Christ, but it means dying to the love of the world to live for Christ. Therefore, there are many Christians who are ready to die for Christ but are not ready to live for Christ, meaning to glorify Christ in their lives. Jesus gave the parable where He said that the rich man, after gaining much, said to himself that he would build bigger barns, and he went and built new barns for himself, saying, "Eat, drink, and be merry, my soul, for you have many goods stored up for many years." But God said to

him, "You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" That is, this man did not take eternal life into account in his calculations; he lived his life focusing on gathering money, so money was his sole support, and he did not pay attention to the matter of his eternal life. With this, the Lord Jesus wanted to direct our attention to the fact that money is not the only security for our lives, but we must work for our eternal life to ensure life after death.

When Peter asked, "We have left everything and followed you. What then will there be for us?" Jesus answered them: "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:27-29). Jesus did not stipulate that to inherit eternal life a person must leave everything for His name's sake, but He promised that everyone who sacrifices or leaves something will receive a hundredfold in this time and will have eternal life. (Therefore, we must have the element of unconditional faith that does not expect anything) and our rewards will be complete. Are you confident that you will have eternal life upon your death? A question every person must ask themselves. Believers in Christ and those who have received His salvation and forgiveness can say: Yes, by the grace and forgiveness of God. This is according to the Lord's promise: "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." That is the eternal assurance.

*How Does a Person Enter the Kingdom of God and Be Assured Eternal Life?*

Eternal Life is a Gift from God We Receive by Accepting the Gift. The Lord Jesus gave another example of how we enter the kingdom of God or obtain eternal life (Matthew 22:11-14). There was a king who invited people to a wedding feast. Everyone invited to the feast was given a garment called a wedding garment. When some refused this invitation, he sent to invite others (the unworthy). But when he entered the feast, he found a person not wearing the wedding garment. He said to him, "How did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (meaning remorse). Therefore, no one can enter the kingdom of God or eternal life unless they are given the garment. This garment is the robe of righteousness that Christ gives to everyone who believes in Him and receives new life through it.

#### *The Certainty and Nature of the Resurrection*

About the resurrection, He said to them, "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matthew 22:31-32). That is, everyone will live even if they die, because we will be brought alive before God, not dead, and that is the resurrection of the bodies. Some deny that there is a resurrection or eternal life, as did a group of Jews who came to the Lord Jesus to trap Him with a question with no human logical solution. They asked Him about "a woman whose husband died and she was married to his brother (to raise up offspring for him). Then that brother died, and she was married to the next brother, and so on until seven brothers had died. In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" The Lord Jesus answered them that "they do err because they do not know the Scriptures," as they were ignorant of what the Scripture says about the afterlife, as is the case now with many. He said to them, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in

marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:18; Matthew 22:23-30). The Lord Jesus linked eternal life with the kingdom of God, which begins with us here on earth, and that His coming will be the sign for eternal life, and that He will vindicate His chosen ones when He comes a second time (Luke 18:8).

*Faith in Christ the Savior is a Condition for Eternal Life*

The Gospel of John writes that in the Lord Jesus was life, and that life was the light of all people (John 1:4). Eternal life is the light that shines in the darkness, and its source is the Lord Jesus, and everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life (John 3:16). Whoever does not believe in Christ and His redemption will not have eternal life but will remain under the wrath of God (John 3:36). Whoever believes in Him will not be condemned and will not come to eternal perdition but to eternal life. When one of the Jewish teachers asked the Lord Jesus how we obtain eternal life, Jesus answered him: "You must be born again," that is, from the Holy Spirit, and that this is like the blowing of the wind, which we do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit, for what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. This is a fundamental condition for entering the eternal kingdom and eternal life. Jesus also said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." And that "all who are in their graves will hear his voice" (i.e., the voice of Christ when He comes again) "and come out—those who have done what is good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done what is evil to the resurrection of judgment." The Lord Jesus also said with all clarity that He is the only way to eternal life, saying in John 6:47, "Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life," and that He is "the bread of life, and that whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood (i.e., by faith in His body given on the cross and the blood shed for the sins of humanity) has eternal life, and I will

raise them up at the last day." Christ did not say that all paths lead to eternal life, but He confirmed that He is the only door to enter God's grace. Yes, many paths may lead to goodness or ethics, but they will not lead to eternal life. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6).

*Whoever Believes in Christ, Rivers of Living Water Will Flow from Within Them*

Likewise, the Lord Jesus promised that whoever believes in Him, rivers of living water will flow from within them (John 7:38-39). He said this concerning the Holy Spirit, whom He would give to everyone who believes in Him, and this is the assurance of eternal life. This living water is water that does not run dry or end. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within a person and will be the spring of these renewed waters that flow from the heart of whoever believes in Christ the Savior.

*Whoever Believes in Christ Will Not Die but Will Live*

When the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). The Lord Jesus means that eternal life begins with faith in Christ and His redemption.

*Knowing the True God and Jesus is Eternal Life*

He also said that eternal life is knowing the true God (John 17:1-3): "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." The Lord Jesus mentioned that His resurrection is the eternal assurance for us, as He will rise, and thus we will have eternal life. Therefore, He said, "Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many

seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. And where I am, there my servant also will be" (John 12:24-26).

*Christ Will Go to Prepare a Place for His Followers*

The Lord Jesus also said that He would go to heaven to prepare a place for the believers, and when He prepares the place, He will come to take them with Him to be with Him forever (John 14:2-3). As for heaven, it is not about eating and drinking but is the place of being in the presence of God and always enjoying His presence. Because of this, we can conclude that after death, the body will be hidden under the earth, and all bodily needs such as food, drink, or sexual drive will end. But we will clothe ourselves with luminous, glorious bodies that may bear all the features or descriptions of our physical form, but without any human needs.

**3- Eternal Punishment (Hell) or Eternal Perdition**

The Bible uses several words to express Hell or the place of eternal separation from God, such as "Hades" or "Shaol" (in Hebrew). Death is the punishment for sin: "The soul who sins shall die." Therefore, physical death is the separation of the spirit or soul from the body, which returns to dust and its elements decompose. The Lord Jesus teaches us that upon a person's death, the souls of the righteous go immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; John 14:3; Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:22; John 11:26; Matthew 17:3), while the wicked face eternal punishment (Luke 16:23). The Lord Jesus described the final state of the wicked with frightening expressions, including going into the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41), the outer darkness (Matthew 8:12), eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46), and eternal judgment (Mark 3:29). Therefore, Christ and the apostles declared that there is no end to the punishment of the wicked, nor repentance or reformation in the world to come, as the opportunity has been lost and passed.

The Bible clearly declares to us that there is a complete separation between the place of the wicked and the place of the righteous, as Christ said in His parable about Lazarus: "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). And the casting of the servant into the outer darkness (Matthew 25:30), the separation of the goats from the sheep (Matthew 25:33), the separation of the weeds from the wheat (Matthew 13:30), the good fish from the bad fish (Matthew 13:48), the wicked from the righteous (Matthew 13:49-50), and this is not a temporary description but a description of an eternal state. Researchers have asked the question: "Is Hell the unquenchable fire or the undying worm a literal torment?" Here we wish to give a few points: The torment will be eternal, without interruption. There will be remorse for not obeying God in salvation. There will be eternal separation between God and Satan, and between the wicked and the righteous. There will be no second chance for repentance and forgiveness. There will be nothing a person can do to be saved from that torment, for this fire is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Every person will receive a just punishment or a just recompense. There will be no torment in the grave between two angels; rather, one goes to Hell or Heaven immediately after death. Every soul will await the redemption of its body; that is, it will receive its body again at the resurrection, but with a glorious, luminous body that may resemble the current body. We do not know if this Hell is literal or symbolic, as there are several questions, such as how bodies burn in fire without being consumed, and how (the fallen angels—Satan and his helpers) will be tormented by fire when they are not bodies but spirits. Therefore, we leave this in the hands of God, who has not revealed everything to us for His own wise purposes.

*Who is the Judge?*

The Bible teaches us that God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world with justice (Acts 17:31). All humans are under God's authority, and Christ also taught us, "Do not be amazed at this... for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done what is evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). And that the Lord Jesus is the Judge, for He said: "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). His first coming was not for judgment but for salvation: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). He taught us that the greatest sin that will not be forgiven is the rejection of God's work "and the Holy Spirit." When He speaks here about good works, He is not nullifying the importance of the atoning sacrifice on the cross, without which there is no relationship between a person and God. But He is talking about the reward resulting from doing good. Therefore, goodness begins with accepting the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. The reader should not think that Heaven will give him a reward for his works and righteousness, but Heaven is the continuation of the relationship that began between a person and God here on earth through the experience of salvation and accepting the work of God's grace in life.

#### **4- The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead**

*(Matthew 24:44; Mark 13:13-23)*

Christ taught extensively about His second coming, the resurrection, and the events that will precede the resurrection. He gave some parables to clarify the importance of being prepared for this unknown day (the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Matthew 25; and the parable of the servant who stays awake for his master, Matthew 24, among others). As for

the events that will precede the resurrection, Christ referred to them on several occasions, including what is mentioned in Matthew 24:

- 1- Wars and rumors of wars.
- 2- Earthquakes, famines, and pestilences.
- 3- Many false prophets will appear who may perform wonders or miracles.
- 4- Tribulation for believers in Christ.
- 5- The love of many in the church for Christ will grow cold due to preoccupation with the world and also with sin.
- 6- This coming will be visible, unmistakable to the eye. His disciples also spoke of the coming of the "man of lawlessness" in whom sin and evil are embodied to turn many away from knowing Christ, but finally, he will be defeated.
- 7- The voice of one of the angels will be heard by every person.
- 8- A loud trumpet sound will be heard.
- 9- Believers in Christ who are alive will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ.
- 10- The dead in Christ will rise.
- 11- The knowledge of the Gospel will be spread throughout the whole world.

Although Christians differ in interpreting the details of the events that will precede Christ's coming, they rarely differ regarding what will happen at Christ's coming. Christ's teachings contain no mention of what is called "the Antichrist" or "false Christ." The Lord Jesus did not speak of any kind of conflict that some claim will occur between the Lord Jesus and the Antichrist. Nor does the Bible say that Christ will return, marry, and have children; rather, He will return to take the believers whom He redeemed and saved to be with Him always.

## **Chapter 21**

### **What Christ Said About Himself and About the Holy Spirit**

In this chapter, we will examine two distinct sections together.

#### **Section One: What Christ Said About Himself**

- 1- I Am
- 2- The Son of Man
- 3- The Son of God
- 4- The Incarnate word
- 5- The Christ
- 6- The Teacher or Lord
- 7- The One Who Has the Authority to Forgive
- 8- The Savior
- 9- The Fulfillment of Prophecies
- 10- Immanuel, God with Us (The Incarnation)

#### **Introduction**

Thinkers, writers, and scientists have not been as perplexed by any leader, ruler, or thinker as they have been by the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, countless views concerning Him have emerged over the past two thousand years, leading to the multiplication of sects, religions, and creeds. Some have completely rejected the divinity of Christ; others have denied that He was a historical figure who appeared in history; and still others have believed in Him so deeply that they have offered their lives for this faith. In this lesson, however, we are not concerned with surveying these opinions, but rather with examining what Jesus Christ said

about Himself and what His words reveal. The verses will be read according to the presentation of each aspect.

## **1- I Am**

Christ described Himself on some occasions using the phrase "I am."

### *1- I am the light of the world*

Light refers to spiritual truth. Therefore, Jesus Christ said that He is the spiritual truth—the complete answer to humanity’s need for spiritual truth. Light drives out darkness; where there is light, there is no darkness. Thus, Christ likened Himself to the light that illuminates the path and erases the darkness of sin. He asked all who follow Him not to walk in darkness but to be children of light, i.e., filled with the holiness and righteousness that are attributes of Jesus Christ. Here we find that not only did the Light (the Truth) come into the world, but everyone who believes in Him becomes light. ("Who gives light to every person") means that everyone who believes in Him becomes a light to those around them. Christ also said that no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bed but places it on a stand so it gives light to everyone. Thus, a life of faith testifies to others and illuminates their path to walk in the light.

### *2- I am the bread of life*

This title "bread of life" refers to Christ’s role as the giver of eternal life, meaning He is the sole source of spiritual life. In the Middle East, we know that bread is the essential element indispensable for people’s lives. Therefore, Christ said He is the essential source of humanity’s spiritual life. Perhaps Jesus Christ was alluding to the manna that God sent to the people of Israel during their exodus from Egypt while they were traveling in the desert. God sent them this bread daily, and it would spoil if kept overnight. Thus, He also said this, referring to His body that would be given for sinners: He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave

it to His disciples to eat, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you." Here He refers to His body that would be killed and His blood that would be shed on the cross as a ransom for all who believe in Him. As for the church, it remembers this work of Christ whenever it gathers by breaking bread and offering grape juice. Traditional churches believe that after prayer, this bread truly becomes His body by faith (this is one of the church's sacraments, called the sacrament of Communion or the Eucharist). However, evangelical churches do not believe in this transformation and believe it is a memorial of Christ's atoning work.

### *3- I am the good shepherd*

A hired hand tends the sheep for wages, whereas the shepherd who owns the flock cares for it because it is his own and because he loves it. Accordingly, Christ likened Himself to the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep out of love and self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ explained that when the hired hand sees predatory animals approaching to attack the sheep, he flees; but the true owner does not flee. He confronts the danger and may even give his life in defense of the flock. Therefore, when a person follows Jesus, he or she becomes part of His flock. Accordingly, Christ said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and I give them eternal life." The expression *eternal security* conveys the assurance that Christ guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him.

### *4-I am the way, the truth, and the life*

Christ said of Himself that He is the only way to God the Father, because He is the one who redeemed us with His blood on the cross and defeated death and its dominion. He added, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Therefore, according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, He grants us eternal life, and there is no acceptance before God except through faith in Christ the Savior. Jesus Christ warned that

many false prophets would come after Him, but Christ did not send them, as they deny His redemption on the cross.

*5-I am the door*

He is the only way and the door through which the sheep enter the sheepfold. Therefore, anyone who wants to be reconciled with God the Father must come through this door that God provided for entry into His fold. Jesus Christ said this door is always open to all who wish to believe. Christ said we can "enter... and find pasture," but a day will come when this door (the door of faith) will be shut, and no one will be able to enter. Thus, when a person hears God's call, they must accept His invitation, lest that day comes when the door is shut and they cannot be saved.

*6-I am the true vine*

Christ likened Himself to the vine, and believers in Him are the branches. The branches derive their life from abiding in the vine; they cannot live apart from the vine, which gives them life. Therefore, every believer must depend on Christ. Some may try to improve their lives or behavior, but they often fail to do what pleases the father. They must abide in the true vine, Jesus Christ.

*7-I am the resurrection and the life*

When Christ went to raise Lazarus from the dead, He declared that He is the resurrection and the life, and whoever lives in Him and believes in Him will never die. That is, they will inherit eternal life even if they die. Therefore, Christ is the true resurrection for every believer in Him. By His resurrection from the dead, He triumphed over the dominion of death. And as He triumphed over death, He will give those who believe in Him victory over it as well.

## **2- The Son of Man**

"Son of Man" was the preferred title of Jesus Christ to express that He came to serve humanity, not to dominate it, by offering Himself as a ransom for humanity on the cross as an atonement for sin. Thus, when He said He was the Son of Man, He expressed His full humanity. He said, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." When the disciples were angry because the people of a Samaritan village rejected Christ, they asked Christ to use His power to take revenge on them. But Christ affirmed to them that the Son of Man did not come to destroy but to save. On the other hand, while the title Son of Man expresses Christ's humanity, the title Son of God expresses His divinity or divine attributes.

## **3- The Son of God**

Jesus Christ avoided using this title to allow every person to discover it for themselves, but He repeatedly expressed that He is the "Son of God"... Jesus Christ said that His works prove that He is the Christ, the Son of God (John 10:22, 29). Christ also used the word Father as well as Son, as we read often in the Gospel of John. He referred to Himself as both the Father and the Son. That the Father loves the Son, and all that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son. That whoever has seen Him has seen the Father, that He would return to His Father, and that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.

### *The Transfiguration*

Jesus Christ chose three of the disciples to see His glory and took them up Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Palestine. He went there to pray. Jesus Christ chose these three disciples because they would have a special role in spreading His message. These three were: Peter, who would open the door to the Gentiles (non-Jews) for His message to spread among the

peoples of the world; John, who would write the Gospel that speaks of Christ's glory and divinity; and the third disciple, James, who resolved the dispute that arose in the church's first meeting regarding accepting Gentiles, i.e., non-Jews, into faith in Christ without the need for circumcision or practicing Jewish customs and traditions (read Acts 15). When Jesus went up to the mountaintop, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became dazzling white. This reminds us of the prophet Moses when he descended from the mountain to meet the people; his face shone, and no one could look at his face because he was in the glory and presence of God. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus Christ. Moses represents the Torah, while Elijah represents the prophets. Both were the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, confirming the status and glory of Jesus Christ. The conversation between them was—according to the Gospel of Luke—about His forthcoming departure from Jerusalem. He uses the same word used by the Torah, "exodus," from slavery in Egypt, because Christ would lead God's people out of sin into the glorious freedom of the children of God. He would give salvation to all who desire to receive it. Thus, the Transfiguration was significant for Jesus Christ, as He would give believers eternal salvation through His cross. Peter, excited, said to Jesus Christ that it was good for them to be in this glory and that he was ready to set up three shelters for the three prophets. But Christ did not want to stay on the mountain; He wanted to descend to the valley because there was a message He wanted to fulfill, and there was also a special message for Peter that he must carry out. Then a voice came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him." That is, heaven testified to the disciples and to us that this is the only Son of God whom we must listen to. The word "listen" here does not merely refer to hearing but includes obedience and submission. Therefore, we submit to Jesus Christ, His words, teachings, guidance, and leadership. This was not the first time heaven declared that Jesus Christ is

the Son of God. At the baptism of Jesus Christ, a voice also came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

*Christ Existed from Eternity*

He also said that before Abraham was, "I am." And when He asked His disciples, "Who do people say I am?" Peter said to Him, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ accepted these words and said to him that he was blessed because no one had revealed this truth to him, and upon this rock (and Peter's name means rock) He would build His church. That is, on the foundation of this faith—the faith that Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, or the Anointed One of God who would build the church (John 12:44–50). For a person to reach such conviction, it must be granted by the Holy Spirit. No human power or method of persuasion can convince anyone that Christ is the Son of God. Therefore, Jesus Christ said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven," indicating that this revelation was given through the Holy Spirit.

**4- The Incarnate word**

Jesus Christ referred several times to being the Incarnate word. When one of His disciples asked Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us," Christ said, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father." With this statement, He was referring to His eternal existence. Jesus Christ wanted to prove His divinity by performing miracles that show He is the Incarnate Word, saying, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" Who has the authority to forgive and heal except God alone?

When the Jews and chief priests asked Him during the trial before His crucifixion, "If you are the Christ, tell us..." Jesus did not answer that He was God incarnate, but He used an expression found in the Book of Exodus: "I am" (Exodus 3:14). Thus, the Jews understood that He meant God, and death was the penalty for anyone claiming divinity.

### *Christ's Statements*

Anyone who reads about Christ's life faces one inevitable question: "Is Jesus God?" Part of any reasonable conclusion includes the fact that He said of Himself that He is God. We have no other choice but to agree or reject His claim. Eternal life depends on this choice.

## **5- The Christ**

As mentioned earlier, the Jewish people were awaiting the Messiah, the Anointed One who would deliver them from the dominion of enemies. Their expectations were that this person would be unique and have divine attributes, that He would be from heaven, and that God would intervene in the course of history to bring His kingdom, His reign, here on earth.

## **6- The Teacher or Lord**

"...Say, 'The Teacher needs them'" (Matthew 21:3). Jesus Christ referred to Himself as the Teacher before others called Him by this title. This is because He taught the truth, had the authority to teach, and His authority was powerful and effective, unlike the authority of the priest-teachers and Pharisees.

### *The Lord*

The word Lord here means Master, that is He reigns over our lives through His Spirit, teachings, and leadership. Christ also instructed that they should not call anyone "Father" or "Lord" (our father or our lord), because there is one Father and Lord, God. Here, Christian

denominations differ in using this term. While evangelicals adhere to the literal command, traditional churches use this designation in reference to the spiritual fatherhood and spiritual authority that God and the church have entrusted to someone to lead spiritual work and church ministry. This does not exempt a person from their responsibility before God nor make them infallible.

### **7- The One Who Has the Authority to Forgive Sins**

The authority to forgive sins is not given to any human; it is the authority of God alone. Therefore, when the crowd was amazed when He said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," Christ said to them, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" He commanded him to get up, take his mat, and walk to prove not only by words but by action that He has not only the authority to heal but also the authority to forgive. And since the authority to forgive is God's authority, Christ the Son is equal to the Father.

### **8- The Savior**

The word Jesus in Arabic is a translation of the Hebrew word "Yeshua," meaning "Savior," because He saves His people from their sins. From the Greek origin "Iesous," meaning Jesus, the Arabic word "Isa" is derived. This word means savior. The name "Yeshua" was common among Jews; Moses' servant was named Yeshua (Joshua) and became his successor, leading God's people to enter the Promised Land, the land of rest. Therefore, Christ resembles Joshua because He will lead us into eternal rest through His salvation and redemption.

### **9- In Him, the Prophecies of the Old Testament Were Fulfilled**

These verses are found in the Book of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before Christ, which Christ said were fulfilled in Him that day. We discussed in the third chapter the prophecies

that were given about Jesus Christ before His days and how these ancient prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

### **10- Immanuel, God with Us (The Incarnation)**

The Hebrew word "El" means "God," while the word "Immanuel" means with us. That is, God dwelt among us, taking the form of a human. This mystery is great, and a person cannot accept it unless the Holy Spirit gives them this conviction and this faith.

### **Section Two: What the Lord Jesus Christ Said About the Holy Spirit**

- 1- God is Spirit
- 2- Christ Will Send the Holy Spirit (the Helper) (John 14)
- 3- The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Second Birth (John 3)
- 4- The Role of the Holy Spirit in Guiding and Teaching the Believer (John 14)
- 5- The Role of the Holy Spirit in Writing the Holy Scripture (Hebrews 1)
- 6- Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit – The Unforgivable Sin (John 14)

The Holy Spirit holds a significant place in the New Testament. While the Holy Spirit accompanied believers in the Old Testament, we find that the Holy Spirit dwells in believers in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Third Person. When we speak of the Trinity, we are not speaking of three gods or three persons, but one God in three Persons. For example, when we speak of a human, we find that a human is body, soul, and spirit, yet they are one person. Similarly, God is a Being united with His Word (Christ) and with His Spirit.

### **1- God is Spirit**

Jesus Christ defined for us that God does not have a body but is "Spirit," and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth (John 4). Although the Holy Scriptures have spoken of (the right hand of God) to indicate God's power and other such metaphors, God does not have a "body" like humans. God is a Spirit, who was and who will be forever and ever, without beginning or end. He is omnipotent, supreme over all things, all-holy, pure, full of grace and glory. He is omniscient; nothing is hidden from Him. His knowledge surpasses all knowledge, and His authority surpasses all authority. At the beginning of Genesis, the Holy Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters. That is, He existed from eternity and will endure forever. The Holy Spirit is not an angel or the spirit of an angel, but the very being of God, or what we call by a special term: "Person" (hypostasis). When the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples who were gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), It was not the spirit of an angel, but the Third Person of the Trinity, who possesses all authority to act according to His will in heaven and on earth. Many err by believing that God is merely a force or a great idea, and some may deny His existence entirely... But when we look around us, the heavens and the earth testify to the greatness of the Creator and His eternal power. Not only that, but our existence as humans tells of God's greatness, power, and wisdom. How can they say that creation came into being from a great explosion? Any explosion causes destruction and ruin and does not result in planets moving in orbits and stars moving in paths without deviation. Yes, all were made by Your wisdom, O God. When we see the sun, moon, and stars, we know that there are supreme power and wisdom that formed and organized all creation. Whoever wants to deny God's existence is like one who closes their eyes in broad daylight and says it is dark. Some want to commit sin and thus deny God's existence, and some want to deny the Holy Bible and the prophets, preferring not to believe in

the Creator. God has revealed to us in His Holy Book that He wants to be reconciled with humanity to forgive their sins so that they may live to serve Him and glorify Him in their works, thoughts, and lives.

## **2- Christ Will Send the Holy Spirit (the Helper) (*John 14*)**

The Bible informs us that the Holy Spirit is the one who came upon Mary, and she conceived and gave birth to a son... It also informs us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus Christ during the temptation to confront Satan and that He was present throughout Jesus Christ's ministry on earth. But Jesus Christ told His disciples that He must go to the Father and that when He goes to the Father, the Holy Spirit will come. He will explain and teach the disciples what He said, what they heard about Him, and what they witnessed with their eyes. He will remain with them forever, i.e., He will continue to be present in the church until the end of the age. Jesus Christ declared that the Holy Spirit is the "Comforter," meaning the Spirit who will give assurance, certainty, peace, and tranquility to the human heart. He confirms in a person's heart the certainty of their eternal salvation, so they know and are assured in their heart that their sins are forgiven and that they will be (after death) with Christ in heaven always, and that they have eternal life guaranteed by Christ's redemption. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness of faith and our lack of understanding. He guides us to the truth and the path we should walk. There is no indication that Christ referred to the coming of another prophet after Him. Because He said on the cross, "It is finished," meaning He completed the work of redemption, and therefore there is no need afterward for any other work of redemption and salvation. Rather, Christ was referring to the Holy Spirit, who would come and dwell in believers' hearts on the day of Pentecost, at the beginning of the formation of the church, to remain as Teacher, Guide, Comforter, and Leader until the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **3- The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Second Birth and Salvation** (*John 3*)

A teacher of the Jews, named Nicodemus, came at night to ask Jesus Christ how to be saved. Christ answered him that he must be born from above (from God). He said to Him, "How can this be? Birth happens at the beginning of a person's life." But Jesus Christ said to him that this second birth happens without us knowing or perceiving where it came from (like the wind), which you do not know when, where, or how it comes. Likewise, birth from above. When a person comes asking God to be born from above and to obtain salvation, they receive (the baptism of the Spirit) and then obtain complete forgiveness and new life (John 3).

John the Baptist declared that he baptized with water, but that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, when a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit, God transforms the inner nature of that person, granting a new nature. As a result, God's word is no longer burdensome to the ears, God's way is no longer difficult for the heart, and God's thoughts and love become the person's delight. Therefore, salvation does not occur unless a person seeks this second birth—birth from above—through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ emphasized the word "must"—you must be born from above—meaning there is no other way besides this. When a person goes through this experience, they do not know what has happened to them, but after a while, they realize the extent of the change that has occurred in their life. And that is better than any gain a person achieves in their life. For Jesus Christ said, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" The true gain for a person is to gain eternal life, and it is yours if you ask for it.

### **4- The Role of the Holy Spirit in Guiding and Teaching the Believer** (*John 14*)

When a person accepts the work of the Holy Spirit in their life and comes to God in confession of their sins, they receive new life and the peace that only the Holy Spirit can give. This

new believer then begins to learn, understand, and grow in following God's way. He may stumble on the path, but he falls and get up like a child learning to walk. The Lord promised that the Holy Spirit will teach us and guide us into all truth. Truly, He will use teachers and guides, but the Holy Spirit is the one who guides a person and gives them inner conviction. The Holy Spirit also convicts a person of sin when they fall and stray from God to restore them to a life of fellowship with God again. Also, the Holy Spirit leads in their path if the person submits in prayer to the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has a great role in the church. He gives various (spiritual) gifts, including gifts of teaching, administration, leadership, preaching, guidance, hospitality, and so on, so that church members may grow and continue in a life of fellowship and faith with God and other believers and lead others to know God. But there is another danger we must beware of: as Jesus Christ said, if a person repents, it is like sweeping the house and driving the devil out. Then the devil returns and finds the house clean and swept, so he comes with seven other demons to inhabit that house. Therefore, every house that is swept must be inhabited, so as not to allow a return to the past life. Thus, a person must receive (the Holy Spirit) to dwell in their heart after repentance. Repentance alone is not enough for a person to live for God or live the best life that pleases God.

#### **5- The Role of the Holy Spirit in Writing the Holy Scripture or Divine Inspiration**

The Holy Bible teaches us that holy men of God wrote as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, and this prophecy did not come from human will, but from God. Also, all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the one who gave us the Holy Scripture. So, we must read

it, recite it repeatedly, memorize it, and learn from it. We should not repeat it without understanding but examine it and compare it with what is found between the Old and New Testaments to understand well what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit accompanies the preached Word, enabling it to bear fruit, transform a person's life, deepen the knowledge of God, and translate words into practical living. In this way, the Word becomes effective rather than remaining hollow or meaningless. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Writer and Author who wrote the Bible despite its multiple human authors, "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 1), meaning He guided them and inspired them. In summary, the Lord Jesus gave clear teaching about the Holy Spirit. A person must receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the new birth or second birth with sincere repentance, and they must ask God to be filled with the Holy Spirit (because God gives the Spirit without limit to those who ask Him). This Spirit will guide and lead believers, help them in their lives, and lead them into all truth because He is the Spirit of the Holy God. Also, the Holy Spirit is the one who wrote the word of God, guiding the believers who wrote the Holy Scriptures and inspiring them.

## **Chapter 22**

### **Jesus' View of Women and His Teachings About Marriage and Divorce**

Jewish society altered the view of women from what God originally intended from the beginning. God revealed to us in His holy word when He created woman and named her Eve; because she is the mother of all living. God created woman to be a helper suitable for man (i.e., exactly like him). There is no mention in the Holy Scriptures that woman is inferior to man,

nor that she is man's property or possession. We also see very clearly that woman is equal to man in spiritual matters; she will also stand before the Righteous Judge and has the right to enjoy salvation and redemption. Likewise, she has all the privileges that man has before God. But man, throughout the ages, resorted to exploiting women and demeaning their status. Thus, in Jewish society, women became inferior to men in a male-dominated society, characterized by the exploitation and oppression of women. Injustice prevailed, so divorce increased without cause or for trivial reasons. Therefore, Jesus Christ had to address men in an attempt to restore this relationship to its original purpose for which it was created and for which God created it from the beginning. We cannot discuss marriage and divorce in Christianity without taking a comprehensive look at Jesus Christ's interactions with women, thereby enabling us to understand the dimensions of His sayings about marriage and divorce.

### **First: Jesus Christ's Appreciation for Women**

Jesus Christ interacted with many women during His life and ministry. We can identify some important points regarding this topic.

1- Jesus Christ respected His mother and was obedient to her, from His childhood, as the Bible mentions that He was obedient to His parents, applying the commandment in the Ten Commandments: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land" (Exodus 20). When Christ was heading to the cross, He looked at John and said to him, "Here is your mother," meaning He entrusted him to care for His mother. And He told her to accept this care, saying to her, "Here is your son." Therefore, caring for the elderly is not only important but obligatory for every son or daughter. During His ministry, Jesus Christ met many widows; He raised the son of the widow of Nain. He raised Lazarus from the dead out of compassion for his sisters Mary and Martha.

2- Jesus Christ associated with adulterers and sinners rejected by the religious society, and religious men rebuked Him for this. His response to them was: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Christ saw Himself as the healing Physician who would mingle with those sinners to heal them, not just to be with them.

3- Jesus Christ praised the widow who gave two small coins, which was all she had, and said she gave more than all the others "because she gave out of her poverty." He also praised the faith of the Canaanite woman who insisted on receiving healing from Him, saying to her, "Woman, you have great faith!" He also praised the woman who poured perfume on His feet, saying, "Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

4- Jesus accepted gifts from women, as the Bible says they "were helping to support them out of their own means," as He did not work but went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil. Christ did not reject women's gifts nor their love for the Lord.

5- Jesus saw that the sin of adultery is the responsibility of both the man and the woman, not the woman alone. He taught that forgiveness is for the woman as well as for the man. He said to the adulterous woman caught in the act: "Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."

6- Women were the first to see Jesus Christ after His resurrection; He appeared to them and instructed them to tell His disciples.

In addition to all the above, there is nothing in His teachings that diminishes the status or rights of women. When they asked Him about divorce, He did not answer about divorce but spoke about marriage, returning to the original purpose of marriage from the beginning, which is forming a family and its stability for the sake of children. After that, He condemned

men as hard-hearted. Jesus Christ applied all that He knew from the Proverbs of Solomon according to God's holy word regarding the status of women and their right to earn a living, even to owning their own business and managing their household affairs. And to possess important qualities such as activity, diligence, care, generosity, and hospitality to strangers.

(Proverbs 31)

Woman is not half a man or of lesser value than man. She is not a vessel for man's pleasure, nor does man have the right to exploit her weakness or need for him to dominate or mistreat her. The opposite is also true—as the Apostle Paul indicated, a woman should not exploit a man's sexual needs to impose her conditions on him. Proverbs contains what we call the characteristics of a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10–31):

Verse 10: Not all women are virtuous, but the fear of the Lord is what brings favor in a person's life. If you want to know the secret of a man's success in his work or building his wealth, look for the virtuous woman who assisted him.

Verse 11: She is trustworthy, proven through experience. A person gains trust when they are faithful and diligent.

Verse 12: Unconditional love for her husband without temporal, spatial, or any circumstantial barriers.

Verse 13: A working woman who brings good to her husband and family. When she works, she does not complain but is content and works without grumbling.

Verse 14: She knows and have many skills, helping to earn money and support her husband.

Verse 15: She prefers the comfort of her sons and daughters over her personal comfort that she provides. She cares for them and feels responsible toward them, which requires patience and endurance. And sometimes encouragement in failure.

Verse 16: She can develop in her work; she may be a business owner, or if she is in a job, she knows how to master this job through study or appropriate training that allows her to be fruitful in this work.

Verse 17: She is active and serious in her work, gaining the trust of superiors or clients.

Verse 18: She shows compassion to the poor and needy without neglecting the needs of her household, which is her primary responsibility.

Verse 19: She has an appearance befitting her status, so she wears appropriate clothes and cares about her appearance and elegance.

Verse 20: She cares about her husband's status; she does not belittle him in front of people, nor does she expose his faults to others, but honors him before everyone.

Verse 21: It may be wise for her to have more than one income or financial source, and she manages and saves from her money to meet future uncertain needs.

Verse 22: Wise in her speech, for the tongue speaks what is in the heart.

Verse 23: She watches over her household to help correct their lives if necessary or support them in other circumstances.

Verse 24: She is not lazy in her work; she does not know idleness in work.

Verse 25: Therefore, she compels her children and husband to respect her.

Verse 26: All this is not related to beauty or femininity. The proverb says that if you want to get a good wife, do not look for beauty or attractiveness but search for the good qualities mentioned above.

Verse 27: generally; religiosity and knowing the ways of God help achieve them.

When we contemplate women's rights in our present world, we find that most of these rights allow women to achieve and realize their aspirations and dreams. Today's world grants them sufficient protection to reach what they want and work without fear. She is a human being with rights and duties. Every man who strives for his wife's advancement advances, and his family advances. Every man who does not help his wife progress reflects this on himself and his family with failure.

This also applies to societies and nations. Nations that allow women to progress advance, and vice versa. Nations allow women to progress through equality, not belittling women, protecting them in their work, protecting their private property, their right to education, a stable marriage, dignity in her home, or decent independence, and ensuring her security. Woman is in no way inferior to man; she can achieve what man can, and sometimes she may surpass him. This does not disgrace society but helps nations to rise and progress. And lest we think ill, Christ did not encourage women to fight battles to gain legitimate rights, but through His teachings and practices, Christ was able to establish in the minds of His followers the truth of His message and the truth of His call. When we follow the global economy, we see that women constitute a tremendous energy for advancing nations' economies. All countries that helped women to work and produce flourished and advanced, unlike those countries that diminish women's status and limit their ability to work and be creative.

## **Second: Jesus Christ's Teachings on Marriage and Divorce**

When some Jews asked Jesus Christ about divorce, He did not speak about divorce but about marriage. Jesus Christ said, "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'" That is, Christ returned to God's original plan for marriage. This divine plan from the beginning of creation was to "make a helper suitable for him" (Adam) (Genesis 2). Therefore, God created one Adam and one Eve, and Adam rejoiced when he found Eve to share his life. So, Christ said, "He created them male and female" (Genesis 2). After creating Adam and Eve, God sealed it by seeing that everything was very good, meaning He did not regret making humans male and female. The formation of the family was in God's mind from the beginning. Therefore, He does not allow humans to take this marriage lightly or its sanctity, for this marriage is God's arrangement for the stability of the family. Marriage is between one man and one woman. It is the union of a man and a woman so that they become one flesh. It is a union until the end of life, not ending with a desire for separation or the decision of one party to separate.

As for the engagement period, it does not differ much from marriage. The Holy Bible mentions that engagement is an announcement of readiness for marriage. Spiritual, psychological, and physical union does not occur except after marriage. We cannot ignore the emotional and psychological attachment of both parties. The separation of engaged couples is no less painful than divorce. But under current circumstances and changing living and intellectual conditions, the engagement period may be important for the success of marriage. A failed engagement is less harmful than a failed marriage. However, it is better for engagement and marriage to occur within a short period. As for the reasons for the desire for divorce or divorce itself, studies have shown that the primary reason is money, because money is a measure of responsibility and other ethics. However, marital success does not depend on the level

of wealth; how many wealthy people have had failed marriages. The second reason for separation is sex. The husband or wife may deviate, led by physical passions, thus trust disappears and the sail of love is broken. The third reason is the interference of families in the affairs of the new home. This interference may be with a spontaneous intent, without any other purpose. But while parents strive for their children's benefit, they forget the children's right to choose their work, homes, or even their right to go through a failed experience. And as Jesus Christ warned against adultery that leads to the destruction of the soul, how much more the trust between husband and wife. Therefore, Jesus Christ did not permit divorce except for the reason of sexual immorality. He did not encourage divorce in all its forms and methods. Therefore, He instructed that it is not proper for a person to marry a divorced woman. The primary purpose of that was not to encourage divorce under any circumstances. When the Holy Bible instructed, "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife," it means leaving his emotional attachment to his parents (and physically too, if possible, i.e., place of residence), to form a new family, and to be the head of this family.

The commandment was directed to the man because he can do this to give his wife the right to lead and arrange her home as she wishes. This includes the woman's right to be the mistress of her home, even if she does not have sufficient experience, and her right to raise her children as she sees fit. And to have a special relationship with her man, without family interference. This ensures her independence and dignity. This right must be guaranteed for both the rich and the poor alike. However, because of widespread divorce and men abandoning their wives, and the resulting societal instability, Moses instructed that a certificate of divorce be given (not as approval of divorce) but to have order in society and so that the woman is free to marry another person. But Christ told the Jews that Moses permitted them to divorce because of the hardness of their hearts and to give the woman a certificate of divorce.

But from the beginning, this was not God's intent for marriage. Some churches permit divorce in certain specific cases. This divorce is not for mere change or for having children, but in cases of contagious diseases or insanity. But some have managed to find other reasons for divorce that do not agree with Jesus Christ's commandment. Jesus Christ did not address the matter of marriage after the loss of a spouse. Because Jesus Christ did not come to give laws or legislation, but He came to fulfill a special mission, which is providing redemption for humanity, leaving it to the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to arrange life affairs. This is what Christ's disciples accomplished in the various epistles to the churches. Jesus Christ added that God does not require every man to marry; some have devoted themselves to serving God and caring for spiritual ministry (Matthew 19:10–12). Therefore, monasticism is a calling from God to serve Him. As for the claim that Christians invented monasticism, this is incorrect, as it existed as a natural result of the persecution that occurred during the formation of the early church. Many young Christian men fled to the mountains or desert. Over time, small communities formed around worship and studying the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus Christ also said, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart," because lust is the foundation of adultery, and adultery is the foundation of divorce. When we contemplate this commandment, we feel it is difficult to implement, but the Jesus wanted to say that you all need salvation from the sinful nature we inherited in our human body, so that by the Spirit we can put to death the misdeeds of the body (1 Corinthians 7). Some Christian denominations may differ in marriage practices and traditions. But the principle remains steadfast based on Christ's teaching that the bond in marriage is permanent without separation. Traditional churches perform marriage before the altar and by the hand of a priest, because they believe it is a sacrament of the church. It is called the sacrament of Marriage because God is the one who joins the couple,

and therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. In marriage, they become one flesh. Since this is a holy sacrament, according to their belief, a priest of the church conducts these ceremonies.

In the belief of evangelical churches, there are no sacraments that God has not revealed to us in His word. Marriage is the declaration of the union of a man and a woman in holy matrimony, and they become one flesh. Since evangelical churches exist in the Middle East amidst traditional churches, it was natural for the church pastor to conduct wedding ceremonies, and the wedding takes place in churches. In the West, marriage may be solemnized in any suitable place without being restricted to the church as a location. As for polygamy, we can implicitly understand that Christ did not permit marriage to more than one woman, because this sacred bond between man and woman makes them one flesh. Polygamy diminishes the woman's worth and leads to much favoritism among wives and their children.

### **Third: Jesus Christ Teaches That There Is No Marriage or Sexual Relationships in Eternal Life**

When some Jewish teachers came asking Him about the marriage of a widow whose husband died, as she should marry the brother of the deceased husband (to care for her), and they asked Him about the status of this wife if she married seven brothers who died one after the other, in heaven, whose wife will she be? Christ answered that in heaven there will be no marriage or sexual relationship of any kind, where we will receive luminous bodies that do not reproduce, multiply, or know the lusts of the flesh. Rather, we will be like the angels of God who praise God and sing to Him and glorify Him continually. Based on what Jesus Christ said, the Apostle Paul taught in his letter to the Ephesians that marriage is holy and children are holy in this Christian marriage. He also taught that marriage resembles the union

of Christ with the church (i.e., the community of believers), for Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for the believers.

Ephesians 5:22–33 points to some things we must realize:

- ❖ The wife's submission to her husband does not mean the husband's superiority over the wife, but submission of love and trust, which gives the man greater responsibility to be worthy of this trust.
- ❖ According to her nature, the woman needs containment, so the man must love his wife as himself.
- ❖ The great mystery is the mystery of the union of Christ with the church, i.e., the community of believers, as Christ loved the believers and gave Himself for them.

### **Summary**

Jesus Christ restored Christian thought to the original divine purpose of creating man and woman. Thus, He gave marriage value in its non-plurality, non-separation, and guarantee of its continuity and stability. He also established the principle of family stability and steadfastness, and not causing anything that might harm the family.

He also reviewed the idea of the couple separating from parents to form a new family when He said, "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." And that marriage is from God, as the Book says, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." He is the one who joined the two, and no human should separate them.

## Chapter 23

### The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

We have previously reviewed the expectations of the Jewish people regarding the coming of the Messiah from God, to save them from Roman bondage and authority. Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the Temple, and His expulsion of the merchants and traders from it were the final stage in which the Jews realized that Jesus Christ did not intend to be an earthly king nor to lead a revolution against the Romans to liberate the Jewish people. However, Christ knew that He would die, and that by doing so, He would establish a different kind of kingdom where He would reign over hearts, not over land. Christians commemorate this day every year, calling it "Palm Sunday." They enter churches carrying palm branches, commemorating what the crowds did when Jesus passed before them, as they carried palm branches and spread their cloaks on the road.

In this chapter, we will address few points as follows:

#### **First: The Prophecies Concerning Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

##### *Zechariah 9:9-17*

It was customary for victorious kings who conquered other nations to enter defeated cities on horseback, followed by bound and humiliated captives. They would also enter, raising banners and swords, accompanied by victory music and shouts. However, Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem riding on a young donkey, not on horseback; He carried no sword, and no humiliated captives followed His procession. Jesus Christ entered the city of Jerusalem humbly, on the back of a small donkey, not to be a victorious earthly king, but as the Prince of Peace, He came in complete humility and peace to reign over the hearts of those who would believe in Him.

**Second: Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord**

Jesus Christ asked two of His disciples to bring Him a donkey on which no one had ever ridden. Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem amid the shouts of the people, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," carrying palm branches (like victory arches) and spreading their cloaks on the road, fulfilling the prophecy found in Psalm 118: "Save us, we pray, O Lord! ... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Despite the initial fear of Christ's disciples about going to Jerusalem, they were soon encouraged when they saw the crowds receiving Jesus Christ and shouting. As for the crowds who followed Jesus Christ, the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead had spread among them. The Jewish elders and priests wanted to kill Lazarus so that he would not be a witness to Jesus Christ's power. Since the crowds had heard what Christ had done in miracles and raising the dead, they wished for Him to come to the Temple during that feast (Passover) (John 11:55-57). The people's shouting was not merely enthusiastic but was based on many prophecies about the Messiah (the Lord's anointed ... the King) who would be from the lineage of King David and who would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:12-14), and also (Psalm 24:7-10). However, when the crowds realized that Jesus Christ would not reign over Jerusalem, they shouted (less than a week later) "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" By entering Jerusalem on that day with such celebration, Christ declared Himself to everyone as a "king." But He was not the king they expected; He was a "heavenly king." His disciples understood what Christ meant after His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Therefore, since the Church (i.e., Christ's people) began, it has been celebrating that King who will lead us into the heavenly Jerusalem.

**Third: Christ Prophecies the Destruction of the Temple and the Ruin of Jerusalem**

In Matthew 24:1-3, we read that the Temple (which King Herod had renovated and expanded) was one of the largest and most beautiful buildings in Jerusalem. The royal porch at the entrance was adorned with one hundred and sixty columns. There was also a courtyard called the "Court of the Gentiles," where all non-Jews came to worship, and there sat the money changers and merchants selling sheep for trade. Since thousands of people, Jews and non-Jews, came to Jerusalem during Passover to offer their sacrifices, they bought them from the Temple, and the priests ensured they were acceptable sacrifices. Also, travelers came from distant countries and needed to exchange their currency, so there were tables for money changers. This was not what angered Jesus Christ; what angered Him was the focus on commerce rather than offering sacrifices and doing what is right; therefore, He overturned the tables of the money changers and drove out the sheep sellers. When Jesus Christ announced to His disciples that this Temple would be destroyed and that Jerusalem would face certain ruin, it was difficult for them to believe because the Temple's foundations were strong. Indeed, less than forty years after that conversation, the Roman Titus came to quell a revolutionary movement, destroyed Jerusalem, and demolished the Temple after offering a pig on the altar to humiliate the Jews. After the destruction of the Temple around 70 AD, the Jews were scattered to various parts of the world, preceded by the gospel message to those lands. Some of them believed in Christ, and some remained in rejection of Christ's message to this day. But those Jews who accepted His message became followers of Jesus Christ, spreading His message. To learn more about church history: After about three hundred years of Christ's death, the message of Christ spread and His followers multiplied. Severe persecution occurred against Christians for many reasons, including accusations of disloyalty to Caesar, among other baseless reasons. Many died, and many also apostatized. However, Christ's message continued to spread until the time came when Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire accepted the

Christian faith, thus transforming the Roman Empire into a Christian one. This does not mean that the peoples accepted the Christian faith and became true disciples of Christ, but it means that the climate became favorable for accepting Christ's message. Under the vast Roman Empire, Christian doctrine crystallized until the Apostles' Creed, which is the foundation of the Christian faith, emerged, and places of worship and churches were established. As for the Gospels, Christ's disciples and apostles wrote them in less than thirty or fifty years, except for the Gospel of John, which was written later. The letters that the apostles wrote to the churches were also written around the same time. We will study this in detail later.

#### **Fourth: Jesus Christ Begins to Speak About His Death**

Many non-Jews came from various regions to offer sacrifices in the Temple during the days of Passover. Having heard of Jesus Christ, they wanted to see Him and meet Him, so they requested this from Philip (perhaps his name was non-Jewish). However, instead of turning to meet them, Jesus Christ spoke about His death and shared a beautiful parable of what would happen. He said that just as a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die (to be buried), He would lay down His life for His beloved, and then it would bear much fruit (John 11:23-26). Christ was referring to His death on the cross and resurrection.

#### **Fifth: Cleansing the Temple a Second Time** (*Matthew 21:12-17*)

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus Christ came to the Temple and found sellers of doves (and sacrifices) and tables of money changers (currency exchange). He drove out all who were buying and selling from the Temple courtyard, overturned their tables, and said to them, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." This was be-

cause commerce had become associated with lying, deceit, fraud, and the exploitation of religion, all for the benefit of the chief priests and Jewish leaders. From that time on, they sought more to kill Him because He posed a threat to their trade.

### **Jesus Christ Curses the Fig Tree** (*Matthew 21:18-22*)

On the following morning, Jesus Christ saw a fig tree, and because He was hungry, He came to it looking for figs, but He found only leaves. He said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" (Matthew 21:19), and the fig tree withered. We know that the fig tree always symbolized God's people, the children of Israel. This represents the curse that would befall them after rejecting Christ's message and the external religiosity that Christ condemned. This was the first and last time Christ caused death because He came to give life, not death. However, He will come again to judge the living and the dead. Perhaps the reader wants an answer to the question: What is the religious status of the Jewish people or the state of Israel now and in the future? To answer this question, I will give you two different interpretations of what is stated in the Bible: The first interpretation is the literal one: God will gather the Jewish people in the Promised Land, and a large portion of them will accept Christ's message in the last days, called the "faithful remnant." Christ will come and rule the earth for a thousand years, during which there will be complete peace, then Satan will be bound and cast into hell for eternal destruction. The second interpretation is the spiritual one: With the Jews' rejection of Christ's message, God's choice passed to the people of the Church, or what is called the "New Israel," but the opportunity remains open for any Jew who wishes to accept His message.

### **Sixth: Christ Debates with the Teachers and Leaders of the Jews**

Since open challenge began between Jesus Christ and the Jewish leaders when He entered Jerusalem as a king, challenging their authority, and also when they asked Him to silence the

children shouting, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," and finally His expulsion of the dove sellers and livestock traders and His overturning of the money changers' tables—all of this made them seek to kill Him. The high priest said it was better for one man to die than for the whole people to perish.

*By What Authority Do You Do These Things? (Matthew 21:23-27)*

Those leaders knew that Jesus Christ had said He was the "Son of God" and the "Messiah," so they wanted to trap Him in any mistake to bring Him to trial. They asked Him by what authority He did these things, as one could not challenge Roman authority or state authority in general. But He told them that if they answered His question, He would answer theirs: He asked them about John's baptism—was it from men or from God? Since they feared the people, because the people knew that John's baptism was from God, if they said it was from God, Christ would have answered them, saying, "Then why did you not believe him, for he testified about Me?" Therefore, they said, "We do not know." So He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

*Give Back to Caesar What Is Caesar's and to God What Is God's*

Then they wanted to trap Him again, so they asked Him about paying taxes. If He said not to pay taxes to the state (to Caesar), then He would be inciting sedition and pushing the people to disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Thus, they would put Him in a predicament with the Romans. However, Jesus Christ asked for a coin and said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Nevertheless, the confrontations between Jesus Christ and the Jewish leaders did not end, and He continued to tell parables, giving two parables: the parable of the wicked tenants and the parable of the wedding feast, indicating that

God entrusted them with His work, but they did not do it faithfully; therefore, He would come to take that trust and give it to others.

### *Hypocrisy*

In Matthew 23:1-12, Hypocrisy is showing something different from what we harbor inwardly and doing something different from what we preach. It is a sign of external religiosity that does not lead people to truth but makes us like blind guides leading the blind, and both fall into a pit, as Jesus Christ said. Jesus Christ often contended with the Jewish leaders, priests, and the meticulous ones, whom we call Pharisees. Several debates took place between the Jewish leaders and Jesus Christ after the cleansing of the Temple and the expulsion of the merchants and money changers. But finally, Jesus directed a question to them to settle the matter of who the Christ is according to the Holy Scriptures (the Torah and the Prophets).

### *Christ and David*

In Matthew 22:41-46, we read that Christ asked the Jewish leaders, saying, "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son, is he?" They answered Him, "The son of David." So, He asked them, saying, "Then how does David, speaking by the Spirit, call him 'Lord'? For he says in Psalm 110:1, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" If David calls Him 'Lord,' how can He be his son? By this, Jesus Christ wanted to point to the truth of the "Incarnation," in which the Second Person, Christ, would come to be also the Son of David, and thus at the same time also be the "Son of God." Thus, Jesus Christ settled this debate about the nature of the Incarnation (i.e., that God came in the flesh). However, this remained the core of the conflict between the Jews and Christ; indeed, because of this accusation, they sought to put Him on trial and crucify Him on the charge that He claimed divinity.

**Seventh: The Warning Against the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees**

In Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus Christ warned the people against the teachings of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, that they do not let those entering enter, nor do they themselves enter the kingdom of God (23:13); that they keep people away from God to have religious authority over others (23:15); they also lead the people to practice empty traditions, following man-made traditions instead of obeying the word of God (23:16-22); they ignore the important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness, and are preoccupied with insignificant details (23:23-24); they maintain false appearances that reveal their inner lives as corrupt (23:25-26); they pretend to piety and spirituality but do not know its power because they practice sin (23:27-28); they claim to have learned from their past, but their present shows they have learned nothing (23:29-36). Not only that, but Christ also condemned them for their hunger for power, money, and status. They also turn their attention away from God's commandments and teachings and spread their own teachings to blind others as well. Christ describes them as straining out a gnat to avoid swallowing it (to avoid becoming unclean). Thus, they are meticulous about ritual purity, but their hearts are impure and evil. So, Jesus Christ told them they strain out a gnat but swallow a camel, thereby warning us not to be religious externally while being impure internally, or to try to give our tithes to God, but when someone needs us, we have no time to do God's work of helping others. Jesus also described them as snakes who will not escape eternal punishment; they are murderers of the prophets and their persecutors, and therefore they will not escape God's eternal punishment for their accumulated sins.

## **Chapter 24**

### **The Passion Week of Jesus Christ**

#### **Introduction**

The final week of Christ's earthly life has held supreme importance in Christianity since its very beginning, because it encompasses the events of the Cross and the Resurrection. This week also includes the institution of the Lord's Supper, through which Jesus Christ commanded His followers to remember His sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood for redemption and salvation. All of this was crowned by His final commandment, known as the Great Commission, just before His ascension: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel (that is, the good news) to all creation, make disciples of them, teach them to obey everything I have commanded you, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28).

#### **Christ's Whereabouts During the Final Week**

From Sunday through Wednesday, Jesus Christ most likely spent the nights in Bethany, which is two miles east of Jerusalem. However, we do not know precisely what Christ did on Wednesday. He probably spent it with His disciples, teaching them in Bethany. On Thursday evening, He celebrated the Last Supper (which we call Maundy Thursday). He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that night He was arrested and brought to the house of the high priest. On Friday morning, He was led to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, who in turn sent Him to King Herod. Herod questioned Christ about performing a miracle, but received no answer, so he sent Him back to Pilate. Under pressure from the chief priests and the crowd, Pilate handed Him over to them to be judged according to their laws. At midday, they

led Him outside the city of Jerusalem and crucified Him there between two thieves. His body rested in the tomb on Friday and Saturday nights, and He rose on the third day (Sunday).

*The Anointing of Jesus Christ (Mark 14:1–9)*

A woman came to Jesus Christ and poured a flask of expensive perfume (or ointment) on His head. Some say that women used to save such perfume for their wedding day. But Judas Iscariot was indignant, preferring that the perfume be sold and the money given to the poor (In reality, his concern was not for the poor, but for himself, as he was entrusted with the money bag and was a thief). When some began to rebuke her, Jesus Christ said, “She has done this to prepare Me for burial”—meaning that His body, which would be laid in the earth within a few days, would be anointed with perfume. He added that what she had done would become a story told throughout the generations as this gospel spread. Thus, Christ once again foretold His death and burial. No one knows this woman’s name or exactly when this occurred, though it may have taken place on Wednesday.

*The Last Supper and What is Passover?*

God commanded the people of Israel to celebrate the Passover in remembrance of the day He delivered them from certain destruction when they were slaves in the land of Egypt, during Moses’ confrontation with Pharaoh. The Lord commanded Moses that each family should slaughter a lamb and smear its blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, so that when the destroying angel came, he would see the blood and pass over that house. This act expressed Israel’s faith in God, for they obeyed this command, and the firstborn son in every Jewish household was spared. The angel, however, went to the Egyptian houses that bore no blood mark and killed every firstborn son in those homes. In remembrance of that day, they would eat roasted lamb and bitter herbs. After Christ died and rose, believers understood that Christ

is the true Passover—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Everyone who believes in Him, just as those who applied the blood to the doorposts in obedience and faith, will be saved from eternal punishment or destruction.

Preparations for Passover included setting the table, buying the Passover lamb, and preparing it with unleavened bread (as there had been no time for the dough to rise when the Israelites left Egypt), along with the wine and other customary foods for the occasion. In those days, tables were not like ours today; they were low to the ground, allowing everyone to recline around them. The host would sit at the head, with everyone gathered around. The upper room (a separate chamber on the roof) was where the Lord Jesus observed the Last Supper with His disciples. We know from the Gospels that Jesus Christ ate the Passover with His disciples, then went to the Mount of Olives, to a garden called Gethsemane. There, Christ withdrew from His disciples and began to pray in preparation for the coming suffering, trials, and imminent agony.

*The Conspiracy to Kill Christ (Matthew 26:14–16)*

The main reason for this conspiracy was likely Christ's challenge to the religious leaders when He entered Jerusalem, came to the temple, and denounced their abuse of their positions as chief priests—their exploitation of the temple for buying and selling, making dishonest profit from selling sacrifices under the pretense of religious specifications, and exchanging money for pilgrims coming from distant lands. Note here that Christ's objection and His driving out of the sellers of sheep and doves (the sacrifices) and the money changers was not an objection to the work itself, but to the misuse of the temple, which was intended for prayer, and to the exploitation of the common people and worshippers who came to offer their sacrifices to God, all for the sake of profit and gain. Every Jewish male over the age of twelve

years, was supposed to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The day of Passover was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a seven-day commemoration of the Israelites' swift exodus from Egypt, when there was no time for the dough to rise, so they baked it without leaven.

The Israelites would gather to eat the Passover meal—the roasted lamb, non-intoxicating wine, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. The entire week came to be called “Passover.” But Jesus Christ took this bread and this cup (the wine) and gave them new meaning: the bread would symbolize His broken body (which He would offer on the cross), and the wine would signify His blood (which would be shed on the cross), so that His disciples would do this (as they remembered the Passover) in remembrance of Jesus Christ's death for the whole world. Hence, this meal came to be called “the Lord's Supper” or “the Eucharist.” This is practiced by most Christian denominations in remembrance of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross for us and for our salvation.

Jesus Christ and His disciples ate the Passover meal and sang hymns of praise to God—most likely from Psalms 115–118, as these were traditionally sung during Passover. Then Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, took the cup, gave thanks, and said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” No miracle or supernatural act accompanied this meal; it was instituted solely as a remembrance of His death, crucifixion, resurrection, and the giving of His life as a ransom for our sins. The day on which this supper took place is called “Maundy Thursday,” marking the new covenant that Christ inaugurated between God and humanity: that everyone who believes in this redemption receives eternal life.

*Commemoration of the Lord's Supper and Christian Denominations*

Christians agree about the importance of the Lord's Supper and its spiritual meaning. However, they have differed in interpreting how it should be practiced and in what is called "transubstantiation." To explain, there are three main views, summarized as follows:

1- The bread and cup transform into the actual body and blood of Christ. This is a mysterious work of God performed through a priest after the celebration of the "Mass." Therefore, the entire worship service revolves around this event. Church members are required to fast before partaking of this body and blood. This is the belief of Orthodox, Catholic, Maronite, and other traditional churches.

2- The bread and cup remain unchanged in substance, but Christ is present in faith through them. This is the understanding of Presbyterian, Evangelical, and some Lutheran churches.

3- The bread and cup remain unchanged in substance; they do not transform and continue solely as ongoing memorials of Christ's sacrifice. This is the belief of some other Evangelical churches, such as Baptist churches and others.

In all three cases above, there is an affirmation of faith in the sacrifice of the one Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Christ), and that we do this in remembrance of the crucifixion and redemption. Thus, whenever we eat this bread and drink of this cup, we remember what He did for us as human beings and for our salvation. We recall His grace and proclaim the work that Christ accomplished for us.

### **Christ Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46)**

"Your will be done." This is how Jesus Christ prayed before His crucifixion. He knew the physical and psychological agony He would endure—and, even more, His separation from the heavenly Father. How difficult it is for a human being to submit to God's will.

**Judas Betrays Jesus Christ to the Jewish Chief Priests (Matthew 26:47–56)**

Judas Iscariot, like the other disciples, expected Jesus Christ to become an earthly king. He followed Christ daily and held the money bag. But his hopes were soon dashed, because Christ did not come to be an earthly king, but to reign over hearts so that they might live for God. Judas Iscariot did not allow Christ's teachings or thoughts to penetrate deeply into his heart and transform him, as happened with the other disciples, whose lives gained meaning and a special mission. Instead, when he weighed matters, he found no material benefit in following Christ, so he decided to gain at least something from following Him. Thus, when Christ said that one of His disciples would betray Him, everyone was troubled. Christ indicated that it would have been better for that man had he not been born, according to the prophecies (i.e., he has no eternal heavenly hope but remains under God's wrath). Despite the opportunity he had to repent and accept Jesus Christ's work and forgiveness, he persisted in the stubbornness of his heart, went out, and arranged to hand Christ over to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver—this too fulfilling prophecy.

Judas came with temple guards and gave them a sign: the one he kissed would be Christ. He knew the places where Christ would be with His disciples, or where He went to pray away from the crowds that might interfere with His arrest. So, he came at night to the Garden of Gethsemane, found Jesus Christ, kissed Him, and handed Him over to the guards. Peter, one of Christ's disciples, had a sword (or large knife) and tried to defend Jesus Christ, cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. Peter did not understand God's plan that Christ must die to accomplish redemption, and that Christ would offer Himself willingly. But Christ told him to put his sword back into its sheath, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." We do not obtain eternal life and the kingdom of God by swords, but by faith, obedience to God, and His holy word. Christ also directed His disciples' attention to the heavenly

forces at His disposal—that He could ask the Father, and He would at once send legions of angels to defend Him. But Christ submitted to the divine will, however difficult it was. Christ restored the ear of the high priest’s servant to its place; this was the last miracle He performed just before His crucifixion. At that point, all His disciples fled, including Peter, who had sworn to follow Him no matter the cost.

After Judas betrayed Jesus Christ to the chief priests, he went back to them seeking to undo the agreement, but they refused, considering the money the price of blood—thus fulfilling the prophecy that the purchase price would be used for a “field of blood.” Judas threw the money down in the temple, and they used it to buy a field, which was called the Field of Blood. Then Judas went away and hanged himself. But what if Judas had returned to Jesus Christ asking for His forgiveness? Without a doubt, he would have received Christ’s forgiveness, for even on the cross Christ said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Yet he succumbed to the torment of his conscience and its accusations, despairing of forgiveness, and went and hanged himself. Sometimes we doubt and lose confidence in God’s mercy, which promises to forgive our sins if we ask Him for compassion and forgiveness. When we compare this to what happened to the other disciple named Peter, who denied knowing Christ in a difficult moment, he wept bitterly in remorse for that denial and later proved the sincerity of his repentance not just with words but with his life—even dying as a martyr, bearing witness to Christ as far west as Rome.

### **The Six Trials of Christ**

*The Trial Before Annas the High Priest (John 18:12–14, 19–24)*

Annas was the lawful high priest, but the Romans had deposed him and appointed another high priest, Caiaphas. Although this was not according to Jewish tradition or the Holy Scriptures, they acquiesced to the situation, so both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests at that time. Why did Christ not turn the other cheek to the servant who struck Him, but instead asked why he was striking Him? Jesus Christ's teaching on this matter is that we should not seek personal vengeance but leave room for justice. When He asked, "Why did you strike Me?" He was questioning His right as a human being to a fair trial without abuse unless guilt was proven.

*Christ Before Caiaphas the High Priest (Matthew 26:57–68) and Before the Jewish High Council (the Sanhedrin) (Matthew 27:1–2)*

The seventy members of the council gathered to confirm their agreement on condemning Jesus Christ, not to investigate. How often do councils convene merely to ratify a verdict already issued? The law stipulated that council meetings must be held in the morning so that witnesses would be present before everyone in broad daylight. But the council convened at night and did not wait until morning to try Christ. Afterward, they sent Jesus Christ to the Roman governor, because they did not have the authority to execute anyone—that power belonged to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The primary religious charge brought against Jesus Christ was His claim of equality with God. But the real charge was His interference in the affairs of the chief priests and the disruption of their private interests when He drove the merchants out of the temple.

*Jesus Christ Before Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor (Luke 23:1–7)*

How many innocent people have been falsely accused! Did Christ say He was the earthly king of the Jews? Certainly not, but they wanted to fabricate a charge against Him, since the

Romans were not concerned with religious affairs unless they posed a political threat. When Pilate learned that Christ was from the district of Galilee, he sought to please Herod the king while also ridding himself of this thorny case.

*Christ Before Herod the King (Luke 23:7–12)*

King Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee, the region where Christ lived. Herod was celebrating the Passover festival in Jerusalem, where Christ was being tried. Therefore, Pilate sent Christ to Herod. Christ's reputation had spread throughout Herod's realm. Herod had long hoped to see a miracle performed by Christ, so he asked Him to perform one. Christ did not come to perform miracles but to restore the broken relationship between humanity and its Creator. Hence, Christ did not comply with his request. Herod, in retaliation, had Him ridiculed and beaten, then sent Him back to Governor Pilate. Jesus Christ had called Herod "a fox." A fox is characterized by cunning and cowardice at the same time. This was true of King Herod. This remark must have reached Herod's ears, but he did not confront Jesus Christ about it, lacking the courage to face what Christ might say to him. Thus, he did not ask about it but instead requested a miracle. Yet how many people witnessed miracles but did not repent toward God or believe in His complete work of salvation?

*Christ Before Pilate a Second and Final Time (Matthew 27:11–25)*

All too often, judges shrink from taking a firm and courageous stand to acquit the innocent but instead yield to unjust verdicts merely to preserve peace, for political reasons, for monetary gain, or to secure some personal advantage. The perversion of justice is an abomination to God. If the ruler is corrupt, who will establish justice? Governor Pilate did not give Jesus Christ a fair trial; he knew full well that Christ had committed no crime deserving death. Therefore, he tried to evade issuing a verdict by sending Christ to King Herod. But Herod

sent Him back. Knowing Christ's innocence and influenced by his wife (Pilate's wife sent him a message saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man"—i.e., do not sin by judging this innocent man), Pilate sought to save Jesus Christ from the Jews by offering to have Him flogged (i.e., disciplined) and then released. But they refused. Then he attempted to place Him in the customary pardon by releasing the prisoner chosen by the people each year during the festival. But Christ was the prisoner who would free every captive from sin through His death on the cross. The Jews, however, chose to release Barabbas, a dangerous criminal. Pilate yielded to their demand and handed Jesus Christ over to them to be executed according to their law. Judges may try to silence their consciences by performing a dramatic gesture to express their dissatisfaction with the verdict pronounced on the accused without pronouncing it themselves—as Pilate did when he washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." God has entrusted rulers not only to manage the affairs of the state but also to judge justly and protect the people from injustice and oppressors.

No matter how much they wash their hands, it does not absolve them of their responsibility to defend the oppressed. Thus, Pilate handed Christ over to be crucified. Since the Roman state was highly organized, there existed a provision in Roman law for the execution of anyone who claimed to be "king of the Jews" during the time of Pontius Pilate.

## **Chapter 25**

### **The Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Jesus Christ**

The week of the Lord Jesus Christ's Passion began with His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem (on Sunday), and on the following day, He drove out the merchants and money

changers from the temple with authority. This was followed by several debates with the Jewish leaders who were trying to catch Him in any mistake or sin, but they found none. The Lord Jesus Christ spent Tuesday and Wednesday teaching in the temple, and a great multitude followed Him, as there were many who had come from various regions of the country to celebrate the Passover feast. On Thursday (Passover night), Jesus withdrew privately with His disciples to eat the Passover, and He instituted the first Lord's Supper. He spoke about how He would be the slain Lamb for the sake of all who believe among humanity. Thus, He transformed the bread and the cup from being a remembrance of the Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt into a remembrance and passage for every sinner into a life of joy in the kingdom of God.

### **First: The Lord Jesus Christ Announces His Death and Resurrection**

#### *1-In Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:21–28)*

The Lord Jesus Christ began to announce to His disciples that He would suffer, be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, be killed, buried, and rise after three days. The disciples were astonished by this—why would this happen to a man who had done nothing deserving death or condemnation? For the Lord Jesus Christ was peaceful, humble, doing good, healing the sick, and teaching with all calmness without using any means that threatened others. And how could this happen when He could stand against any force? He was a miracle worker; Peter knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was the awaited Messiah, and therefore he tried to dissuade Him from speaking these words. But Christ said to him, “Get behind me, Satan” (because he was not thinking the thoughts of God but the adversarial or contrary thoughts).

#### *2- In Galilee (Matthew 17:22–23)*

While Jesus was gathering with His disciples in Galilee, He announced to them that He would die and rise on the third day.

*3- On the Way to Jerusalem (Matthew 20:17, 19)*

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His disciples about His crucifixion and resurrection after three days from death. Despite this, they still did not believe it would happen to Him, for crucifixion was the punishment for the worst criminals.

*4- While Descending from the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:9–13)*

The Lord Jesus Christ took three disciples from those close to Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and while they were descending from the mountain, the Lord Jesus Christ announced to them that He would be killed and rise on the third day.

*5-After Driving Out the Money Changers and Pigeon Sellers from the Temple (John 2:18–22)*

The Jewish leaders asked the Lord Jesus Christ, “By what authority do you do these things?” Jesus said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” But He was referring to the temple of His body, not the temple of Jerusalem. Therefore, the disciples remembered His words after His resurrection.

*6-The Sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38–42)*

Some Jews asked the Lord Jesus Christ to show them a sign. He said to them, “This generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” The story of Jonah is well-known among the Jewish people: God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh to inform them that God would destroy the city if they did not repent from their evil and return to Him. But Jonah fled and did not want to go to these enemies. The story of Jonah’s flight ends with him being swallowed by a great fish, remaining in its belly for three

days, after which the fish vomited him onto the shore. Jonah complied with God's command, went to Nineveh, preached repentance, and the king and the people accepted God's word and repented from their sins. As for the resemblance between the sign of Jonah and Christ, it lies in the Lord Jesus Christ remaining in the belly of the earth (i.e., in the tomb) for three days, just as Jonah remained three days in the belly of the fish. Then Christ rises and exits the tomb, just as Jonah exited the fish's belly. (Read Jonah's story in detail in the Book of Jonah).

### **Second: The Lord's Supper and Its Relationship to the Crucifixion**

#### *The Passover Supper—Maundy Thursday (Luke 22:7–12, 14–23)*

The Jews would eat the supper on the night before the sacrifice was offered by the high priest on the following day—Passover day. This sacrifice commemorated the destroying angel passing over the Jewish firstborns when they were in Egypt. This represents salvation for humanity from certain destruction. It was also an atonement for sins. They ate unleavened bread because there was no time for preparation for departure and exodus from the land of Egypt, so the bread did not leaven. As for the cup, it represents the joy that accompanied deliverance from slavery. But the Lord Jesus Christ took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you." By this, He was speaking about His body that He would give up for the sins of the world on the cross. Likewise, He took the cup and said, "Drink from it, all of you. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." This is what the church does in remembrance of Christ's death for them.

### **Third: The Six Trials of the Lord Jesus Christ Ending in Crucifixion (John 19:1–18)**

Notes Regarding the Trials:

1- Christ remained silent before those judging Him so that the prophecy in Isaiah 53 might be fulfilled: “as a lamb before its shearers is silent.”

2- Pilate knew full well that the Lord Jesus Christ was innocent and tried to release Him by having Him flogged, hoping that might satisfy the chief priests, but they insisted on His death.

3-Pilate was not concerned with justice but with pleasing the people to preserve his position as governor. He merely washed his hands and said he was innocent of this righteous man’s blood, but that would not absolve him of the responsibility placed upon him: to achieve justice.

4- Herod wanted to see Jesus perform miracles and therefore was pleased to see Him. But miracles are not performed to amaze people but so that people may believe through them. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ did not comply with his request despite His ability to do so.

5- Pilate attempted to release the Lord Jesus Christ in another way. Knowing Jesus’ popularity and righteous deeds among the people, he thought that if he asked them to choose between releasing Barabbas, the robber and murderer, and releasing Jesus, the people would choose to have Jesus released. But to his surprise, the crowd shouted, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” This was their submission to the orders of the chief priests. This was the same crowd that had shouted a few days earlier, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” during Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Thus, we know that true faith does not change, whereas false faith fluctuates and changes with changing circumstances and interests. So Pilate handed Him over to the Jews to do as they wished.

6- The Roman soldiers took Him to their headquarters (the Praetorium) and mocked Him, struck Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him, symbolizing royal robes (as King of the Jews),

and placed a crown of thorns on His head (instead of the golden crown worn by kings). Then they led Him out to be crucified. But since Jesus was utterly exhausted from lack of sleep all night, the trials, and the flogging, He could not carry the cross. Therefore, they compelled a man named Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross. Roman soldiers had the right to compel anyone to carry a burden for one mile.

7- All of this was a fulfillment of prophecies as we studied in chapter 3.

8- As for Mary, the mother of Jesus, while she was watching all this, she could do nothing. How difficult it is to watch your son being treated harshly even though he is innocent, and how hard it is to feel helpless and unable to do anything. Truly, Simeon the elder's prophecy was fulfilled when he said to her, "a sword will pierce through your own soul."

9- The chief priests used their authority to kill Christ to preserve their positions and interests, even though the high priest had prophesied that Christ would die that year, as he knew the Scriptures. But that is a faith that knows facts, not the faith that leads to repentance, a life of piety, and eternal salvation.

10-The Old Testament states that "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Christ was hung on the cross and became a curse for the sake of sinners, to provide atoning redemption on the cross. Although those who sentenced Christ to death were the Jews, they used the Romans to carry out the death sentence by crucifixion. Even though crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment but a Roman one, despite this difference, the prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was hung on a tree to declare God's love and redemption.

#### **Fourth: The Seven Words of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross**

The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified between two thieves outside the city of Jerusalem. This was a significant event because crowds had gathered around Him during that week, and there

were thousands of pilgrims who had come from distant places to celebrate the Passover. To hang Him on the wood, they nailed His hands and feet, but not one of His bones was broken, according to prophecy. The Lord Jesus Christ did not remain long on the cross; He was on the cross for about 3 hours and died quickly. To ensure His death, the guards pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out.

**The Soldiers Mock Jesus** (*Mark 15:16–19*) / **Jesus Christ on the Cross** (*John 19:17–39*)

When they came to the place called Golgotha, which means the Place of a Skull, they crucified Him. They pierced His hands and feet so they could fasten Him to the wood of the cross. When He said He was thirsty, they gave Jesus vinegar to drink. After tasting it, He refused to drink it. Then they crucified Him and divided His garments among themselves by casting lots. They sat there guarding Him. Above His head, they placed a sign bearing His accusation, written: “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” They crucified two thieves with Him, one on the right and the other on the left. All this was a fulfillment of prophecies. Passersby blasphemed Him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days.”

**The Seven Phrases on the Cross:**

- 1- “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34)

Satan had blinded the eyes of unbelievers, so they do what is improper: they oppress others, steal and take what is not theirs, and even kill the innocent. When their consciences cry out, they do not respond; instead, they justify their sins with flimsy reasons. Therefore, they flee from the truth, from those who practice truth, and from the light of God. They do not come to the light because their deeds were evil. They did not know, “for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” But to accomplish eternal salvation, God

used the wickedness of the wicked to accomplish redemption and bring about salvation on the cross.

Therefore, the Scripture says that the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God because they are folly to him. This folly is not a lack of education but a lack of enlightenment. Therefore, when a person accepts God's work for him by faith, the Holy Spirit gives him "spiritual enlightenment" so he can understand spiritual matters. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ asked God to forgive those who crucified Him.

2- "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the thief on His right, who said to Him, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." This was evidence of faith and belief that He was the Messiah (Christ), even though He was on the cross and in the last moments of life. Therefore, Christ assured him that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day. There is no crime that cannot be forgiven, and no repentance is unacceptable to Christ. Let us come to Him repentant.

3- "Woman, behold your son... Behold, your mother" (John 19:26-27)

Christ cared for His mother even while on the cross. He wanted to entrust her to a trustworthy person, John the beloved, whom history tells us became the bishop of the church in Ephesus (in Turkey) and who was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he saw a vision recorded for us in the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

4- "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)

Christ prayed, and He experienced hunger and thirst. Christ appealed to God the Father because He was “fully human” in His “humanity” (in His body). The listener or reader must not confuse the verses that speak of His divinity with those that speak of His humanity.

At that moment—the moment of the Father’s separation from the Son—to accomplish the great redemption that would determine the course of humanity past, present, and future, the Son cried out. This was one of the most difficult moments when God the Father hid His face from God the Son so that this redemption might be accomplished.

5- “I thirst” (John 19:28)

We mentioned earlier that Christ was acting (as a complete human). When a guard gave Him vinegar to alleviate the pains of crucifixion, He refused to drink it so that He might drink the cup of suffering completely, to its dregs, because He had poured out His soul unto death (Isaiah 53), as the prophecy says.

6- “It is finished” (John 19:30)

Christ had said earlier, “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” This is what Christ completed; prophecies and all the hopes of God’s people who believed in Him from ancient times were fulfilled in Him. This is what the Lord promised Abraham: that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Him, i.e., in His salvation. He who established David’s throne forever (in heaven) and in whom the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices—offered every day and every year—was fulfilled, so that He might become the perfect sacrifice.

He in whom God’s promise to the generations was fulfilled: that He would come from the woman’s offspring. He who would crush the serpent’s head (Satan), thus giving a heavenly victory over Satan and his kingdom. He upon whom the church of Christ was founded, and upon His redemption, the stone that became the chief cornerstone. There is no

Christianity without Christ; if there were no Christ and the cross, there would be no Christianity. When we say that He completed redemption and the reconciliation of humanity, there is no longer a need for another Christ or another prophet except those who will proclaim this salvation and that message until Jesus Christ comes again.

7- “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46)

With these words, the Lord Jesus Christ committed His life to the Heavenly Father. He had said earlier regarding His life that “He had authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.” Therefore, He gave up His spirit voluntarily and by choice; His spirit was not taken from Him, but He laid it down of His own accord, to affirm His divinity. The reader should know that the Lord Jesus Christ was always one with God the Father, even on the cross, and that this is a divine mystery that the natural person cannot believe in except by the Spirit of God.

#### **The Death of the Lord Jesus Christ** (*John 19:28–37*)

After Christ’s death, four supernatural phenomena accompanied His death: darkness, the tearing of the temple veil, an earthquake, and the resurrection of some dead from their tombs. Thus, everyone knew that something momentous had occurred.

#### **Fifth: Joseph of Arimathea Buries the Lord Jesus Christ** (*John 19:38–42*)

Joseph of Arimathea was a Jewish leader of high standing in the Sanhedrin. He was wealthy and had previously feared the Jewish leaders, but he was a secret follower of Christ. However, after Christ’s crucifixion, he became bold and requested to take Jesus’ body from the cross to bury it in his own tomb, which was hewn out of rock, so that the prophecy might be fulfilled that Christ would be born poor but buried with the rich. While Jesus’ disciples did not remember His teachings about His resurrection, the Jewish leaders remembered (Matthew

27:62–66) and feared that His disciples might steal Him and say He had risen, and thus this conflict would not end. Therefore, they asked Pilate to seal the tomb. So, they sealed it and placed guards around it.

## Chapter 26

### Why Was Jesus Christ Crucified?

#### Introduction

Why the Cross? This is an important question that every rational person must ask. Why did God permit the crucifixion or suffering of a man who did nothing wrong and committed no error? How does a just God allow the killing of one of His honored prophets? And what is the connection between the Cross and the forgiveness of sins, as some believe? All these are important questions for which we must find answers.

In short, the Cross is the fulfillment of heavenly justice. If God forgives the sinning, guilty human, He is merciful, but justice demands retribution, a ransom, or a price.

#### First: The Cross is the Fulfillment of God's Justice and Mercy

This story happened in a small village. A thief entered a house to steal. The family sensed him and rose to catch him, but he took their young son hostage to escape. The father cried out, "Take what you want and go, but do not shoot the young boy!" The father kept begging the thief not to kill his son. However, although he could have escaped and left the boy to enjoy the grace of life, he shot the son, who died at that moment. The father cried out, wept bitterly, and grieved deeply for his son's death—and indeed, the thief managed to escape. But after the villagers gathered, their anger erupted over this incident. How could this happen in

their safe village? They decided to search for the murderer thief to find him. The police managed to arrest the murderer and put him in jail. After a few days, the police chief came to ask the father for pardon for this murderer thief. He said to him, "We know you are a righteous man, and we know you believe in God's mercy. If you demand retribution, this young man's future will be lost. Therefore, I ask you to pardon this young man." The father was perplexed about what to do, but he said, "Where is justice? You are a man of law and justice. How can you command mercy without knowing justice?" The villagers were outraged and demanded the police chief's dismissal, and indeed, he was removed from his position because he represented the law and justice. This story illustrates God's justice and mercy at the same time. God's mercy is great and boundless, but if human sins are forgiven without paying the price of sin, He would be merciful but not just. Thus, His mercy would be fulfilled, but His justice would not.

The Lord said in the Old Testament: "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). Death entered the world after Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God's commandments. This is physical death, where the spirit separates from the body, the body returns to dust, and the spirit goes to its Creator. Spiritual death, however, is separation from the presence and fellowship of God. We know from the Holy Scriptures that when Adam and Eve sinned, God slaughtered a sacrifice, took the skin, and covered human nakedness after asking Adam, "Where are you?" Adam said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And God said to him, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Disobedience to God must result in distance and separation from Him. So, God provided the remedy—the sacrifice. That is, God redeemed human blood with the blood of an innocent sacrifice, symbolizing the redemption He would accomplish later. God said to Eve that because of

this guilt and sin, He would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent, which represents Satan. He added, promising that the seed of the woman (which, according to our understanding, is Christ, the son of Mary) would crush the serpent's head, symbolizing Satan. This was fulfilled on the Cross when He offered redemption for humanity's sins. Therefore, for God to be both merciful and just—since justice and mercy are attributes of God—He had to offer a sacrifice for redemption, taking the punishment for sin and the penalty of eternal spiritual death, i.e., separation from God. (Psalm 85:10) "Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed." Thus, He grants forgiveness to the sinful human and fulfills His justice.

### **Second: The Cross is God's Eternal Plan for Human Salvation**

The Holy Bible mentions that Satan fell into disobedience and rebellion against God and took many angels with him, falling into disobedience to God. Since that time, Satan and his allies have become enemies of God's kingdom, God's work, and His creation. We know this from the Holy Bible (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:11-15; Revelation 12:3-4).

God, who knows all things—past, present, and future—knew that humanity would fall into the sin of disobedience due to Satan's temptation of Eve. Therefore, He ordained salvation for humanity from the foundation of the world, but He did not provide salvation for the fallen angels (Satan and his allies); rather, He cast them into eternal destruction. It is illogical to attribute every wrong or sin to Satan and absolve us of responsibility. Humans are responsible for their actions and choices.

Therefore, the plan of salvation through redemption on the Cross was not merely an event in time; it was God's plan from eternity. God knows what will happen in the future, and

nothing is hidden from Him. He decreed that "the soul that sins shall die." Therefore, He fulfilled His justice through this atoning redemption, which Christ accomplished for us on the Cross, thus making God both merciful and just in executing His judgments. The Cross was also the fulfillment of the many prophecies about it in the Old Testament, i.e., the Torah and Psalms (the Holy Scriptures), as spoken by the prophets of Israel, as we will study later. For example, the prophet Isaiah said, "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted..." (Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53). Likewise, King David spoke about Christ's death and resurrection, saying, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol..." (Psalm 16:10; compare with Ephesians 4:7-8) and that they would hang Him on the Cross.

Furthermore, prophets hundreds of years before Christ's coming prophesied about the Christ who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins and then rise from the dead after His crucifixion and burial. Despite the Jews' disbelief in this Cross as a symbol of redemption, they could not delete a single letter from these prophecies in the Torah, which speak explicitly about the coming of the Christ the Savior, His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. We will address those prophecies during our study of redemption and atonement in the Old Testament, i.e., before Christ.

### **Third: The Cross is the Basis for the Forgiveness of Human Sins and Atonement for Sins**

Sin, according to the Holy Bible, is not only the act of evil but also separation from God and relationship with Him. Thus, every human has sinned because evil resides in the human heart, and human innate inclinations are disobedience to God's commandments and transgression against His laws. Therefore, humanity is captive to a corrupt nature inclined toward evil, sin, and separation from the holy and righteous God. Thus, humanity needs salvation, and there is

no deliverance for humans from punishment unless God Himself saves them from this eternal destiny. Because the wage of sin is death, as God's word says, God provided redemption for humanity. God ordained this redemption through the shedding of blood to be an atonement, for as the Book says, "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (as Hebrews tells us). Throughout history, the Holy Bible tells us about sacrifices, beginning from Adam until Christ's coming. Here are some examples for you, the reader:

- 1- God provides redemption for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3).
- 1- Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain (Genesis 4).
- 2- Noah offered a sacrifice (Genesis 8).
- 3- Abraham offered a sacrifice of redemption for his son (a great ram) (Genesis 15, 22).
- 4- "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Moses and the ten plagues) (Exodus 11-12).
- 5- The Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12), which became an annual feast for the Jews.
- 6- God commands Moses to offer a sin offering for atonement and establishes the statute that a person must offer an atonement sacrifice to the Lord for his sins (Leviticus 1).
- 7- The rich offers sheep, while the poor offers doves (Leviticus 5) for atonement for sin.
- 8- An annual sacrifice for the people as atonement for the people's sins (Leviticus 16:30).
- 9- The sacrifices were a symbol of God offering the perfect sacrifice.

#### **Fourth: God's Holy Men Prophesied About the Perfect Sacrifice**

While God's people, the descendants of Abraham, worshiped the one God throughout the ages, idol worship spread throughout the world, invented by the human mind.

In Egypt, the ancient Egyptians who built pyramids and mummified their dead for preservation worshiped gods of their own making, including "Osiris," "Isis," and "Horus." Some worshiped the calf "Apis," the elephant, the sun, frogs, and flies. In ancient Babylon, history says they worshiped four thousand gods until "Ishtar" became a primary goddess throughout the land, along with "Marduk"—all pagan worship. In Greece, the Greeks worshiped many gods like "Artemis," "Aphrodite" the goddess of love, "Hermes" the heavenly guide, "Athena" the goddess of wisdom, and "Zeus" the god of the sky. With the spread of Roman authority and the Greek language, these pagan worships spread. In the Arabian Peninsula, idol worship spread. They worshiped Al-Lat, Manat, Al-Uzza, the moon, and set up symbols and banners for them, like the "crescent" sign. In India, various religions spread, especially "Hinduism," the majority religion in India. Along with Hinduism, the religion of "Buddha," revered by many Indians, spread. In our modern age, rationalists have increasingly rejected the God of heaven and earth, worshiping science and progress, thus denying God's existence, sovereignty, and His plan for human salvation.

*Prophecies About the Crucifixion of Christ*

Prophecies about Christ's crucifixion were declared by prophets in the Old Testament, that God would intervene in the course of history, reveal Himself, and bring salvation Himself.

1- The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the One who would suffer, die, and rise from the dead more than seven hundred years before Christ's crucifixion (Isaiah 52:10-15; 53).

2-The prophet Moses prophesied about Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). This prophecy applies to Christ and no one else. He is (the Jew) from among their brethren within the Jewish people. He performed miracles like Moses and spoke the words God put in His mouth, just as God spoke to Moses. Christ said to His disciples: "The words that I speak to you I do not

...speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10). And Christ said to the Jews who rejected His message: "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:45-46).

3-The prophet Micah prophesied about the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2).

4-The prophet David prophesied that Christ would die crucified (Psalm 22:12-18).

5-The prophet David prophesied about the burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Psalm 16:10), compare with (Acts 2:29-32).

6-The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the burial of the Lord Jesus among the rich, although He was poor (Isaiah 53:9). Although He should have been buried with criminals and had no right to be buried with the rich, this prophecy was fulfilled when Joseph of Arimathea took Christ's body and buried it in a new tomb he had prepared (Luke 23:52).

7- The prophet David prophesied about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in (Psalm 16:10), and the apostle Peter declared the fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ (Acts 2:29-32).

8-The prophet David prophesied about the ascension of the Lord Jesus to heaven after His resurrection with these words (Psalm 68:18), and Paul, Christ's apostle, confirmed these words in (Ephesians 4:7-8): "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

9- John the Baptist said that Christ would be the perfect sacrifice: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Despite the Jews' disbelief that Christ—

who came, was crucified, performed miracles, and taught about God's kingdom—is the Messiah or the One the Father promised would come, they did not delete a single prophecy from these prophecies in the Holy Scriptures, especially (Isaiah 53), the prophecy that speaks clearly about the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. This confirms that God guards His word from distortion, deletion, or addition—how could it be otherwise, as it is God's holy word.

10- The Lord Jesus confirmed His resurrection from the dead to His disciples and the church when He met two of His disciples on the road to a village called Emmaus (Luke 24:44-48). It became as clear as the sun that the shedding of Christ's precious blood was an eternal divine plan and that any denial of this crucifixion is a claim proven false, with no basis in truth. But the problem in our present age is that people are preoccupied with livelihood matters, politics, and the affairs of this world. They do not care about knowing the truth, nor do they read or search for the truth. They believe everyone who claims something or says something. The Lord Jesus said: "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matthew 22:29).

#### **Fifth: The Cross is the Foundation for Humanity's Deliverance from Eternal Destruction**

Sincere repentance and good work are insufficient to accomplish human redemption, pardon, and deliverance from eternal destruction because the price has not yet been paid. The Holy Bible says: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." For God to be both just and merciful at the same time, He sent Christ to die on the Cross and shed His blood so that blood would be the satisfaction of God's complete justice, and His mercy would be realized within it. If a criminal repents and says he will not commit the crime again, that is not enough for

pardon. There is a price that must be paid and a punishment that must be executed to achieve justice.

Through this humility, Christ declared God's love, for "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He also says, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). To understand the story of deliverance from eternal destruction more, we must go back to the days of Moses when God commissioned him to lead the people of Israel from slavery to worship God in freedom (Exodus 12:1-13). Therefore, God commanded that blood be the sign by which every firstborn son would be saved (Exodus 12:13). So, the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the two doorposts, not underneath, so the destroying angel would see it and pass over, resulting in a shout of deliverance from destruction.

After the Israelites crossed into freedom, the Lord God commanded that every family offer a sacrifice or a lamb as an expression of taking refuge in the blood, which is the sign of redemption for deliverance from punishment and from eternal destruction. There was a condition for this sacrifice: it must be without blemish. The lamb must not be sick, lame, or blind but healthy and perfect. This also symbolizes Christ, who is without blemish. Therefore, He answered His enemies, saying, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). He alone is free from error and immune from fault because He is the Son of God (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

Deliverance from destruction was linked to the Hebrew (Jew) or any other person believing that the blood he would sprinkle on the door lintel was what would save him, and only

faith would save him. Everyone who believes that Christ's blood and His redemption, according to God's arrangement and purpose, will be saved from torment and eternal destruction.

### **Sixth: The Cross is the Basis for the Forgiveness of Human Sins**

Sin is a terrible burden that humans cannot bear when their conscience awakens or when God's Holy Spirit convicts them and places their sins before their eyes. When the Lord God confronted Cain with the sin of killing his brother, he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (Genesis 4:13). The prophet David wept as he expressed the feeling of human guilt, saying (Psalm 38:3-7). Sin leaves its mark on the human soul and body. Health deteriorates, abilities flee, and one tries to escape either by immersion in intoxicants, drugs, medications, or even work. But we cannot flee from God's Spirit, who is everywhere.

*What does "forgiveness" mean?*

Forgiveness is "pardon," or God no longer remembers our sins and casts them into the sea of forgetfulness, becoming like clouds that passed and exist no more. If a person believes in Christ—not only intellectual faith but faith that places all trust and certainty in God's work and redemption on the Cross—that person obtains eternal forgiveness. Forgiveness means God will blot out sins like a black cloud is blotted out and exists no more (Isaiah 44:22). God promised He would remember our sins no more (Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34). The person becomes close to God (Ephesians 2:13; Psalm 103:12). The conscience is cleansed and no longer feels the weight of sin because it is covered and remembered no more (Hebrews 9:13-14). But this forgiveness is linked to faith that Christ shed His blood and satisfied divine justice. But how can one individual pay the wage for millions of humans who believe? The answer: What do you think of a flag seen by everyone from a distant rooftop or whose image is broadcast on air and seen by millions? Christ expressed this in His words (John 3). But what

is the story of the bronze serpent? When serpents bit the Israelites in the wilderness, Moses went to the Lord, asking Him to heal the people. God commanded him to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. Everyone who looked at this serpent received healing by faith. In this analogy, John refers to the lifting up of the bronze serpent being similar to Christ being lifted on the wood, and when a person looks up, he is healed. This happens only by faith.

The second question is: Why should an innocent person be crucified for the sins of other people? If Christ is innocent, why does He die for others, and does that satisfy God's justice? The law of love is higher than the law of justice. The innocent Christ is "the Word who became flesh" because of His great love and for one purpose: to pay the price of sin. Therefore, He gave Himself willingly, not by compulsion. He said that He "has power to lay it (his life) down, and ... to take it again," but He laid it down in surpassing love to accomplish this salvation (Philippians 2:5-8).

*How is a sinful human justified before God?*

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12). A sinful human is justified by true repentance and faith in Christ and the Cross, through which He gave us redemption and forgiveness, which we receive by faith. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

The verb "to be justified" means to become justified before God or to be reckoned "righteous." A human cannot be justified by good work, despite their importance. A person cannot say he is justified before God by faith while his works still prove contrary to his faith. But he will be justified only if he believes and places all his trust and hope in this grace—the grace of redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ's offering of Himself as an sacrifice

was, first, to accomplish God's justice and demonstrate His righteousness. On His cross, He proved that God is righteous because His justice requires payment of the price, for "the soul that sins shall die." He "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," so that we might have eternal life.

### **Seventh: The Cross is the Basis for Reconciliation Between God and People**

The Cross is the foundation for reconciliation between sinful humanity and the holy God. The prophet Isaiah says (45:6): "That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other." Christ's precious blood is the basis for reconciliation with God. The prophet Isaiah says: "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! ... Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands?'" (Isaiah 45:9). Yet, humanity, in its fallen nature, declares enmity against God—in other words, declares hostility toward God. There are several reasons for humanity's enmity toward its Creator.

*The first reason is sin.*

Sin means transgression against God's commandments, as John the Evangelist said: "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). And sin is everything not of faith: "Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Sin in all its forms stands as a separating barrier between God and humanity, and in its ugly form, it declares human enmity against God. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Sin is concentrated in thought and evil deeds, as the apostle Paul says in Colossians 1:21.

Human enmity appears in the denial of God's existence (Psalm 53:1-3). God calls a person who denies His existence "foolish" because he ignores the truth of creation and perfection in the creation God made, ignores the precision and beauty with which God created humans, and ignores the spiritual world surrounding humanity.

Human enmity toward his Creator appears in evil deeds (Romans 1:28-32).

*The second reason is devastating calamities and disasters that befall humans.*

An elderly lady told me: "I hate God intensely because He took my mother when I was twelve years old. I needed her care and advice... But God, hard-hearted, took her."

It is strange that a person denies God's existence in his dark heart, yet if a natural disaster occurs, like floods and hurricanes that drown thousands, or earthquakes that destroy homes and displace inhabitants, or a human disaster like train and car accidents or plane crashes, he raises his voice blaspheming against God, attributing to Him—blessed be His name—indifference.

Job pondered the calamities that befell him: how he lost in one day seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yokes of oxen (i.e., a thousand cattle), and five hundred female donkeys. Added to all that, the house where his sons and daughters gathered was struck by a great wind, collapsed on them, and they all died.

After all these calamities, Satan struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 1:1-9; 2:7). Here Job uttered the words: "My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will

say to God, 'Do not condemn me; Show me why You contend with me. Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, That You should despise the work of Your hands, And smile on the counsel of the wicked?'" (Job 10:1-3). The Lord did not contend with Job, but Job did not know what conversation took place between the Lord and Satan concerning him. In his ignorance, he said to the Lord: "Show me why You contend with me?" And many have contended with the Lord because of the calamities that befell them.

*The third reason is human hatred for his fellow human.*

In a single family, a mother-in-law hates her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law hates her mother-in-law. Often, a brother hates his brother, a father his son, a husband his wife, and a wife her husband. When a person hates his brother, he hates God (1 John 4:20). John, the disciple of the Lord Jesus, said: "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:9-11). So, whoever hates his brother declares hostility toward God.

*The fourth reason is great wealth.*

This is the reason that prompted Agur son of Jakeh to lift this prayer to the Lord: "Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or lest I be poor and steal And profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9). Great wealth leads a person to forget the Lord, become arrogant toward others, and despise them. It may lead to mistreating and exploiting them. Through this forgetfulness, he declares enmity toward the Lord by ignoring His existence. Human enmity

toward God deprives him of God's peace and makes his life miserable, however he tries to cover his misery and wretchedness by various means. But reconciliation with God gives a person a new mind, love for others, and appreciation for them, however lowly their status.

*The fifth reason is love for the world.*

James says in his epistle: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). The "world" James mentions is not the world of humans whom God loved (John 3:16) but the general system placed under Satan's dominion, about which John the apostle said: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). It is the system about which he also said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16). Whoever loves this corrupt worldly system declares enmity and hostility toward God.

*How Can a Defiled Human Be Reconciled with the Holy God? And What Does Reconciliation with God Mean?*

The word "reconciliation" indicates there is hostility between two parties. This hostility has separated them. One has wronged the other, the wrongdoing has wounded the other and created a chasm in the relationship between the two parties, and planted fear in the heart of the hostile party. Reconciliation begins with knowing the reasons for hostility, knowing the One able to remove it, and restoring the two hostile parties to relationships of love and peace. Jacob was afraid of meeting his brother Esau, and fear drove him to pray to the Lord: "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come

and attack me and the mother with the children" (Genesis 32:11). The Lord answered Jacob's prayer. When he approached Esau, "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (Genesis 33:4). Fear vanished from Jacob's heart after he was reconciled with his brother Esau. This is what happens to a person when reconciled with God: fear vanishes from his heart, and the heart is filled with peace. Job realized his inability to be reconciled with God unless he found a mediator who would lay his hand on both the Lord's hand and his own, bringing them together. He said: "For He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both" (Job 9:32-33). The only Mediator capable of reconciling God with humanity is Jesus Christ, based on His precious blood.

Christ's precious blood brings us near to God, restores our fellowship with Him, and reconciles us with Him. This is what the apostle Paul declared to Jews and Gentiles who believed in the efficacy of Christ's precious blood, making them one and removing the enmity between them (Ephesians 2:11-17). And again, Paul wrote to the saints in Colosse (Colossians 1:19-22). The apostle mentions reconciling "whether things on earth or things in heaven." In Paul's words, we see the eternal reconciliation of creation when it is freed from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21). The words "whether things in heaven" give us pause. Perhaps the rebellion of Satan and his angels, and his fall after being "the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezekiel 28:12), and the rebellion of a third of the angels with him, made heaven unclean in the Lord's eyes, as Eliphaz the Temanite said to Job: "If God puts no trust in His saints, And the heavens are not pure in His sight" (Job 15:15). The time will come when the eternal reconciliation of all creation is accomplished: "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not

willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:19-21). At that time, there will be no place for Satan and his angels in heaven (Revelation 12:7-9), and the eternal reconciliation of things on earth and things in heaven will be accomplished.

A sinful human cannot approach God without a mediator. The only Mediator able to reconcile God and humanity is Jesus Christ: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Christ is the only Mediator because He is the Son of God. By His divinity, He can lay His hand on God's hand, and by His humanity, He can lay His hand on humanity's hand, reconciling God and humanity by His precious blood.

Paul the apostle mentions the characteristics of natural man: he is weak, ungodly, a sinner, and an enemy of God (Romans 5:6-10). But with all this, he mentions that God reconciled this man by the death of His Son, i.e., by Christ's precious blood, saying: "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). Christ's precious blood is the basis for reconciliation with God. The person reconciled with God lives in peace, and his heart is filled with joy. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2).

### **Finally, The Cross is a Historical Truth That Cannot Be Denied**

The historian of Israel's history, the Jewish historian Josephus, mentions that during the time of Pontius Pilate, a person who claimed to be the Christ was presented for crucifixion. Also,

the Roman state records contain the order for the Lord Jesus' crucifixion during the tenure of Pilate the governor, preserved until now. The preaching of Christ's disciples and followers centered on Christ's work on the Cross and His redemption, and they offered their lives as martyrs for this message. History testifies that Christ came. The Jewish historian "Josephus" testified about the crucifixion and Christ. Others, like Pliny the Younger, testified that Christ came.

## **Chapter 27**

### **The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ and His Final Commandment**

The Resurrection plays a pivotal role in Christianity; it is the second and complementary part of the Cross. If there were no Resurrection, the crucifixion would not have been a victory over Satan and the sting of death. We follow a living Christ who now sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, having risen triumphantly from the dead. Therefore, He has the ability and power to lead us in a triumphal procession, the power to lead us in this life, and to intercede for us before the Heavenly Father.

#### **The Story of the Resurrection**

- ❖ The Guarding of the Tomb (Matthew 27:62–66).
- ❖ The Glorious Resurrection (Matthew 28:1–10).
- ❖ The Report of the Guards (Matthew 28:11–15).
- ❖ The Disciples Depart for Galilee (Matthew 28:16–20).
- ❖ On the Road to the Village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13–17).

- ❖ We will return to tell this story again later.
- ❖ Jesus Christ Appears to His Disciples
- ❖ The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20).
- ❖ The Ascension into Heaven (Luke 24).

### **First: The Resurrection is Victory Over the Sting of Death and the Authority of Satan**

Without the Resurrection, there would be no Christianity. The Resurrection was the primary factor that motivated Christ's disciples to spread the message of salvation. When the disciples discovered that their teacher had risen from the dead, they began to remember what He had told them and started to understand why Christ came and what God's plan of salvation was. Not only that, but they also began to understand the meaning of the sacrifice and why John the Baptist said of Jesus Christ that He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. After the Resurrection, the disciples discovered that they were following a living Christ who is eternally present in heaven, and who, through His Holy Spirit, is present with them, strengthening them. Therefore, they feared nothing; their primary goal was not to gather wealth or build houses, but to witness and proclaim that Christ came to redeem and save what was lost. The disciples of Christ proclaimed that in the Resurrection lies victory over all the powers of evil and the evil one (Ephesians 1:18–23).

Also (Colossians 2:12–15). And just as the Holy Spirit raised Christ from the dead, so He raises those who believe in Him from sin to eternal life. Thus, death no longer has eternal authority over those who believe in Christ; instead, they have eternal life. Since death is the last undefeated enemy, the Resurrection was Christ's victory over death and over everything that could separate the believer from God.

### **Second: Witnesses of the Resurrection**

*1- The Women*

The Lord honored women by being the first to witness Christ's resurrection.

*2-The Disciples of Christ*

The Inner Circle: These were the disciples chosen by Christ, including Peter, to whom He appeared and spoke. All of Christ's disciples were martyred for the sake of this message. If the Resurrection were a lie fabricated by Christ's disciples, why would a person die for a lie?

The Outer Circle: Scripture mentions that more than five hundred people witnessed the Resurrection and Christ's ascension into heaven. We also know that many of the dead rose when Christ was crucified and lived for a period; they were also among those who testified that Christ's message—the message of life and victory over death—was true.

*3- The Empty Tomb Bears Witness to Christ's Resurrection*

When we examine different religions or philosophies, we find that the tomb is the place followers visit for their leader or founder. Therefore, when the prophet Moses died, Satan wanted to take his body to be the focal point of worship for the Jews, but the angel Michael, sent from God, prevented him and took the body to be with God (Book of Jude). However, Christ's tomb is empty, testifying that Christ has risen.

*4-The Testimony of Prophecies*

The holy men of God and His prophets, by the Holy Spirit, prophesied that Christ would rise from the dead (Acts of the Apostles 2:22–25, 27, 29–37).

*5-The Testimony of Christ's Glorified Body (John 20:19–31)*

Christ does not leave any of His followers in doubt but comes to remove all doubt and confirm the truth of His resurrection. When Thomas doubted—which was natural, as how could a man rise from the dead—Jesus Christ came in His glorified body, appeared to His disciples, and invited Thomas to touch and see with his own eyes the marks of the nails in His hands and the wound in His side. He said to him (and to us): "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This means that faith is the essential element, and we must not rely solely on sensory evidence to believe.

*6- The Testimony of the Angels (John 20:11–18)*

*7-The Testimony of the Guards (Matthew 28:11–15)*

Have you ever heard of someone taking a bribe to be condemned and to say about themselves that they did not perform their duty perfectly? What was the duty of the guards if not guarding? We know that the penalty for negligence in guard duty was death in a harsh state like the Roman Empire. Therefore, the bribe was for silence, not for the lie that the disciples came at night and stole His body. We do not find any of Christ's disciples referring to this accusation; otherwise, they would have responded to it. This is evidence that the guards likely did not comply with the bribe to lie but rather remained silent and did not go to the authorities to investigate the matter of the empty tomb.

### **Third: The Results of the Resurrection**

When Jesus Christ died and was laid in the tomb, the disciples thought their hopes in Christ and His kingdom had ended, and they were filled with disappointment. Peter said to the disciples, "Let us go fishing," meaning they should return to their former profession. Others went to a nearby village called Emmaus, perhaps their own village. In other words, each one of them intended to return to their family and loved ones or to their former occupation. But

Christ soon came to them to tell them that He had risen and how the prophecies concerning His crucifixion and resurrection on the third day had been fulfilled. This was only the beginning of their work and mission.

Resurrection was the fundamental impetus, the source of courage, and the transformative event in the lives of the disciples. After being afraid of the Jews, their fear turned into courage and boldness in preaching and proclaiming what Christ had done. As we know from the Book of Hebrews, they confronted the Jews with having crucified Christ and also with killing other prophets who came before Christ. Stephen (the first martyr) paid with his life for this testimony. As for Peter, he spoke about Christ and why He came into the world, and about three thousand souls followed Christ after that sermon (Acts 2). What made Peter, who denied knowing Christ before the crucifixion in front of a simple servant girl, transform to preach with such convincing power and courage before a huge crowd like that? It is the power of the Resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus Christ promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

#### **Fourth: On the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)**

What Christ did that day was explain the prophecies of the prophets. This is what the disciples continued to do when they preached Christ's message to the Jews and also to the Gentiles. Indeed, Christ and what He accomplished on the cross were the center of the disciples' message.

#### **Fifth: Christ Promises His Disciples Power When the Holy Spirit Comes Upon Them**

*(Acts 1)*

Jesus Christ confirmed that the true source of power is the Holy Spirit (i.e., the Spirit of the Holy God), through whom is the power of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads,

strengthens, and trains a person. The disciples had to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit to receive that power with which they would go into the world to preach the Gospel, the message of salvation.

**Sixth: The Great Commission** (*Matthew 28:16–20*)

Jesus Christ commanded His disciples (until this day) to go to all nations, proclaim His message and salvation, make disciples of all who accept it, and teach them the commandments and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He also promised them that He would be with them always, to the very end of the age, strengthening and encouraging them.

## **Chapter 28**

### **Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews**

In this chapter, we will review the summary of Christian thought concerning Jesus Christ. The early church faced many problems from both inside and outside, but God was always building His church and bringing it through trials. The problem we will talk about is that many Jews had apostatized, or intended to apostatize, from the Christian faith due to the persecution they faced from the Roman state. Therefore, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews resolved to clarify many spiritual truths to show them that the new faith is the one that leads to the knowledge of the truth, and that Christ in His person, attributes, and work is greater than all the pillars of the Jewish religion, that He is able to give a new covenant better than the past covenant, and that apostasy from Him is apostasy from God Himself. The Epistle to the Hebrews (that is, to the speakers of the Hebrew language, the Jews) clarifies the identity of Jesus Christ and expresses the complete Christian thought about the person and mission of

Jesus Christ. This epistle expresses that Christ is the Word who became flesh; He is the complete revelation of God, higher than all angels, greater than all the Jewish fathers and leaders (Abraham, Moses, Joshua), the rank of His priesthood is higher than all priests, and His sacrifice is better than all the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, because He is the incarnate Word of God who became flesh for the redemption of mankind. Therefore, He can give us a new covenant better than the past covenants, and we will explain this in more detail in this chapter. No one can forgive your sins and offer you complete salvation and full forgiveness except Jesus Christ. Through your faith in Christ, you will find peace and complete forgiveness, which God grants to everyone who believes in Him.

### **First: The Supremacy of Christ**

#### *1- Christ is Greater Than the Angels (Hebrews 1)*

The Jews had formed many ideas about angels and considered them a higher authority in managing human affairs. They derived that information from the Torah and the books of the prophets, but the scholars added many teachings about angels. Not only that, but the people also added many incorrect doctrines about angels. However, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find that Christ is of a higher and more exalted rank, and the authority of Christ is above the angels. The Epistle to the Hebrews attempted to compare the authority and power of Christ with the authority of the angels in the Old Testament. Therefore, the Epistle to the Hebrews presented this comparison to answer that angels are nothing but servants to humans, and God uses them for the glory of His name and to serve mankind. But although Christ became flesh—that is, He became in the flesh lower than the angels—He is still in a rank higher than the angels (Heb. 1). The Epistle to the Hebrews clarifies the identity of Jesus Christ: He is the incarnate God and possesses absolute authority. He is higher than angels and greater than all

the Jewish fathers and leaders (like Abraham, Moses, and Joshua), and better than all priests because Jesus Christ is the complete revelation of God. Only Jesus Christ forgives sins. In the blood of Christ alone there is sufficiency to guarantee the forgiveness of sins and salvation for us all. Through our faith in Christ, we will find peace with God, and we will also find the true meaning of life.

### *2- Christ the Great High Priest*

In the Old Testament, the high priest represented the Jews before God and offered sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, especially the annual sacrifice offered for the people. Jesus Christ connects us to God, and there is no other higher way to reach God. Because Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, He is the perfect substitute to die for our sins, and He is perfect in representing us before God. Jesus Christ guarantees us the possibility of approaching God the Father and entering His presence. He intercedes for us with God the Father so that we can present our needs directly to the Father with confidence. When we feel our weakness, we approach the throne of grace with all confidence, seeking forgiveness and help.

### *3- The Perfect Sacrifice*

Christ's sacrifice is the final fulfillment of everything represented by the Old Testament sacrifices, namely God's forgiveness of sins. Christ offered Himself and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. All our sins have been completely forgiven—past, present, and future. Christ removed the sin that prevented us from being in God's presence and having fellowship with Him. But we must first accept His sacrifice for us. By this, we become not guilty but pure and complete in God's sight. His sacrifice is our way to eternal life. Just as the priest used to offer the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, so Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for redemption.

#### *4- Maturity*

Although through faith in Christ we are saved from sin, we must continue in faith and grow in it. Through our relationship with Christ, we live without blemish or defilement, and we keep growing until maturity. Christ may set us apart for His service. The process of a person's maturity in faith takes a long time and requires daily surrender. Service also leads to maturity. When a believer's faith matures, it is difficult to be shaken or led astray easily.

#### *5- Faith*

Faith is firm trust in God, and that God's salvation is through His Son Jesus. Jesus is the only one who can save us from sin. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that faith is confidence in what is hoped for and assurance about what is not seen. Faith gives the Christian the opportunity to face trials. True, genuine faith involves commitment to honesty and faithfulness toward God, even when we are during trials. Endurance builds character and leads the believer to victory. You can overcome trials if you do not surrender to them or turn your back on Christ. Remain true, faithful, and loyal to Christ, and pray that He may grant you the strength to endure.

#### *6- Christ is Greater Than Moses (Hebrews 3)*

Moses is considered a great hero by the Jewish people for three reasons:

- 1- He brought their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt to the land of freedom, and he was a great leader who led them to form their nation.
- 2- He wrote the first five books of the Law.
- 3- He is the prophet to whom God gave the Law with its pillars (ceremonial, moral, and civil).

But in Christian thought, we know—through the Epistle to the Hebrews—that Jesus Christ was greater than Moses, for He brought us out of the slavery of sin and saved us into the glory of the freedom of the children of God. While Moses was faithful in his service over the house of Israel, Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, was faithful in providing salvation for all humanity and faithful in the house of God, the church.

*7- Christ's Priesthood is Greater Than the Old Testament Priesthood (Hebrews 4:14-16; 8:1-13)*

In the Old Testament, the high priest stood before God once a year to intercede with God for the people and for his own sins. But Jesus Christ is the intercessor who intercedes for us continually and perpetually before God. He is the only mediator between man and God. His presence at the right hand of the Father after His resurrection confirms that He paid the price once for sins, and therefore we no longer need to offer blood sacrifices now every year repeatedly (see Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 3:17-18). And since He lived without sin, He is the perfect substitute.

*8- Christ's Sacrifice is Greater Than the Old Testament Sacrifices (Hebrews 10:19 - 13:25)*

Christ's sacrifice is the final fulfillment of everything represented by the Old Testament sacrifices, namely God's forgiveness of sins. As John said about Him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Through our faith in this redemption, all our sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven. God no longer requires other sacrifices from us every year, but Christ gave the perfect sacrifice once on the cross. Therefore, His sacrifice is our way to eternal life. If the sacrifices in the

Old Testament were a symbol of the perfect sacrifice that Christ would give by offering Himself for sinners, to die and shed His blood instead of everyone who believes in Him, then we have no need after that to offer a sacrifice, because Christ offered it once for all.

#### *The Connection Between Repentance and Sacrifices*

Repentance is not merely regretting committing a sin or confessing guilt, nor regretting leaving sin. Rather, repentance is when a person regrets committing sins and realizes that even if they were against other people, they are against God and a breaking of His commandments. The person asks for pardon and forgiveness from God, who abundantly forgives everyone who repents. In the Old Testament, God commanded that when a person repents, he must bring a sacrifice, and he offers atonement for the sin through the sacrifice (Leviticus 5:5). True repentance is linked to a change in behavior.

#### *The Perfect Sacrifice*

The sacrificial system that God gave to His people in ancient times is a shadow of what He would do on the cross of Jesus Christ to offer the perfect sacrifice. Christ, the incarnate Word of God who is without sin, gave Himself as a living sacrifice on the cross to provide atonement (the substitute) for the sinner who deserved to die and to have no relationship with God the Father due to his disobedience and breaking of God's commandment. All of this requires faith.

#### *Faith*

Faith is confidence and assurance about things not seen. Faith is not mere knowledge. Faith is not a mere abstract emotion. Rather, faith is building a new relationship with new foundations. It is the full assurance and belief in the word of God and trust in His promises and work. We believe that Christ, in His divinity, placed His hand in the hand of God the Father,

and in His humanity, He placed His hand in the hand of man to reconcile them on His cross.

As Job asked, saying, "Is there not an umpire who lays his hand on us both?"

*9- Christ Brought a New Covenant Better Than the Old Covenant*

Below is a comparison between the Old Covenant (pre-Christ) and the New Covenant (post-Christ). Through this comparison, you can recognize its impact on us who live in the era after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*What Happened After the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ*

1- No More Need for Sacrifices: Christ offered the sacrifice of Himself once. There is no need to offer these sacrifices every day.

2- Freedom from Ceremonial Laws: The Old Covenant had prohibited eating some foods and drinks, while permitted others, and instituted rituals of washing. All these were statutes and regulations not in themselves of value for human salvation. But Christ fulfilled all that. "The blood of Christ is what purifies a person," not washing. Faith in Christ and obedience to His commandments are what lead us to eternal life, not our works however good they may be.

3-The Gift of the Holy Spirit: Through Christ's death and ascension, He sent us the Holy Spirit. When we accept His work in our hearts by faith, we are changed and obtain the eternal salvation promised to us by Christ. When we inherit eternal life, we become children of God. Therefore, we are heirs and not slaves. The Holy Spirit who works within us is the one who assures us (internally) that we are children of God, confirms our salvation, leads us on the way, teaches us the word of God, guides our lives, and gives us endurance in distress and patience in difficulties. This is what believers of the Old Covenant did not enjoy.

4-True Freedom from Sin: Through Christ's death and receiving His forgiveness, we became free from sin so that we do not return to it again. "If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed." That is, we experience true freedom in the salvation of Jesus Christ. But let us be careful not to make this freedom an opportunity for the lusts of the flesh or to sin against God.

5-New Desires Through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit gives us new desires, so obeying the Lord's commandments is not difficult for us because He helps us, and the Lord's word is not heavy on our hearts or ears. Serving the Lord becomes something beloved to us.

6-Victory Over Death and Eternal Hope: Through Christ's death and resurrection, victorious over death and its dominion, we have confidence that death will not rule over us. We have hope in Christ that if we die, we will be with the Lord forever. That is, there is eternal life for everyone who accepts the Lord's salvation.

### **Second: The Supremacy and Necessity of Faith**

Belief in the existence of God is only the beginning of the path to true faith, because even the demons know, understand, and fully believe in the existence of God, that is not enough (James 2:19-20). Faith is described here (Hebrews 11:1) as belief and assurance in His promises. Therefore, we believe in what He told us even though we have not seen or witnessed Him. But faith is trust and assurance (John 20:24-31). Faith is not merely knowledge of God's promises. Faith is embodied in obedience. It is not enough to know about salvation or how to be saved. Faith is taking positive steps toward salvation and toward obeying God according to His holy word. There is a big difference between someone who believes that medicine will heal him but does not take it and someone who believes and takes this medicine to be healed. The Epistle to the Hebrews recounts for us about faith and those who lived by faith, like

Abraham, Moses, David, and Sarah. Although they did not see what they were promised, their faith in the One who promised them is what distinguished them from others.

### **Third: True Discipleship**

The Cost of Following Christ and the Rewards of Heaven Jesus Christ did not promise us a comfortable, quiet life if we follow Him. Rather, He promised us "tribulation." Let us look at this matter considering our present world.

#### *1-True Evaluation*

A young man came to Jesus Christ and said to Him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus Christ said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Another one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus Christ said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:18-22). The first person did not evaluate following Christ correctly. Perhaps he was sincere in his desire to follow Christ, but he was not ready to pay the cost that this discipleship might entail. The second person was preoccupied with his family ties and responsibilities toward his father. But Jesus Christ indicated that he must leave these ties to be His disciple. In the days of Christ, Christianity (or following Christ) meant nothing but preoccupation with one thing: learning and training for a message contrary to the teachings of Judaism and rejecting the practices that the Jews had added to the books of Moses and the prophets. Therefore, it guaranteed the disciples only a life of struggle, poverty, and persecution. In our day, with the world's progress, Christianity has become associated with many financial benefits or livelihood guarantees. Therefore, we find that many want to follow Christ merely because they desire better circumstances or more benefits. But soon those rea-

sons appear, and we soon know how the person evaluated following Christ. We have encountered those who want to follow Christ to marry a Christian girl, or to inherit money from her family (or vice versa). Some want to immigrate to more affluent countries, some want money, some want to obtain a residence or work permit... All these are reasons that are not the true motive for following Jesus Christ. Therefore, when those disciples obtained what they were aiming for, they left the Christian faith and following Jesus Christ. The signs of true faith are the genuine desire to know God's words according to the Gospel, the behavior that this entails, and the pure life commanded by Jesus Christ. Also, the disciple's desire to continue in relationship with believers and in a life of prayer and fellowship with God.

Therefore, we know Christ's parable about the seed sown in the ground (Matthew 13:1-23). He said that the seed might fall on the path, and birds come and snatch it away. Some hear the word and receive it with joy, but only for a while. When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they stumble. Others have the word choked by the pride and desires of the world, so they do not remain steadfast in their faith. Likewise, Jesus Christ said, "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). Since the cross was a disgrace at that time and an instrument of killing, Jesus Christ likened that whoever wants to follow Him must evaluate the cost and count it. He may be misunderstood, he may get a bad reputation, he may lose some family relationships, his comfort, a job opportunity, or a chance for prosperity. But everyone who has left father, mother, brothers, or sisters for the sake of following Christ will receive a hundredfold in this world—along with persecutions—as Jesus Christ promised. Therefore, He also promised, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it, and whoever tries to save his life will lose it" (here He means the eternity of this life).

*2-Why Does the World Hate Christ and His Followers?*

Jesus Christ teaches us that the world will hate His disciples as it hated and rejected Him because their works were evil, and they do not want to come to the light. The world hates Jesus Christ because He testifies against it. Also, the presence of believers on earth and their good works testifies against evil works that do not glorify God.

### *3- What Does Persecution Mean?*

The Lord may allow persecution for several reasons, including:

a. A Testimony for Them: We find that all the disciples of Christ were subjected to trials, interrogations, and even imprisonment because of their message, and they were witnessing with all courage before the authorities (Matthew 10:16-30). And those who believe they are serving God by resisting and killing believers do this (John 16:1-3).

b. So That We May Abide in Him: Christ said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." Therefore, persecution may be one of how Christ purifies His church and His people.

c. The Extension of God's Kingdom: "Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word" (Acts of the Apostles 8:4).

d. Persecution Achieves Unity for Preaching: Jesus Christ said: "I do not ask on behalf of these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me."

e. Jesus Will Overcome the World: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." The Scripture teaches us that Christ rose victorious over the agonies of death. "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:20-22).

#### *4- How Do We Face Persecution?*

Therefore, when we face persecution, Christ tells us:

- ❖ Do not fear. (But fear God).
- ❖ Trust in God's promise. He will give us what we should say (Luke 12:11-12).
- ❖ He has overcome the world. "But take heart; I have overcome the world." Victory is not rescue, but obedience. Jesus Christ died, but through His death came life for those who believe in Him. When King Herod put Peter and James in prison, he killed James with the sword, but Peter came out by an angel of God. True victory is eternal victory.

#### *5-The Rewards of Heaven*

Christ promised many rewards to those who follow Him.

- 1- Eternal Life
- 2- Compensation for Loss
- 3- Joy and Peace
- 4- The Holy Spirit
- 5- The Kingdom of God Within Us
- 6- Heaven

## Chapter 29

### What is the Gospel or the Good News?

In this chapter, we will review some elements as follows:

First: The meaning of the words “Gospel” and “New Testament”

Second: Is the Gospel one or four? An objective comparison between the four Gospels

Third: My confidence in the integrity of the Gospel and that it is the holy word of God

Fourth: The relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament

Fifth: The relationship of the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament writings

Various Readings

1- Holy men of God wrote as they were moved (guided) by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

2- What the disciples wrote as a testimony for those who did not see, and was written for our instruction (John 19:35; 20:30-31; 21:24).

3- No one can add to or take away from the word of God (Revelation 22:18-19).

4- Christ came not to give a book (like many prophets) but to accomplish the work of redemption (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15; John 5:39).

5- The Holy Scriptures lead to salvation and the correction of man (2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

6-The word of God endures forever (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:24-25).

**First: The meaning of the words "Gospel" and "New Testament"**

*The Gospel:* The word "Gospel" is not an Arabic word but a Greek one, and it is not applied to any book other than what speaks of Christ. The word Gospel means "Good News." So, when we speak of the Gospel according to the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, we are speaking of what one of them recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to explain to us the "Good News - the Gospel" and that Christ came to give us eternal redemption. The "Good News" is what Christ did for us. To tell us what Christ did, the Evangelists had to prove through Christ's deeds and teachings that He is that "Christ or the Anointed One of God" awaited by the pious Jews according to the promises of the Old Testament, and that in Him the prophecies spoken by the prophets in ancient times are fulfilled. Therefore, the Gospel is not a set of statutes and judgments given by God to Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary, but it is the entirety of what Jesus Christ taught and did to lead us to eternal salvation. This includes His crucifixion, death, and resurrection to accomplish eternal redemption for humankind; that is the Good News.

*The New Testament:* The word "Testament" means that there is an agreement between two parties (and it can be from one party). The book of the New Testament, which focuses on Christ the Savior, begins with the four Gospels. Later, we will study the relationship of the New Testament to what preceded it, i.e., the Old Testament, and to the writings of Christ's apostles that came after it. The Bible consists of two parts: the Old Testament, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament, written in Greek. The Bible has been translated into more than two thousand languages and dialects and is one of the most distributed and widespread books in the entire world. To understand where the designation "New Testament" came from, we must know the historical progression of the different covenants in the Bible:

1- *An Unconditional Covenant*

When we read the Book of Genesis (or Beginnings), we know that God made a covenant with Abraham that He would bless him, give him descendants, and that in this (descendant or son) all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22). This was fulfilled in Christ (the son of Abraham and David), as He became a blessing for all nations and peoples, thus becoming the mediator of a new covenant. This covenant was unconditional. Christ's disciples understood that this promise was fulfilled in their teacher.

### *2- A Covenant Based on Obedience*

As for that covenant which God made with Moses and the people of Israel, it was a covenant based on obedience (Deuteronomy 28), and the condition for blessing was obedience. We find that the people of Israel defied God and provoked Him greatly by worshiping other gods and neglecting His commandments. The kings and the Jewish people were not content with worshiping other symbolic idol-gods, but they persisted in breaking God's commandments, and corruption, injustice, bribery, favoritism, slavery, crime, and immorality prevailed. Therefore, God led them into captivity and slavery once again.

### *3- The New Covenant*

But finally, God promised a new covenant, not like the old covenant, but a covenant in which they would worship God in truth and commit to it with all their hearts. This would be through the work of His Holy Spirit. Christ's disciples knew that this could only be through the Spirit of God and His work in human hearts. This is what the Church bases its faith upon. Therefore, we live in a new covenant (the covenant of grace) which Christ granted us abundantly in His redemption.

**Second: Is the Gospel one or four? An objective comparison between the four Gospels**

As for those witnesses whom God appointed—by His Holy Spirit—to record the Good News, they were contemporaries or lived during the time of Christ and wrote these teachings and events for our instruction. The reader should not think that there is any contradiction among what the four Evangelists wrote, but there is complete consensus and perfect agreement among them. If any differences in some details are found, they neither delay nor advance our general understanding of the events or of what Jesus Christ did or taught. If the testimony of two in any case is sufficient to establish the truth and confirm the event, then the testimony of four witnesses is sufficient to convey to us in more detail the events, sayings, and miracles that occurred. We must know that each of those who wrote the Gospels wrote from a specific perspective. The Evangelist Matthew wrote from the perspective of a Jewish person speaking of Christ the King and that in Him the prophecies are fulfilled, so we find that in the Gospel of Matthew, he addressed many prophecies and proved that they were fulfilled in the person of Christ. It is also notable that he wrote to the Jews. As for in the Gospel of Mark, the spoke of Christ the "Son of Man" who said of Himself that He came to serve, not to be served by others. It is also notable that he addresses the Gentiles, i.e., non-Jews, because God wanted to reveal Himself to the Gentiles as well. In the Gospel according to the Evangelist Luke, he spoke of Christ the "Son of God" who proved His eternal authority through words and miracles. Luke was a physician with a systematic, scientific, and practical approach and knew the Greek language well. Luke chose to trace the narrative of the story, events, and sayings related to Christ in historical order, i.e., in the sequence of events and with great accuracy. He relied for this on those who lived with and were contemporaries of Jesus Christ, meaning their words are true because they were eyewitnesses. John, in his Gospel, spoke of Christ as the "Word of God – i.e., the embodied revelation of God" and of His divinity and redemptive work to save what was lost and give eternal life to everyone who accepts Him. He addresses

the Greek mentality accustomed to Greek philosophies. Thus, the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) became one Gospel in content, substance, and message, so that we may know the Good News that Christ came for the redemption of humanity.

**Third: My confidence in the integrity of the Gospel and that it is the holy word of God**

*1- Logic and history prove the authenticity of the Bible*

No accusation of distorting the New Testament or the Gospels has been made except recently. Those who leveled this accusation were unable to present any convincing evidence for the truth of their accusation regarding the time and manner of the Gospel's distortion, what the evidence for that distortion is, and what the purpose of this distortion is? How difficult is the accusation that God remains silent and does not preserve His word from distortion if that were true? As for historians like Josephus, Pliny, and others, they confirm the historical reality of Christ's coming and His crucifixion. All the characters mentioned in the New Testament (like Pontius Pilate, King Herod, and others) are real historical figures mentioned in human history and are not non-historical fictional characters.

*2- Manuscripts prove the authenticity of the Bible*

A manuscript is a copy of an original document. Although the original may no longer survive, the existence of manuscripts from successive periods allows for comparison, demonstrating that these copies faithfully preserve the original text. The texts of the Bible are certain in their material, and this applies especially to the New Testament. The number of available manuscripts of the New Testament, ancient translations of it, and quotations taken from it in the writings of the earliest Church Fathers are so numerous that they assure us of the authenticity of the text and that the original writing matches those manuscripts. This has not happened with any other ancient book in the world. Manuscript experts say that we now have

more than five thousand manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek and ten thousand in Latin. We also have today more than 24,000 manuscripts (of parts) of the New Testament. It is known among manuscript scholars that if about ten manuscripts of one book remain, that indicates their correspondence to the original. For example, there are 7 manuscripts of the famous Greek philosopher Plato and 49 manuscripts of the philosopher Aristotle. As for the New Testament, thousands of manuscripts exist, preserved now in museums around the world. This is evidence that the book we have in our hands corresponds to the original. Following are the names and dates of some important manuscripts (and this is for example, not an exhaustive list):

- 1- The John Rylands Manuscript (130 AD), which is the oldest manuscript, found in Egypt.
- 2- The Chester Beatty Papyri (200 AD) in the Dublin Museum.
- 3- The Bodmer Papyrus II (150-200 AD).
- 4- The Diatessaron, compiled by Tatian.
- 5- Codex Vaticanus.
- 6- Codex Sinaiticus.
- 7- Codex Alexandrinus.
- 8- Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus.
- 9- Codex Bezae.
- 10- Codex Washingtonianus.
- 11- Codex Claromontanus.
- 12- The Qumran and Dead Sea Scrolls.
- 3- *Archaeology and excavations prove the authenticity of the Bible*

No archaeological discoveries or excavations have been found that contradict the Bible. On the contrary, modern discoveries confirm the authenticity of the Bible. Since we are not in the context of a scientific study on this topic, we will suffice by saying that the Bible is historically, geographically, and factually accurate, and that there is sufficient evidence from archaeology for the accuracy of what the Bible describes. We will give only one example about the fall of the city of Jerusalem to the outside in its place, which was unexpected, as declared by the Bible.

4- *The fulfillment of prophecies proves the authenticity of the Bible*

The Bible reveals to us through the spirit of prophecy what will happen in the future. What Jesus Christ prophesied about the city of Jerusalem and its destruction, which occurred about 30-40 years after His ascension, was fulfilled exactly. Also, what He prophesied concerning Tyre, Sidon, and the city of Chorazin happened according to the woes foretold by Christ. As for the prophecies of other prophets, they were fulfilled as mentioned in the Bible, such as the prophecies concerning Babylon, Nineveh, Memphis, Thebes, Edom, Petra, Gaza, Ashkelon, and others. But the greatest prophecies are what we have studied previously concerning the prophets' prophecies about Jesus Christ.

5- *The teachings of the Church Fathers prove the authenticity of the Bible*

Christians followed the Jewish tradition of reading portions from the Holy Scriptures during worship. Christians followed this tradition by reading portions from the New Testament during worship times. Special readings from the New Testament were designated for special occasions, holidays, and specific events. The Church Fathers wrote, and their writings contained many verses from the Holy Bible, for the purpose of studying the contents of the New Testament as the holy word of God.

6- *The power of personal experience proves the authenticity of the Bible*

The Bible has had a great impact on changing the lives of thousands, indeed millions, of human beings. How many sinners have had their lives changed because of the Bible, and how many criminals who were in prisons have left lives of evil and sin because of the Bible? The Bible says that the word of God is profitable for reproof and correction, which is for righteousness, i.e., for holiness. Without it, we cannot know God; without it, we cannot know His commandments or His plans for salvation and redemption; and without it, we do not know the way to righteousness and faith. It is not only a book from which we derive information, but it is the book by which we live our lives for God.

**Do different translations mean that the Gospel is inaccurate?**

Different translations do not change our understanding of Christ's message, nor our understanding of what Christ did. Some may think that with different translations we will deviate from what God intended, but this is not true. On the contrary, the number of believers in the world has increased as many have heard the message of salvation in a language they understand. Our relationship with God is not through one specific language, and because God is love and He loves every person in existence, He intended for His message to reach every person in existence through different translations, so that all flesh may come to Him, as it is said: "For God desires all to come to repentance and He takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that he should turn and live." The number of translations has reached more than two thousand languages and dialects.

**Fourth: The relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament**

You can understand the Gospels and the New Testament in general, but after reading the Old Testament, you will say that we cannot fully grasp the deep dimensions and meanings stated

or contained in the New Testament except after understanding the Old Testament. This is because the New Testament includes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, as well as Christ's teachings in comparison with the Old Testament. It also includes God's plan for salvation from the beginning of creation and the entrance of sin into the world. And not only that, but it contains the ethical principles for the believer and the members of the Church, the believers.

*The Old Testament contains three sections:*

- a. The Torah (or Instruction) - the five books of Moses.
- b. Historical Books (or the Prophets).
- c. The Poetic Writings (Psalms of David and others, Proverbs of King Solomon, etc.).

The Bible, with its Old and New Testaments, consists of 66 books as follows:

- 1- Old Testament: 39 books (or scrolls).
- 2- New Testament: 27 books or scrolls (the Gospels and the Epistles).

#### **Fifth: The relationship of the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament writings**

The four Gospels end with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His appearances to the disciples and the Marys. Thus, Jesus Christ completed His work on earth, but He left the responsibility of preaching and spreading His word to His disciples. God chose to spread His message through ordinary humans, who may have strayed and then returned to Him. Thus, the Church, i.e., the community of believers, was established.

The Book of "Acts" comes after the four Gospels and includes the events following Christ's ascension: preaching, the descent of the Holy Spirit, sermons, and missionary jour-

neys. But the Holy Spirit did not wish to record for us everything the apostles did but recorded what is sufficient for our instruction. As for Christ's disciples, they went to distant regions. Tradition says that Christ's disciple Thomas went to India, and the Apostle Paul aimed to go to the ends of the known world at that time, which was Spain. He ended up reaching the heart of the Roman state and died in Rome with Peter during Nero's persecution of Christians.

### **Apostle Paul and his writings**

Apostle Paul recounts his own experience several times, that after Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven, Paul was persecuting the Church and the believers, putting them in prisons and pursuing them everywhere to eradicate this new teaching. During his journey to the city of Damascus, a heavenly light appeared to him, and a voice from heaven spoke to him (and Paul says it was Christ Himself) which made him realize that by persecuting Christians, he was persecuting Christ Himself. Therefore, he asked in complete submission what he should do. The voice answered him to go to the street called Straight in Damascus, and their God would inform him of what he should do. This indeed happened, and Paul was converted into a follower and disciple of Christ. The Apostle Paul faced severe persecution for the sake of this message. He traveled extensively, including three major journeys that took him into Europe, and planted many churches. For these churches to remain firm in the faith, the Apostle Paul wrote epistles to instruct and guide them. Although these letters were originally addressed to specific churches, they were shared among other congregations and functioned as circular letters. The same was true of the other apostles, even when they wrote general epistles. For the sake of unity and consistency in teaching among Christ's disciples, these letters were included in the New Testament, through which believers entered into the new covenant with God.

## Chapter 30

### What Jesus Said About the Last Days

#### Introduction

The prophecies of the Lord Jesus concerning the end times, as recorded in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (chapter 24), form the primary prophetic framework through which the Church anticipates His Second Coming. This vision is not confined to a single book but is affirmed by the testimonies of the other Evangelists in eloquent theological harmony. What Matthew recorded about "the appearance of false messiahs" (verse 5) is confirmed by Mark saying, "false messiahs and false prophets will rise" (Mark 13:22). Matthew's warnings about "wars and rumors of wars" (verses 6–7) find their echo in the Gospel of Luke: "When you hear of wars and tumults" (Luke 21:9). Moreover, the command to watch, with which Matthew concludes his prophecy (Matthew 24:42), is the same one emphasized by Mark: "Therefore, keep watch" (Mark 13:35). Thus, the four Gospels do not present separate visions but an interconnected and harmonious testimony that outlines the path toward that awaited Coming, reminding believers that these tribulations are not the end but the beginning of the birth pangs preceding the final redemption, thereby strengthening their hope and urging them to constant vigilance and preparation.

#### First: Signs of the End Times

Christ did not give these signs so that we might set timetables for His return, but so that we might be watchful, prayerful, and prepared.

- 1- *General Signs in the World (Matthew 24:4–14)*

**Religious Deception:** In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ warns us of the appearance of many deceivers who will claim to be the Messiah, using His name to mislead everyone. This phenomenon is a sign of the end times, when fraud and deception will spread, and the believer must beware of them. "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." (verse 5). False messiahs and deceiving prophets will appear.

**Wars and Rumors of Wars:** Indeed, this verse predicts the continuation of instability in the world. Instead of lasting peace, there will be periods of tension and frequent outbreaks of conflicts among nations and kingdoms, confirming the troubled nature of the world before the end times. "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." (verses 6–7). There will not be a moment of lasting world peace, but rather tensions and conflicts.

**Natural Disasters:** These disasters—famines, epidemics, and earthquakes—are not in themselves signs of the end but are "the beginning of birth pains." They are a warning cry from creation itself, declaring that the current world order is in labor. They are a call from God not to be troubled, but to spiritual wakefulness, for they confirm that human history is moving according to God's plan toward its ultimate purpose. "And there will be famines, epidemics, and earthquakes in various places. But all these are merely the beginning of the birth pains." (verses 7–8).

**Persecution and Apostasy:** This prophecy from the Gospel speaks of future persecutions, where believers will face tribulation, be killed, and be hated by all nations. And with the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold, indicating people's departure from faith and spiritual principles in difficult times. "Then they will deliver you to tribulation

and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name... And because lawlessness will increase, the love of many will grow cold." (verses 9–12).

Preaching the Gospel: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (verse 14). Before the end, the message of salvation will reach every nation.

### 2- *Specific Signs and the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15–28)*

Abomination of Desolation: "So when you see 'the abomination of desolation,' spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)!" (verse 15). "The abomination of desolation" is the pivotal sign warned of by Daniel and Christ, a deliberate defilement of sacred things. After its historical fulfillment with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, it remains an open prophecy for final fulfillment. This abomination is a declaration of the ultimate degree of rebellion against God, and it is the signal for immediate flight, where obedience to the divine warning becomes the path to salvation: "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (verse 16).

The Great Tribulation: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." (verse 21). A short period of unprecedented judgment and distress will immediately precede Christ's coming.

Warning Against False Messiahs: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it." (verse 23).

### 3- *Cosmic Signs and the Coming of Christ (Matthew 24:29–31)*

Disturbances in the Heavens: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven,

and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” (verse 29). These awesome cosmic disturbances—the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars—are not merely natural phenomena, but a declaration of the collapse of the old order with all its forces and injustice. They are the thunderbolt that precedes the coming of the King, heralding the passing away of our present world to make way for the emergence of a new order, the order of His eternal kingdom. These signs proclaim that God's judgment has come and our salvation has drawn near, calling us to lift up our heads in hope.

The Coming of the Son of Man: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (verses 30–31). Christ's coming will be visible to all, glorious, and decisive, to gather His elect from all the earth.

### **Second: Practical Applications and Spiritual Preparations**

Christ did not leave us to be terrified by these signs but gave us practical applications for how to act.

#### *1- Watchfulness and Preparation (Matthew 24:32–44)*

A Lesson from the Fig Tree: "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, know that He is near, at the very gates." (verses 32–33). Just as the leaves of the tree indicate the nearness of summer, these signs confirm that his coming is near.

The Certainty of His Word: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." (verses 34–35).

Not Knowing the Day and Hour: "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." (verse 36). The concealment of the day and hour from all creatures, including the angels, is a divine grace and wisdom. For if we knew the timing, we would either slide into negligence over the long duration or into panic at the countdown. But divine wisdom directs our attention from being preoccupied with when He comes, to focusing our effort on how we live. True preparation, therefore, is not a temporary state we adjust before the deadline, but a continuous lifestyle—a life of watchfulness, faithfulness, and daily communion with God, where every moment of our lives is ready to receive the bridegroom.

Constant Preparedness: Watchfulness is the perpetual spiritual alertness of life with God, and preparedness is the fruit of this alertness. Since the timing of the Lord's coming is hidden from us, every moment becomes a precious opportunity to live it in faith and faithfulness. This call is not for mere anticipation, but for active work according to His will. For Christ is coming at an unexpected moment, and our duty is to always be prepared for a meeting filled with faith and acceptable works.

## *2- Parables on Watchfulness and Faithfulness (Matthew 24:45 – 25:30)*

Christ told numerous parables to clarify the meaning of preparedness:

The Faithful and Wicked Servants (Matthew 24:45–51): Preparation for the Master's coming is not an obsession with timing, but a constant commitment to faithfulness in service. It is a call to translate faith into action and giving into daily work. Blessed is that servant whom his master finds working when he comes suddenly, not idle. Faithfulness in simple daily tasks, and serving others with love, is the living proof of our true waiting, and it is what qualifies us to enter the eternal joy of the Lord.

The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13): Preparation for the coming of the bridegroom (symbolizing Christ) means maintaining a living and satisfying relationship with God, represented by the oil that lights our lamps. This renewed personal relationship through prayer and communion with the Holy Spirit is our guarantee. One cannot rely on the faith of others or mere religious appearance. Spiritual watchfulness is a state of constant alertness, because the time is unknown, and what is required is a constant readiness of heart, where the oil is sufficient to receive the bridegroom when He comes suddenly.

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30): True preparation for Christ's coming is embodied in investing the talents and resources that God has entrusted to us. Faithfulness is not merely in preservation, but in work and diligence to magnify God's kingdom on earth. Those who act wisely and produce will be rewarded with the divine pronouncement: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" This faithfulness in little things qualifies us for greater authority and opens for us the door to entering our "Master's joy" eternally, where there is perfect grace and deep communion with the source of every gift.

### 3- *The Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31–46)*

Christ concludes His discourse with the scene of the great judgment, where He will separate people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

The Criterion of Judgment: The practical measure of our true faith will be our active love for Christ through serving "the least of these brothers of Mine"—meaning the needy and persecuted among believers, and every person in need. "...Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.'" (verse 40).

The Eternal Destiny: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (verse 46). This judgment confirms the reality and inevitability of the

two different destinies: eternal life for those who accepted Christ and lived by His faith, and eternal destruction for those who rejected Him.

### **Conclusion**

The words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the last days, confirmed in Mark and Luke, do not paint a gloomy picture but illuminate the path toward a sure hope. Yes, there will be wars, tribulation, and apostasy, but all these sufferings are "the beginning of birth pains" (Matthew 24:8) that precede the most magnificent event in history: the triumphant coming of the Son of Man on the clouds with power and great glory. This hope transforms our fear into holy vigilance and expectation. It reminds us that this world is passing away, but the word of our Lord endures forever (Matthew 24:35). Therefore, let us not be preoccupied with calculating times, but let us commit to the Lord a faithful, prepared life, a life of faith active in love and service to the least, which will be the record of our testimony before the throne. The Lord has left us not to be terrified, but to lift our heads because our redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28). May our lives be a constant prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20), for in His coming is the fulfillment of our hope and the beginning of our eternal glory.

### **The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ**

Indeed, Jesus Christ is unique. His life and teachings, miracles, morals, and sacrifice stand alone. In his book, *the Unique Christ*, Nizar Sheen points out ten points to illustrate the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ:

- 1- He fulfilled numerous prophecies in detail concerning His coming, purpose, death, resurrection, and many other things spoken of Him hundreds of years before He comes.

2- His miraculous conception and virgin birth. He was born of a woman for a purpose and only through a miracle of God (Gen. 3:15, Is. 7:14, Gal. 4:4) for nothing is impossible for Him.

3- His sinless life. No one else among all prophets could truthfully claim to have never sinned (John 8:29, Heb. 1:9, 4:15, 7:26; 2 Cor. 5:21). He was the Perfect Lamb of God who died for our redemption and salvation.

4- Because of the incarnation, He is the God-Man. He is a fully God and perfect human in a perfect unity. The angel announced the He is “Immanuel... God with us” (Mt. 1:23) He was qualified to be “the Redeemer.”

5- His dealing with people. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. He demonstrated what He taught. He forgave those who crucified Him and loved the sinners. He had passion and love for all.

6- His teachings are unique and unparalleled. Jesus spoke with a divine authority with wisdom and power.

7- His miracles demonstrate His authority on nature, sickness, demons and the unseen spirits. He raised people from the dead because of His authority on life and death. He is not just a mere prophet, but He is the incarnate God and savior.

8- He was the only person who was born for the express purpose of dying. Jesus came to lay down His life to redeem sinners.

9-The uniqueness of His death itself. On the cross, unlike all humans, Jesus dismissed His spirit from His body. (John 19:30)

- 9- He died vicariously in our place and victoriously was raised from the dead to be the first who conquered death and He promised that whoever believe in Him will have everlasting life. Amen.

**End Notes**

Chapter 1: The Birth of Jesus Christ

Chapter 2: The Childhood of Jesus Christ and His Circumcision

Chapter 3: Old Testament Prophecies About Jesus Christ and Their Fulfillment

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Chapter 7: The Teachings of Jesus Christ — The Sermon on the Mount (1)

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Chapter 20: What Jesus Said About Death and Eternal Life

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Chapter 27: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His Final Commission

Chapter 28: Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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