

renewing and enriching life

revive

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**THE TRUE VINE
AND THE SOON
COMING KING**



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham
 Founder/President
 India Gospel Outreach

President
 India Bible College and Seminary

When he was 17 years old, a perceptive German student wrote, "Our heart, reason, history, and the work of Christ convince us that without Him we cannot achieve our goal, that without Him we are doomed by God, and only Christ can save us."

Nine years later, that young man, Karl Marx, rejected Jesus Christ and went on to write "The Communist Manifesto" and declare religion as "the opiate of the people." The fruit of his life has been untold misery for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Karl Marx's life illustrates what happens when we refuse to take Jesus' words seriously: "I AM THE VINE and you are the branches."

Recently, we experienced a California windstorm that saw many large branches broken off the trees. I noted that after a few days, the leaves and branches of those fallen trees had withered and become brittle because they no longer had life in them

Jesus promised that when we abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine, we will bear much fruit. By this, He meant the fruit of the Spirit-love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We see fruitfulness in the lives of men of God such as William Carey and Charles Grant who have left a permanent imprint of Christ upon India.

Jesus means for all of us to bear fruit by abiding in Him. Jesus says that to bear fruit glorifies God the Father. To bear the fruit of the Spirit also blesses us. Who of us, for example, doesn't want more love, joy and peace in life?

To bear fruit also blesses others who live with and around us. Whenever we meet someone who is obviously filled with the fruit of the



LIVING THE FRUITFUL LIFE

Spirit, we immediately know it and hunger for those qualities in our own lives, if we are truly seeking after God.

To abide in Christ is to experience every part of our lives surrounded by His love, power and care, and to let our relationship with Him overflow into the world.

How do we abide in Christ? Jesus tells us in John 15:7-by letting His words abide in us. These are not only the words that come from memorizing scripture (although that is important), but also by the words that come through the Holy Spirit as we converse with God in prayer and hear Him speak to our immediate needs.

Abiding in Christ is a choice. We decide to spend time with Him in prayer, to seek after Him in the Bible and to fellowship with others who abide in Him. All these things aid us in maintaining our close relationship with Christ.

If we have committed our lives to Christ, we already abide in Him. If we do not see the fruits of the Spirit as we ought, Jesus promises that His Father will "prune" us-remove those things from our lives that prevent us from bearing fruit. Confession of sin will help to put us in better relationship with Him.

Abiding in Christ means that we share an intimacy with God closer than any human relationship. We share a common eternal destiny with the maker of the universe. We share common interests and a common work. He is our mentor who leads, prepares, teaches, reveals, encourages, provides all we need, when we need it

Most of all, we share each other's fellowship in the deepest sense. The apostle Paul has told us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus. This is what Jesus meant when He called Himself the "true Vine."

As we abide in Christ, we will increasingly recognize those who do not experience the abiding life of Christ. We will share Jesus' concern for them, many of whom want fruitful lives but do not know Christ.

India is filled with millions who have yet to be grafted into the True Vine. In 2023, may each of us share more closely the heart of the One in whom we abide. Have a Blessed 2023.

Father God, I want to live a fruitful life and abide in Christ. Show me those areas of my life where I am not trusting you fully, so that I may better produce the fruit that glorifies you, blesses me and blesses others who live with and around me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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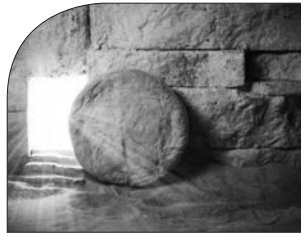
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e-mail : revivemegod@gmail.com
igotoibc@gmail.com
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MRS. STARLA LUKOSE

MANAGER

PASTOR T. J. ABRAHAM

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

JUNE THOMAS
ANN ABRAHAM

PUBLISHER & PRINTER

Lt. Col. V. I. LUKE (Retd.)
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PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA

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Beam Design S2dio
Ph: 93870 73135
beamfine@gmail.com

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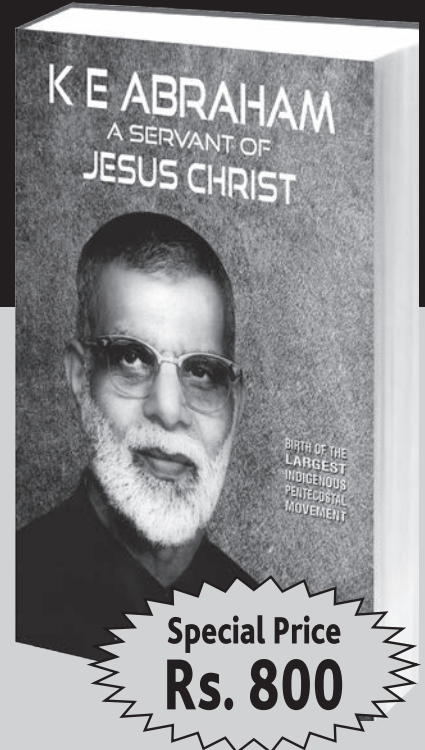
P.O. BOX. 31, HEBRON, KUMBANAD
KERALA, INDIA, PIN - 689 547
Phone: 0469 - 2664075, 2665855
Mobile: 94476 08954

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BE FRUITFUL



Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

There are many references about the vine in the Scriptures. In the book of Genesis, we read that "Noah proceeded to plant a vineyard".

In the book of Judges, Jotham speaks of various trees in a metaphor criticizing the appointment of Abimelech as king over Israel. In this metaphor, he identifies the vine with a noble character. In Judges 9:7, Jotham says, "Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. One day all the trees in the forest went out to anoint a king from among them. They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king.' But the olive tree answered, 'Should I give up my oil by which both gods and men are honored, to hold sway over the trees?' Next the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and be our king.' But the fig tree replied, 'Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet to hold sway over the trees?' Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come and be our king.' But the vine answered, 'Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and men, to hold sway over the trees?'"

Of all the trees, only the vine cheers both gods and men. How does this vine cheer God? God does not drink wine."

A parable answer is given in the book of Genesis. When Jacob blesses his sons with regard to Judah, he says, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the rulers' staff from between his feet, until he comes to where it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will either tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the closest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah, accomplished this prophecy on the cross as He shed His blood for the remission of the sin of mankind. He grafted us, as ordinary people, nothing better than donkeys, to the choicest vine. This grafting was done on the cross. We are now branches of the true vine. Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."

God intends us to remain in Him and produce fruit. Apostle Paul narrates the fruit of the Spirit to be, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22). These nine graces are the petals of a flower. Fruit characterizes three things:

First, fruit is an evidence of death. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24). The fruit that we yield declares that we are dead for Christ and for the cause of Calvary.

Second, the fruit affords identification. In Mathew 7:17, Jesus says, "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thrown bushes or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit".

Third, fruit is the source of propagation. Pollination takes place in most of the trees through its flowers and fruits. Therefore, no fruit means no propagation.

Christianity is contagious. It is spread by us, the branches. Moreover the Master wants us to produce more fruit. So He prunes the branches. The Apostle Paul asks, "For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, then you are illegitimate children, not sons" (Hebrews 12:8). Therefore we must endure the Lord's discipline. It is better to be disciplined by the Lord because He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit. He has authority to do that. He is the true vine and we are the branches. ●

NEW CLOTH AND NEW WINESKINS



DR. JOSE L.

Academic Dean,
India Bible College and
Seminary, Kumbanad

Jesus used different analogies to teach his disciples and the crowd about topics such as the Kingdom of God, discipleship, dasting, dtewardship, trust in God, prayer, and God's care for people etc. In the Gospels, Jesus explain the meaning of fasting through two imageries of sewing new cloth on an old garment and pouring new wine into old wineskins (Mk.2:18-22; Lk.5:33-39; Matt.9:14-17). As the best teacher ever seen by the world he taught through pictorial illustrations of rejecting the patchwork in life in order to receive the Kingdom of God.

Setting of the Analogy: Patchwork with New Cloth and New Wine with Old Clothes and Old Wineskins

The ministry of Jesus was in the light of the kingdom of God and the presence of the age of salvation (Mk1: 14, 15). The Jewish religious authorities like the scribes and the Pharisees opposed Jesus throughout his ministry. After Jesus healed the paralytic and had dinner at Levi's house, a question of fasting was raised by John's disciples and the Pharisees (Mk.2:18) to which Jesus gives the right response (Mk.2:19-22). Moreover, the image of a wedding with guests and the bridegroom describes the joy and celebration related to God's Kingdom.

Here in this context the two imageries of old and new are thematically parallel to each other. Moreover, the scene is focusing on the presence of Jesus the bridegroom and the disciples' relationship with the master. There is also a concealed passion overtone with the idea of the removal of the bridegroom and fasting.

John's fasting is associated with the ascetic lifestyle leading towards repentance and humility in the light of the coming kingdom. The Pharisees also practiced fasting as a sign of their piety. Both John's disciples as well as the Pharisees fasted



regularly on Mondays and Thursdays (Lk.18:12). They fasted week after week and displayed dispondent faces like the hypocrites so that their fasting became obvious to people. Jesus said 'when you fast, do not look sober as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting' (Matt.6:16). They also took offense because Jesus' disciples were not fasting.

In contrast to this, during Jesus' ministry, there are festive meals of 'eating and drinking,' table fellowship with 'sinners' (Mk.2:13-17). He is teaching his disciples that people receive forgiveness and the blessings of the Kingdom. Here, Jesus and the disciples are compared to the bridegroom and groomsman who enjoyed one another's presence. Jesus, probably metaphorically, alludes to the age of salvation that he brought in. Jesus' response to the question about

In contrast to this, during Jesus' ministry, there are festive meals of 'eating and drinking,' table fellowship with 'sinners' (Mk.2:13-17). He is teaching his disciples that people receive forgiveness and the blessings of the Kingdom.

fasting is that 'the sons of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them. Similarly, when the wedding festival is in progress, they cannot fast (Mk.2:19). Jesus' sayings reflect the joyful spirit that accompanies the dawning consummation of the messianic kingdom. Here Jesus brings the biblical motif of the wedding imagery (Isa.54:4-8; 62:4-5; Ezek.16:1-63) as the portrait of his redemptive mission. The new age has already begun and the disciples are celebrating the coming age of the Messiah. However, they will fast when he has been 'taken away' (Mk.2:20).

New Wine and New cloth in the light of God's Kingdom

Mark begins his gospel by presenting the good news



of Jesus who is identified as both 'Christ' and 'Son of God' (Mk.1:1). The new eschatological salvation of God has been inaugurated by the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah. The first half of the gospel explains the ministry of Jesus with authority in and around the region of Galilee (Mk.1:14-8:30). The second half depicts Jesus' travel towards Jerusalem and his death and the resurrection (Mk.8:31-16:8).

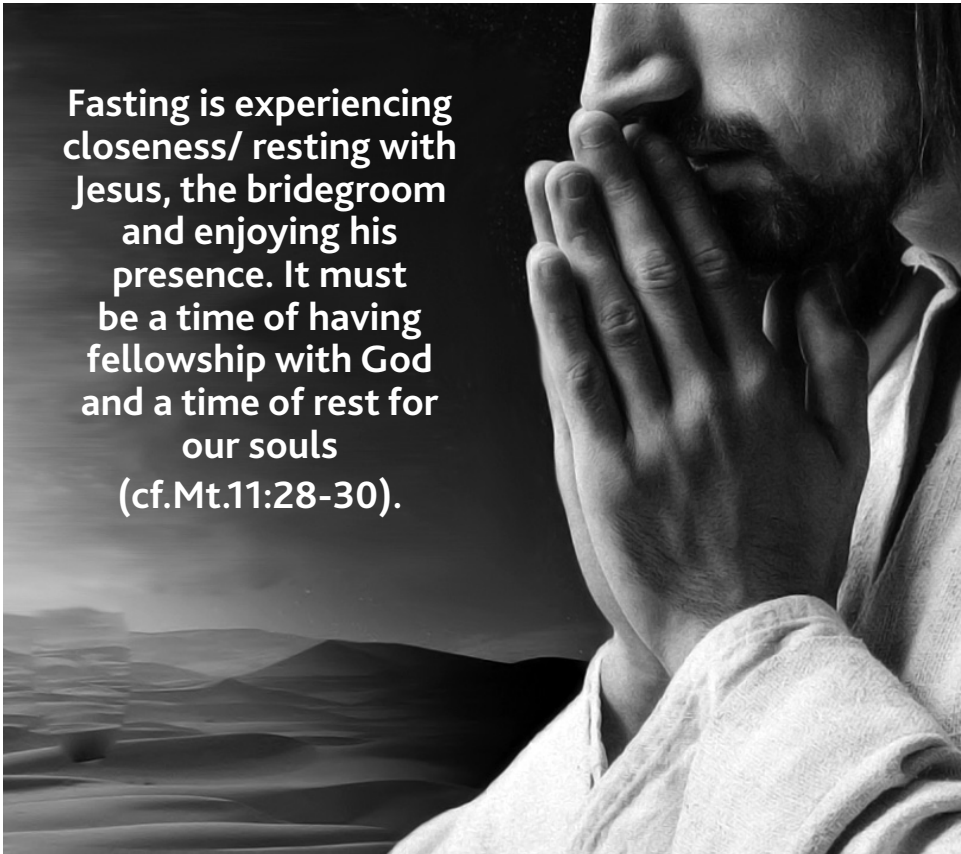
The Kingdom of God is inaugurated in Jesus' ministry and the call to repentance to enter into God's Kingdom (Mk.1:14, 15). By casting out the demons (Mk.1:23-27, 33-34; 3:11-12, 22-30; 5:1-20; 7:24-30); healing the sick (Mk.1:29-31, 32-34; 3:9-10; 5:29-34; 6:5, 54-56); cleansing the leper (Mk.1:40-45); healing the

The old garment probably has undergone the natural process of wearing out through the days of use and repeated washing.

If we put a new piece of cloth on an old garment, the new piece shrinks and leaves the tear bigger. So, it is not wise to match the new with the old unless it is made new.

paralyzed (Mk.2:1-12; 3:1-5); various other miracles (Mk.4:35-41; 6:35-44, 47-52; 7:31-37; 8:1-10, 22-26); raising the dead (Mk.5:21-24, 35-43) and forgiving the sins (Mk.2:5-7), the eschatological age of salvation has been dawned through the ministry of Jesus.

Mark portrays Jesus who inaugurated his Kingdom through word and deed. In this process he teaches his disciples and the crowd about fasting and prepares them to be part of God's Kingdom. He used two illustrative examples drawn from the imagery of everyday life—wine and new clothes were both regular items at first century Palestine weddings. The sayings together emphasize the newness in the Kingdom that threatens the viability of the old unless and until it is transformed. Jesus invokes the example of a new piece of cloth affixed to an old garment for the purpose of



Fasting is experiencing closeness/ resting with Jesus, the bridegroom and enjoying his presence. It must be a time of having fellowship with God and a time of rest for our souls (cf.Mt.11:28-30).

mending it. The old garment probably has undergone the natural process of wearing out through days of use and repeated washing. If we put a new piece of cloth on an old garment, the new piece shrinks and leaves the tear bigger. So, it is not wise to match the new with the old unless it is made new.

Jesus came to inaugurate the gospel of the kingdom that brings newness-happiness, and joy into the life of the people. The new wine points out the wine from the recent harvest and it gives joy to the heart. The wine is produced out of grapes stored in tanned goatskins and because of the fermentation, the skins would expand. Old wineskins could not be used to pour new wine because they are already expanded to their limit. The result of putting new wine in old wineskins is that both the wine and the wineskins will be lost. The new patchwork will not work with the old garment similarly the new wine will not work with the old wineskins.

The Significance of Fasting

In its real sense, fasting is an expression of experiencing closeness with God, the bridegroom. It also possesses the religious significance of abstaining from eating and drinking to have fellowship with the Lord. In fasting people experience the close presence of God and communicate with God (Deut.9:9; Dan.9:3). It is also a time of repentance (Lev.16:29-31; 23:27-31; Numb.29:7). Prophet Isaiah redefines fasting in terms of feeding the hungry and fighting injustice (Isa.58:4-7).

The Pharisees and the Qumran community observed fasting twice a week (Lk.18:12; song.Sol.3:8). Pious Jews also observed fasting like Anna the prophetess (Lk.2:37).

Jesus himself took forty days of fasting before the commencement of his ministry and he also taught his disciples about fasting (Matt.6:16-18). The passage from Mark did not give an

idea of negating the importance of fasting but gives us the significance of fasting. There is a probable allegorical application to the bridegroom as Jesus and when he will be removed from the disciples and then they will fast. Similarly the passage also points to the wedding celebration and the joy of the age of salvation now as they experience in the company of the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus.

Fasting is experiencing closeness and resting with Jesus, the bridegroom and enjoying his presence. It must be a time of fellowship with God and a time of rest for our souls (cf.Mt.11:28-30).

Jesus teaches them that fasting is not a patchwork patching the old with the new. It is not possible to patch the new cloth with the old during the time of fasting. In fasting, one must throw away the old clothes and make them new. It is to make us completely new and to receive a new garment of praise from the master (Isa.61:3). The master will clothe you with the new garment if you fast and stay close to him. If we stay close to him he will clothe us with a new vision in the place of old and he will remove the torn lives from us.

Wineskins are made out of animal skins and it is used to store wine. Making new wineskins out of the old was popular in ancient Palestine. The process of renewing the old wineskin was very important and necessary. The farmer used to make new wineskins out of the old through a strenuous process of cleansing. The shrunk old wineskins become hard and brittle because of the passing of time. The farmer

washes the old wineskins thoroughly with fresh water. After drying up the soaked wineskins the farmer places the washed wineskins into oil tubs for some days. There is a tough process of washing and drying up before it is soaked up in the oil tubs for a period of time. After this process, the old wineskins become new, useful and stretchable enough to hold the new wine.

Spending time in fasting and meditating on God's Word makes the believer like new wineskin ready to receive the new wine. Through the cleansing with the Word make the believer sanctified and humble. The new wine must be poured into the new lives. Becoming the new wineskin is very important through time of fasting.

BECOMING A NEW CREATION

For Mark, the new age of God's reign has started and people started to experience the new creation (Gal.6:15; 2 Cor.5:17) instituted through the Gospel. The disciples function as authorized agents of God's reign on earth as they participate in the redemptive work of Jesus.

The new garment and the new wine compare to the messianic mission of Jesus. The new wine requires new wineskins. The old cannot be modified with the new patch and if we do it will tear its patch. Similarly, the new wine also cannot be contained in the old wineskins. Fasting is not to engage in patchwork rather fasting is a time to create total transformation and renewal in the life of the people.

The old wine was once useful and the Jewish religious system was ordained by God. Now it is through Jesus, the new life is established and the new wineskin is needed to pour the new wine. Apostle Paul says 'do not be drunk

with wine that causes debauchery but be filled with the Spirit' (Eph.5:18). The new relationship will create joy in the Lord and the new wine will give new experiences. Moreover, the new age will give us the abundant life in the Lord. The new wine will give us a new atmosphere of love for God which cannot be contained in the old wineskins. This imagery also explains the dynamism of the newness of the present moment in the context of the arrival of the King and the dynamic effect of the Kingdom of God upon the established religious traditions.

In fasting, we recognize God's reign over our lives and submit our lives completely for renewal. Fasting is to obtain a new garment and new wineskin. God will give us new clothing as we stays close to him through fasting and meditating on His word. Through fasting, one becomes tender, humble, and clean in order to receive new wine into the new wineskins. ●

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JESUS THE TRUE VINE



KRIS JACKSON

ThD – Branson West, MO

The night before Jesus went to the cross, In John chapters 14-16, Jesus shared many vital last-minute details to the disciples. Last words are often a man’s most important words. Jesus spoke of preparing mansions in the Father’s house. He talked of another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would be “in” the disciples just as he was “with” them. He called them personal friends and shared that the world would hate them even as the world had hated him. But the focus of his final teaching to his disciples centered in the 15th chapter on the imagery of a vineyard and fruit bearing. “I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).

This is one of the seven “I AM” passages in the Gospel of John, Christ’s personal certification that He is God the Son, the eternal Logos who became flesh. In verse 2 he mentioned “every branch in me”. Branches have no life in themselves apart from the vine. To be in the vine is to be “in Christ”, for there is no life outside of him. Jesus, therefore, is the root, stalk, strength, supply, and support of the entire plant – “...for without me you can do nothing” (vs 5).

1. CONNECTION

God the Father planted this vine. The Son was sent, born of a virgin, planted in the covenant soil of his native Israel, was raised a living body to which every born-again soul becomes a member, or in this context, a branch. Our very existence depends on our connection to Christ. A disconnected branch is at best a shriveled, fruitless vine branch, and at worst is dried tinder ready to be thrown on the burn pile.

Fruits are the evidence of spiritual life and our connection to Christ, but roots are the source and support of our spiritual life. Plastic fruit can be purchased from the merchant, but it has no life, no flavor, no nourishment. Whether one has the beauty of a ripened mango or the weight of a plump jackfruit, he must remember that he did not support the tree, but the tree supported him. We have nothing that was not “received”. We are the recipients of the True Vine’s flowing life. Living things produce fruit, whether children, calves, oranges, or cashew nuts. But nothing can be produced



without connection. "I am the vine, you are the branches..." (vs 5)

2. ELECTION

A helpless branch cannot graft itself into the vine. Only the husbandman, the vinedresser, the heavenly Father can create a new life. Aaron's rod budded and produced almonds because of a divine miracle. Joining a church does not graft a dead branch into a living vine. Mere repentance cannot change the fate of a dried stick lying on the ground. Connection is dependent upon election. One is not saved because they are born into a Malayalee family, or American, or some denominational family. Grace is offered of the Vinedresser. The redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides our welcome into the family. We did not choose Him, He chose us! Accept the free offer, make your calling and election sure.

God the Father planted this vine. The Son was sent, born of a virgin, planted in the covenant soil of his native Israel, was raised a living body to which every born-again soul becomes a member, or in this context, a branch. Our very existence depends on our connection to Christ.

3. SUBJECTION

As the True Vine, Jesus, was subject to the will of the Father and submitted to the Husbandman in every way, so the branches are subject to the laws of the vine and can only prosper through the care and pruning of the Dresser. I am not skilled in gardening and horticulture. Most plants I touch suffer from my lack of expertise. There is a right time to water, the soil requires proper nutrients, bugs and briars need fought and conquered. God is at work in the vineyard. The branch's only responsibility is to cling to the stem, to cling to Jesus, and to allow the Vinedresser to work. Fruit bearing is the natural result of the Master gardener's work. "He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit..."

4. INJECTION

John 15 cannot be understood separate from the two chapters which proceed and follow. The mystery of any living plant is found in its sap. The paraclete, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit is the mystery

substance that injects and infuses life and sustenance into every branch. From the root to the farthest leaf, all life is sustained by the living water. Needy fiber and tissue draw power from the nectar that feeds the vine. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and those connected to Him are injected with the same power.

Where the heaviest rains fall, we can expect the richest fruits. The leaves and shoots and grapes beg for rain – “My soul longs for You in a dry and thirsty land” (Psalm 63:1). Revival praying can break the drought. “Abiding in Christ” which symbolizes walking in the Spirit, feeding on the Word of God, and surrendering to Christ, maintains the full flow of his blessings and power. “The trees of the Lord are full of sap...” (Psalm 104:16)

5. INSPECTION

In a vineyard each plant stands side by side in long rows along the mountainside. Our connection to Christ is important but so is our interconnection with the entire vineyard. The new wine is found “in the cluster” (Isaiah 65:8). The mission of the Holy Spirit is not to produce a grape here and there but clusters, strong local gatherings, where unity abounds.

The Vinedresser walks through his garden inspecting. Jesus inspected one fig tree and found nothing but leaves. “Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself...” (Hosea 10:1) The Lord of the Lampstands walks among the seven churches. Believers are to be fruit-bearers, not fruit inspectors, but we must examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. At each communion gathering we come for both self-inspection and divine inspection. This is not something to dread but rather to welcome because inspection leads to pruning which leads to further fruitfulness.

6. CORRECTION

Every branch that bears fruit “he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit” (vs 2). Why do we resist correction? Fathers correct their children because they love their children. Yes, the pruning process cuts and the vine bleeds, but the flowing

sap quickly cauterizes the wound.

If there is no pruning, dead, diseased, and dried up branches will rob the water and nutrients away from the healthy branches and stunt the growth of the vine. You have seen how the pruning of roses causes new blossoms to flourish. Plants work to support the ailing just as any other physical body. If branches are choked from sunlight, blighted by insects, or overgrown with too many leaves, the plant must pour its efforts into the weak or overgrown part of the vine which causesthe rest of the vine to suffer. But when these things are carefully pruned (one of your chief duties, Pastor!) the rich grapes thrive, and remember, deep purple is the color of royalty.

7. PERFECTION

Finally, in studying Christ, the True Vine, we know He has a destiny in mind. The Author of our faith is also the Finisher and Perfector. Good soil, healthy



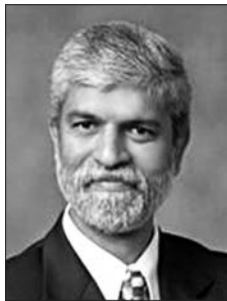
husbandry, and good doses of sunlight and rainfall “brings forth fruit unto perfection” (Luke 8:14). Jesus spoke of no fruit, fruit, and much fruit. Both quality and quantity are in mind. “Herein is my Father glorified that you bring forth much fruit, so shall you be my disciples” (Johns 15:8). The True Vine produces true disciples. Some years are more productive than others. We live in the season of the latter rain outpouring. There is no excuse for empty pews and barren vines.

In the New Testament the term perfection deals more with maturity than flawlessness. You will notice that all mature grapes look basically uniform. The process of subjection, inspection and correction create sweet fruits. The Holy Spirit within us produces the new wine that draws the world to Christ. At harvest the husbandman seeks a mature, ready, complete crop. Every passing day brings us nearer to the final harvest. The gleaning of grapes is the highlight of the season. By the grace of God the Church shall ripen! And then the red cup shall be lifted to the lips of the King!

“
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FALSE VINE AND WORLDLY PLEASURES

**DR. SAMSON GANDHI**

Counsellor & Faculty at IBC

What would happen if petrol is put into a diesel car? What would happen if you plug in a 110-volts hair dryer into a 220-volt power socket? Imagine, what will happen if you stand under a shower and open hot water instead of cold? We know the obvious consequences – the car engine would be totally destroyed; the hair dryer will burn and we would be scalded under the shower. When we are aware of the damage that can happen with a mismatch of fuel, voltage or temperature, why are we ignorant about the dangers to our souls when we drink at wrong places to satisfy out deep thirsts?

Jesus said, “I am the true vine . . .” A grape vine is symbolic of a deep, abiding relationship, nourishment and bearing fruit (John 15:1-8). Jesus is the true vine and if we as branches of that vine abide in Him, we can sup (draw strength) in Him and bear fruit of good attitudes and works that will bless people and glorify God. Just as Jesus is the true vine there are many false vines that are constantly trying to seduce us to abide in them. These can only bring a total disaster in our lives and a destruction of our souls.

As children of God and believers in Christ, we are asked to abide in Him. We are designed only for the true living God who revealed Himself in Christ and therefore we cannot find satisfaction or fulfilment anywhere else except in Him (John 7:37). But we think abiding in Him means that we go to Him with a shopping list full of faith instead of an intense desire to know Him deeply and enjoy Him wholeheartedly. No wonder, we come away disappointed because our demands are not fulfilled. So, we think we must find other ways to satisfy our cravings. We pay a lip service to God on Sundays and live our own lives the rest of the time (Jer. 2:11-13).



What are the false vines we plug into thinking that they will satisfy the longings of our souls? There are three things that tug at our heart: material things without God, popularity without God and power without God (Matt. 4:3-11). We have an insatiable appetite for good things of life – exotic food, fashionable clothing, glittering jewellery, latest electronic gadgets, expensive cars, luxurious houses and picture-perfect holidays. Every one of these things is not wrong in itself but the kingdom of God is not marked by these things. Paul writing to Romans said, “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17).” Look at what happens when we pursue food and drink without God: “. . . and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (Ex. 32:1-6).” Jesus powerfully brings home the

Jesus powerfully brings home the point in Mark 8:36; “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul.” When we pursue material things, we are sure to move away from God (James 4:4).

point in Mark 8:36; “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul.” When we pursue material things, we are sure to move away from God (James 4:4). But when we pursue God and His righteousness, we will have what we need and more with peace and joy (Matt. 6:33).

Secondly, and usually after we have amassed material things, we still feel empty. Then we are deceived into thinking that we will be happy if we can gain popularity – praise of men, pleasure of women and recognition of people. Popularity without God is another mirage. Those who begin to chase popularity without God begin to use their money, material things and talents for the gain



of popularity among men. King Saul felt miserable when he heard the women say, "Saul has killed his thousands but David his ten thousand (1 Samuel 18:7)." James and John asked for places on the right and the left when Jesus would come in glory. Jesus had to sober them down. He asked all His disciples to learn to be servants first (John 13). At another time he pointed them to pharisees and asked them not to do stuff to seek the praise of men (Matt. 6:5).

Thirdly, we are tempted to become powerful without God. By now people would have money and popularity but their souls are not satisfied. They will use their money, material things, and popularity to gain power

Thirdly, we are tempted to become powerful without God. By now people would have money and popularity but their souls are not satisfied. They will use their money, material things, and popularity to gain power over people.

over people. They think that power will protect them, they can use power to control others and finally they will use all that they have to gain such power. Although King Saul was made powerful as a king by God Himself, he lost his power as he erroneously thought that political power and military might will keep his kingdom safe. David waited to receive power from God and did not take things into his hands. Joseph saw that the power given to him was given by God and to save many but not apart from God and for selfish satisfaction.

What are the things that you are drawn away by and from God? Reflect on your preoccupations? If you are thinking about money and material things all the time then you are wanting possessions without God. If you are constantly trying to please people and gain their approval you may be in danger of displeasing God. If you are pursuing power, then it is sure to take you away from God and it is bound to corrupt you. You heard it said, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." But even more a greater danger is when we become proud with power, God Himself will resist us (James 4:6).

"GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

- JAMES 4:6

There are obvious places where people go to satisfy their lusts: to a Casino, lottery, business with questionable, corrupt practices for the sake of quick money; find pleasures in drinks, drugs and sex; to colleagues, friends, associates and others for popularity; and in our spheres of influence for power. But I believe that those of you who have been spiritual, mature in Christ, and in ministry may also be connected to false vines. Look at how Paul Tripp puts it so well in his book, *New Morning Mercies*:

- "A focus on material things can masquerade as good stewardship of your possessions.
- Loving personal control can masquerade as using God - giving leadership gifts.
- Anger can masquerade as having a heart for what is right.
- Self - righteous legalism can

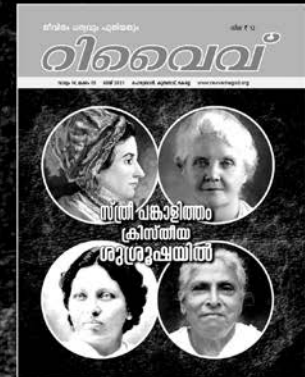
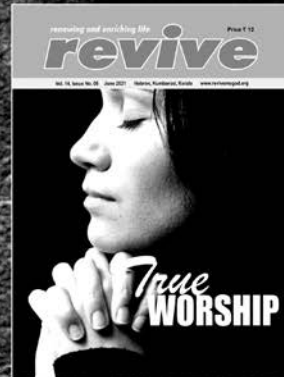
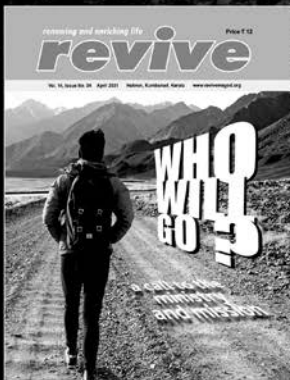
masquerade as loving God's law.

- Building your own ministry empire can masquerade as a commitment to the expansion of God's kingdom.
- Fear of men can masquerade as a sensitive heart toward the needs of others.
- Selfish attention seeking can masquerade as being candid about your needs.
- Judgement and criticism can masquerade as a commitment to honesty.
- Theological pride can masquerade as a commitment to God's truth.
- A craving to be known and respected can masquerade as a commitment to ministry.
- Bondage to the opinions of others can masquerade as a commitment to community.

- Lust can masquerade as a celebration of the beauty of God's creation.
- Gossip can masquerade as a prayerful concern for others."

You are made for the True Vine, not the False one that is deceptive. When we are plugged into a false vine, we not only seek illegitimate pleasures but we deceive ourselves by seeking good things with a wrong motive - to satisfy our pleasures without God. What we then bear is a fruit of pain, disappointment and regret. But when we seek His rule and His righteousness (Christ), all good things will be given to us as needed for His kingdom and the saving of many. The fruit will be love, joy, peace, patience and kindness.

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**DR. J.N. MANOKARAN**

A Civil Engineer by profession. God called him and his family to be missional leader in Haryana as cross cultural missionaries for eleven years. Since, 1997 they returned back to Tamil Nadu to help missionaries and pastors to build their capacities by teaching, training and writing.

Vines are an important aspect of Israel since ancient days. Grapes were used to be eaten fresh, making wine, dried as raisins and grape honey, a sweet thick liquid. Grape honey was made by treading the grapes, then boiling it to evaporate the water and create a syrup. Vine was part of the day-to-day life of people of Israel. Grapes are mentioned in the Bible, more than fifty times.

Three texts

There are several texts in the bible connected to grapes or vine or vineyard. However, three prominent passages help to understand the meaning and purpose of God's vineyard: Ministry and Mission.

The first text is from Isaiah where the Nation of Israel is compared to vineyard. (Isaiah 5) The second text is the parable of evil tenants. (Matthew 21:33-44) The third is the parable of workers who are invited to work in the vineyard. (Matthew 20:1-16)

I Lord, owner of vineyard**1. Great Privilege**

The Vineyard belongs to God who is a loving person or the beloved. God has wisely planted the vineyard on a fruitful hill. Even in that hilly area, he had dug and removed the stones. Then he planted the best or the choicest vine. Lord invests in it by giving constant attention by pruning. In the midst was a tower to provide protection. There was also a winepress to process the grapes. In the Genesis, before Lord created Adam and Eve, he had already created the whole world to make their life comfortable. In the same way, Lord chose the Nation of Israel and provided all that were needed for them to be a blessing to the whole world.



2. Great Expectation

As the owner of the vineyard, God expected good grapes. Despite the privileges, provisions, advantages and opportunities, the vineyard did not yield sweet fruits but only wild grapes. That means it was worse than unfruitfulness. The wild grapes mentioned are beautiful berries, but bitter, foul-smelling, poisonous, useless, and unprofitable. God's love, mercy, care, investment, time, and energy did not produce the desired result because of sin and rebellion.

3. Great Judgement

When the vineyard did not produce sweet grapes, the owner would just remove the special protection provided. It shall be burnt, trampled down, and become a waste land. The Assyrians could do that to the Nation of Israel when Isaiah prophesized. Lord will stop his work: digging, watering, and pruning. Briers and thorns would be there. God will command the clouds not to rain.

“
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 ”

4. Lord of Harvest

God is not only the owner of vineyard, but He is also Lord of Harvest too. (Matthew 9:38) In fact, the whole world is his vineyard.

II The Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33-44)

1. Tenants

Lord shared the parable of a vineyard that was planted, cared for and had protection fence around it. The owner appointed vinedressers to manage the vineyard. They were supposed to tend the vineyard and give the yield to the owner. However, they were not in a mood to give the yield to the rightful owner. In other words, they looted, exploited, and destroyed the vineyard. Hence, those unfaithful tenants were branded as thieves by the Lord. (John 10:8)



2. Prophets, the Messengers

However, when the owner sent his messengers to get the yield, they were beaten up, mistreated, and killed. God sent many prophets to warn Israel to repent and turn to the Lord. The prophets were not given respect, they were humiliated and rejected by the Nation of Israel.

3. Son of God, the Messiah

The Master sent his son thinking they will respect at least his son. However, the tenants thought if they kill the heir, then they could enjoy the vineyard forever. Lord stated his parable as a prophecy that He will be killed by the elders of Israel in alliance with political power of Romans. The Chief Priests and the elders of Israel did not respect the Son of God. They caught him in the

Garden of Gethsemane, took him to the court of Pontius Pilate and crucified him at Calvary.

4. Judgement

But the owner of the vineyard would judge the wicked tenants and destroy them. The owner had legal right to

“
However, when
the owner sent
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killed.”

expect and demand fruits. The tenants were punished and judged. And God will judge the nation of Israel. As Lord Jesus foretold the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and it was in 70 AD.

5. New Tenants

The owner turns the rights to other tenants. The New vineyard the church is given to new tenants the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers. (Ephesians 4:11)

III The Harvesters

All disciples ought to be disciple makers and church planters. Lord Jesus Christ told his disciples that the harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few. He urged the disciples to pray that there could be more workers to gather the harvest. (Matthew 9:35-38) The whole world belongs to God and it is His vineyard too. Throughout the history Lord has sent his workers into the vineyard and continues to recruit more as evident in the Parable of Workers. (Matthew 20: 1-16) The Master recruited workers four times: at 9 AM, then at noon, 3 PM and 5 PM. If one day is considered as the whole period of church history, then it denotes four eras.

1. Early church Era (0-450 AD):

After His resurrection Lord appeared to disciples and gave them the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20) Lord before ascension promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who will empower believers to witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8) The twelve Apostles, the New Testament church and subsequent era could be considered as those invited to work at 9.00 AM.

2. Middle Ages (451 – 1451 AD): The next batch of workers were invited at 12.00 Noon. The medieval church era could be compared with workers who were invited in the second round. The

monasteries (monks and nuns) were the remanent, faithfully holding on to faith and sharing the faith.

3. Reformation and Modern era 1451-1914 AD: The Era of Reformation, protestant movement and modern missionary movement could be compared with workers invite at 3.00 PM. Kenneth Scott Latourette, a historian consider the period of 1800-1914 as the Great Century when the gospel reached nook and corner of the world, embracing many cultures, languages, nations and people groups.

4. Modern and Lay movements:

After 1914, the world drastically changed, and mission efforts were challenged intellectually, socially, nationally, culturally, religiously and ideologically from all nations around the world. At that time God raised many lay movements (like Operation Mobilization, Youth With A Mission),

local church movements, marketplace movements, tent makers, business as missions to continue His mission. This could be compared to workers invited 5.00 PM.

In these last days, God will use all who are willing to be disciple makers and church planters. These willing people should be identified and trained.

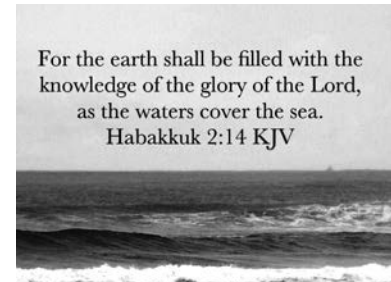
IV. Global Promise

Every person has potential to produce sweet grapes (righteousness, justice), but when human sin dominates, that person would produce wild grapes (oppression, cry for help, disobedience, rebellion). All disciples are expected to be productive or fruitful. Like Joseph, who even in the context of difficulties, hardship, deception and injustice, produced fruitful vine. (Genesis 49:22)


Isaiah prophesized: "In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall

blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit." (Isaiah 27:6) The Global Church has reached nooks and corners of the world, yielding fruit in all nations, culture, and language. "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14) Our mission and ministry to to fill the world with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Are we proactively engaged in this mission? ●



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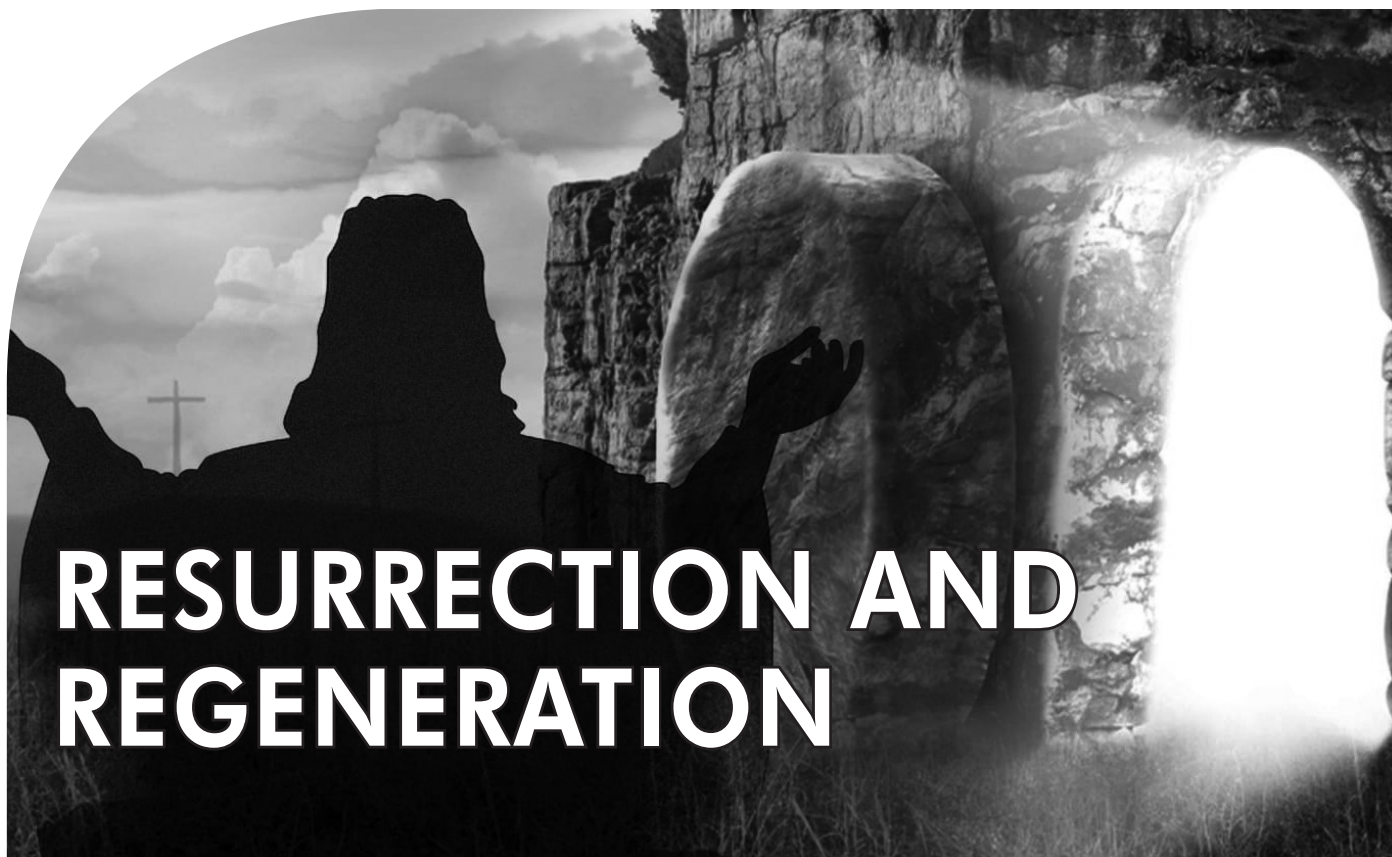
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RESURRECTION AND REGENERATION



DOMENIC MARBANIANG

Christian Minister and Provost at Central India Theological Seminary. He is also author of several books on Amazon, Lulu, and Google Playstore. He prolifically blogs at Marbaniang.com

“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)

Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 stands out as a simple but extremely profound and central discussion on the meaning of Christian salvation. The climax of the conversation is reached in John 3:16, a scripture verse that almost every believing Christian is supposed to know by heart. Of course, the full gist of John 3:16 can only be understood in context of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in the whole chapter.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who believed in the resurrection of the dead. As a Pharisee and a member of the ruling Jewish council (John 3:1), he obviously disagreed with the Sadducees who believed that there were no angels, no spirit, and no resurrection (Acts 23:8). But he did have his questions like everyone else and came to Jesus one night. He said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.” It was a simple claim with a valid reason. Notice that he does not say, “I know” but “we know” signifying that there were other Pharisees who also understood that Jesus is from God because of the kind of miracles He performed. Jesus’ reply to Nicodemus was startling:

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

Why did He say that? What had that to do with what Nicodemus just said? To understand that we need to first look at what the Pharisees really believed about salvation and the resurrection from the dead.

The last chapter of the Tractate Sanhedrin (a Jewish legal commentary) gives us



some idea about the beliefs of the Pharisees regarding the resurrection. The views in the Sanhedrin may be summarized as follows:

1. All Jews, even sinners executed by death-penalty, have a share in the World-to-Come (resurrection); but the Kingdom of God is shut to three kinds of unbelievers: those who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, those who do not believe in the divine origin of the Mosaic Law (Torah), and epicureans (hedonists or materialists who go after pleasure and despise godly things).
2. God promised to the Patriarchs to give to them the land of Canaan (Exodus 6:4). They are now dead; however, in the future they will come to life and inherit the land.
3. Deuteronomy 31:6 promises to Moses: "you shall lie with your fathers and arise; this people will go astray". The verse is a promise of resurrection to Moses.

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 stands out as a simple but extremely profound and central discussion on the meaning of Christian salvation. The climax of the conversation is reached in John 3:16, a scripture verse that almost every believing Christian is supposed to know by heart.

4. Queen Cleopatra had a question for Rabbi Meir: Will the dead arise naked or clothed? Rabbi Meir answered: "If wheat, which is buried naked, meaning that the kernel is sown without the chaff, emerges with several garments of chaff, all the more so will the righteous, who are buried with their garments, arise with their garments."
5. God, the Holy One, will raise them from the dead on the day of judgement. He will bring the soul (heavenly) and cast it back into the body (earthly) for judgment.
6. In the resurrection, the dead will arise with their defects (lame as lame, blind as blind, Jeremiah 31:7,8), but they will then be healed (the lame will leap, the mute will sing, Isaiah 35:6).



7. The Jews will live forever after resurrection (Isaiah 25:8), but gentiles will ultimately die after an extremely long life (Isaiah 65:20).
8. In the days of the Messiah, the sun and moon will shine brightly (Isaiah 30:26); but in the World-to-Come, the only light will be the light of God (Isaiah 24:23).
9. The coming of the Messiah will be preceded by seven years of tribulation, "the Sabbatical cycle" – of drought, famine, and great famine (Torah forgotten); then, of plenty, great plenty (Torah studies restored), heavenly voices, and finally the war of God and Magog.
10. According to the School of Eliyahu, the coming of the Messiah should happen at the end of the 2000

God, the Holy One, will raise them from the dead on the day of judgement. He will bring the soul (heavenly) and cast it back into the body (earthly) for judgment.

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years of Torah (the Jews believed it was around third century when the Mishnaic age or age of Oral Torah ended). The commentators note that the Messiah had not yet appeared because of their sins. The 6000 years of world history was divided into 2000 years of chaos, 2000 years of Torah (from Abraham to the Messiah), and 2000 years of Messiah.

We do not exactly know which of these beliefs were also held by Nicodemus; however, we can be certain that he believed in the resurrection and that he may have also been expecting (along with many others) the Messiah to appear. People had already been very expectant and wondering in their hearts if John was the Messiah (Luke 3:15). However, John did not perform any miracles, but Jesus did. So, one can understand why as a ruler of the Jews Nicodemus would be curious to personally know more about Jesus. And Jesus did reveal to him the truth of who He was.

Jesus began by saying that one cannot see the kingdom of God unless one is born again (John 3:3). Nicodemus immediately responded with a question, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Nicodemus here is thinking in terms of physical birth or rebirth. The Pharisees, unlike modern day Kabbalah Jews, did not believe in reincarnation (punarjanma) but in the resurrection. So, the use of the word "born again" might have startled Nicodemus. Of course, the concept of socio-religious rebirth was not new to Jews. The Sanhedrin mentions that Jewish law regarded a convert to Judaism as reborn. However, this concept of regeneration had its complications. For instance, it was believed that since a convert was reborn, all his previous family ties were to be disregarded. However, incest laws did apply to him regarding his previous family ties. But Jesus was not talking about this sort of socio-religious conversion that merely thought in terms of socio-physical relationships. He said:

"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 the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8)

Jesus explains that He is not talking about physical birth by water and blood, but of spiritual birth of water and the Spirit. The Jews were obsessed with genealogies and the bloodline, but Jesus speaks here of being born of the Spirit. Unless one was born of the Spirit, one cannot see the kingdom of God. Later Paul would write:

"...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1Corinthians 15:50).

The Jewish practice of genealogy was only valid until the Messiah, the Last Adam (1Corinthians 15:45). That is the reason why there is not genealogical significance beyond the Gospels; Luke's genealogy from Adam to Jesus is the last one. In the age of the Church, genealogical obsession is discouraged (1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9) as it has no significance for the believer who is born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Any "believer" who boasts of family lineage, caste, or class is terribly blinded about his spiritual identity in Christ and so searches frantically for his genealogical roots and prides in an identity found therein. But the illuminated believer knows that being born of the Spirit, he is like the wind of which one cannot tell "where it comes from and where it goes." The most beautiful part of the Gospel story for the first century Christians was that Jewish lineage did not matter; even the gentiles could be born of the Spirit and be children of God.

Nicodemus wonders how these things can be, and Jesus presents to him the great stumbling block of the Gospel—the Cross. Christ is the true Witness, the Son of Man who descended from heaven, who will be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, the light of the world, so that whoever comes to Him and believes in Him should not perish in sins but inherit eternal life and the kingdom of God (John 3:11-18). As the Last Adam, He puts an end to the genealogy of sin through His death but rises again, vanquishing death, "the Lord from heaven," "life-giving spirit," "the Second Man," "the heavenly" (1Corinthians 15:45-49).

By faith in Christ through the Spirit we are baptized into Christ by the Spirit and made to drink into one Spirit (1Corinthians 12:3,13; Galatians 3:2). Thus, by faith in Christ's Word, we are "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1Peter 1:23). We are raised

up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that we walk according to the Spirit of Christ, fulfilling the desires of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:6; Galatians 5:16). We are delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of the Beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). We do not walk according to the spirit that works in the children of disobedience in the lusts of the flesh but are led by the Spirit of Christ as children of God knowing and doing the will of God (Ephesians 2:2,3;5:17,18; Galatians 5:16-25; Romans 8:14). Through the Spirit we "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" because we are born again, we are the children of God (Romans 8:23).

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:16,17)

It is, however, important to always remember that this work of regeneration is a work of the Spirit, of grace, and not of any human physical action. The Galatian and Colossian Christians began to forget this truth and were becoming deluded by physical practices such as circumcision and harsh physical regulations (Galatians 3; Colossians 2). None of these regenerates us. The only point of connection between us and Christ is His Holy Spirit in us by whom and in whom we live.

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3-4)



RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST

**PASTOR P.J. DANIEL**

Senior Pastor at IPC;
Faculty at IBC

As we sail through the turbulent and rough ocean of this world, Jesus Christ, our eternal hope, is the only anchor who can hold and keep us steady in these dreadful situations.

The “Resurrection of the Dead in Christ” is relevant and faith-evoking to those who are in drudgery today. It always arouses hope in a child of God, and promises not only a future serene life but also creates resilience to face tough situations of life.

The resurrection of the dead is an amazing subject of the Bible, which had attracted much criticism and attack from the Sadducees during Jesus’ time. And they attack the materialist in the present day. But Jesus verified all the questions of the opponents and established the resurrection.

We see two unanswered questions in the book of Psalms. “Who can live and not see death, or who can escape from the power of the grave?” (Psalms 89: 48) Nobody could answer these questions until the time of Jesus Christ. It cannot be answered by any sage, religion, or philosophy. The answer could be given only by Jesus Christ. He said to Martha: The person, who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. Indeed, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11: 25, 26) Our life will not be extinguished with our death. Death is only a turning point to the celestial abode from mortality.

The guarantee of our resurrection is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ who has prevailed over death and Hades. When Jesus was resurrected some of the saints were also resurrected to guarantee our resurrection. (Matthew 27:52,53) Satan usurped the domain over death and Hades after the depravity of Adam, but Jesus defeated him on the cross of Calvary and snatched the keys of death



and hades from him. (Hebrews 2: 15; Revelation 1: 18) Now Jesus is in absolute control of death and hades. He is resurrected as the first fruit from death. "Christ the first fruit"(1 Corinthians 15: 23) If Christ is the first fruit, then there will be the hope of a great harvest.

There are two kinds of resurrections, the resurrection of the Just and the resurrection of the Unjust (Daniel 12: 2; John 5: 28; Acts 24: 15; Revelation 20: 5,6). There are two kinds of resurrections, but different ranks in it. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ at His coming. Then comes the end." Christ has been resurrected as the first fruit on the third day of his crucifixion. If Christ is the first fruit, then there will be a harvest. It will occur at his coming. "The Scripture obviously supports this fact. "For the Lord himself will come down from

The guarantee of our resurrection is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ who has prevailed over death and hades. When Jesus was resurrected some of the saints were also resurrected. to guarantee our resurrection. (Matthew 27:52,53)

heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17) Paul also underscores it: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15 51-52). These verses are the foundation of our faith. Because our Lord is raised from the dead so we shall also be raised with a transformed body, from corruptible to incorruptible; from mortal to immortal.



On the blessed morning of that resurrection day we shall hear the song of victory in the midair: "Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory?" Who can sing this song? Only those who do not face death can sing, "Oh death, where is your victory?" Death could no more defeat them. And only those who met death and resurrected from the grave can sing, "Oh grave, where is your sting?" The grave could not hold them anymore. This is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to Martha. (John 11: 25, 26)

So, now our question is: In what manner will be the resurrection? Paul clarifies this in his Epistle to Corinthians. He figurately compares the funerals of the saints with sowing. We sow in the field mere grain, which dies in the field, and is buried. Then it germinates and sprouts, and will have a different body, and each seed will have its

own body. Similarly, the resurrection of our body will come to pass. If God can give a different frame of a plant to a mere seed, how much more will the Lord provide a transformed body for his saints, who are purchased by his blood? At the trumpet sound, in a flash, the dead will be raised. The perishable body will be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. Saints from all corners of the earth will be resurrected in their glorious apparitions. But the grandeur will be diverse. Paul compares it to celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. We get the reward according to our work, but our glory will be based on our holiness. Only those who are conformed to the image of His Son, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish will have a better resurrection. Eternity will prove how we have lived on Earth!

The Psalmist elucidates spectacularly the golden morning of the resurrection day. "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth

will be yours." (Psalms 110: 3) It is a fabulous portrayal of resurrection. The Lord's people will voluntarily offer themselves with the beauty of holiness, on the day of His power reflected on the day of the resurrection. Resurrection will occur with the power of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you." (Romans 8: 11). The guarantee of our resurrection is based on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So, make sure that we are under the scrutiny and direction of the Holy Spirit.

The resurrection will be fabulous. Regardless of age, our resurrection will be as we had been in our prime youth. Not with grey hair and wrinkled face or like infancy. As we are in our prime of youth, the saints will be resurrected. As the saints are going up, they will be like the dew of the morning, reflected with the rising sunshine. What a glorious day it will be!

Then we see the third order, the end. Since resurrection is figurately used in agricultural terms, first fruit and harvest, then the third will be putting chaff in the lake of fire. It is described in Revelation 20: 11-15. All the dead in trespasses and sin will be resurrected before the white throne, and they will be judged according to their works. Those whose names were not found in the book of life will be cast in the lake of fire (Revelation 20: 15).

Dear readers, what is your destiny? Is it going to be an eternity spent with the Lord Jesus or is it going to be an eternity in the lake of fire? This is a reminder to you to decide about your life. It is our blessed hope that we will be with the Lord forever. So let us encourage each other with this word.



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham inaugurates the IPC Kumbanad District Convention held during 4th to 6th January 2023 at Maniyattu Auditorium, Muttumon. Translation: Dr. Saju Joseph. Pr. C.C. Abraham, T.J. Abraham Thomas Philip and Blesson Kuzhikala on Stage



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