

# Sharing the Word Year C



Author Akinori Kamachi

■63rd Session of Sharing the Word of God

●First Reading: Baruch 5:1?9

This passage describes the liberation of Jerusalem and Israel from the Babylonian exile. It calls for casting off mourning clothes (sorrow) and clothing oneself with the glory (salvation) of God, signifying the end of exile and the realization of hope. The dignity and honor lost during the exile are restored through God's salvation, which extends to the entire world. God's peace is eternal, and Jerusalem glorifies God, thereby becoming an eternal symbol of God's special presence.

The "east" symbolizes God's presence and calls people to witness His salvation. Jerusalem, personified as a mother, is reassured that her children are not forsaken, and the realization of salvation based on God's covenant is a source of joy for the people. The exiled and scattered will be gathered from the ends of the earth through the Word of God or the Messiah sent by Him, affirming God's promise to watch over His people without fail.

Despite the hardships and humiliations experienced during exile, God's plan guarantees restoration and glory. His word of salvation is certain. Through Israel's repentance, the proud mountains and hills (arrogance and power) will be lowered, valleys (oppression) will become level, and distinctions before God will be erased. God's mercy will lead Israel in joy and peace, conveying the importance of repentance and holding onto hope during hardships.

【Jerusalem】

1. Jerusalem is a special city emphasizing God's presence and salvation (Exodus 25:22, Isaiah 60:1?3).
2. Its personification expresses a deep bond and intimate relationship with God.
3. The restoration of Jerusalem symbolizes salvation for the entire world and represents the center of hope and salvation.

●Second Reading: Philippians 1:4?6, 8?11

Paul shares a deep relationship with the Church in Philippi, expressing joy and gratitude for the believers. His intercessory prayer aims for their spiritual growth and actions to glorify God. This life of glorifying God results in the fulfillment of His work and serves as spiritual support for one another. The "first day" refers to the time when faith was first embraced in Philippi, such as the conversion of the jailer (Acts 16:30).

"Sharing in the Gospel" involves believing and accepting the Word, receiving God's grace, practicing it in daily life, supporting missionary work, sharing the joy and hope of the Gospel with others, and fulfilling the mission of evangelism.

"Good work" refers to:

The work of salvation achieved through God's grace and gifts (Ephesians 2:8?9).

The transformation of believers into Christlike individuals (sanctification, 1 John 3:2), as they are called to this purpose (Romans 8:29).

Paul is confident that this work will be completed when Christ returns, grounded in God's faithfulness to His promises (Hebrews 10:23).

Paul's overflowing love for the believers, inspired by Christ's sacrificial and unconditional love, is sincere and visible to the omnipotent God (Hebrews 4:13). It fosters understanding of God's Word and discernment of what is right and excellent, enabling believers to focus on the most important things and prepare for Christ's return.

The "harvest of righteousness," which includes spiritual fruit and good deeds, glorifies God. It underscores the importance of both faith and practice in Christian life.

●Gospel Reading: Luke 3:1?6

Luke establishes the historical credibility of John the Baptist's ministry, dating it to the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar's reign (AD 28?29). John, the son of Zechariah, receives God's Word in the wilderness and fulfills his prophetic role as

the forerunner of Jesus. His mission is to prepare for the coming of the Lord by preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins, symbolized through the baptism of water.

The words from Isaiah 40:3-5, "Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness... Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill made low... All flesh shall see the salvation of God," highlight repentance and the leveling of distinctions before God. God's plan of salvation is universal, available to all humanity, and transcends divisions.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 64th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-17

The 3rd Sunday of Advent is called Gaudete Sunday (Sunday of Joy), as it celebrates the joy of the Lord drawing near. This theme of joy resonates throughout the other readings as well. The song of joy for Zion (Jerusalem), the people of God, is rooted in the assurance of God's salvation and restoration, and the conviction that God will bring new blessings. God's judgment for Israel's sins concludes with their repentance during the Babylonian exile. The relationship with God is then restored through His love, mercy, and forgiveness of sins. This passage encourages believers to cast aside despair and powerlessness, holding on to faith without fear, and to avoid "letting their hands fall limp." As a "mighty Savior," God protects and rescues His people. The "quietness" and "songs of joy" born of love reflect God's overflowing delight in His people, offering comfort and security. This intimacy between God and His people is beautifully portrayed.

【Zion, Jerusalem, and Israel】

Zion refers to the City of David, a part of Jerusalem located on the southeastern hill, and is often used to represent the holy place where God's temple stands or the specific gathering place of God's people (see Psalms 48:2-3; Isaiah 2:2-3). Jerusalem refers to the entire city, including Zion. Israel is often personified as a woman, with Zion and Jerusalem described as daughters, symbolizing the closeness and affection between God and His people.

● Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Writing from prison, Paul encourages the believers in the Philippian church to rejoice even amidst hardship. This joy not only reduces stress and clarifies thinking but also leads to constructive ideas, offering both psychological and spiritual peace. The imminent return of the Lord, or the celebration of His birth, assures believers of His constant presence (Immanuel). Therefore, they are urged to treat others with patience and gentleness. Paul advises entrusting worries to the Lord, offering thanks for His blessings first, and then presenting specific requests in prayer. By doing so, believers receive peace that surpasses human understanding, freeing them from fear and filling their hearts with tranquility.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 3:10-18

Hearing John's message, the crowds repent and ask what they should do in practical terms. Repentance is expressed through acts of love for neighbors: those with excess share with those in need; tax collectors act honestly and refrain from exploitation; soldiers avoid abusing their power, harming others, and are content with their wages. The key takeaway here is to "remember the kindness you have received but forget the kindness you have given."

The crowd eagerly anticipates the arrival of the Messiah, and some even wonder if John himself is the Savior. John humbly denies this, proclaiming the coming of a mightier One (Jesus), who will baptize with "the Holy Spirit and fire." He speaks of Jesus' spiritual work and purifying power. Using the image of a winnowing fork, John describes how Jesus will separate the grain (the righteous) from the chaff (the wicked), illustrating that Jesus' salvation is accompanied by judgment. John teaches that repentance must be demonstrated through concrete actions (Luke 3:8) and that salvation through Jesus comes with accountability.

【Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Fire】

1. Baptism with the Holy Spirit

- 1) God pours out His Spirit, granting believers new life and a close relationship with Him (John 3:5-8; Acts 2:1-4).
- 2) Jesus promises to send the "Helper" (the Holy Spirit) to guide, teach, and empower believers (John 14:26).
- 3) The Holy Spirit works within believers, equipping them to fulfill their God-given mission and become



witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8).

## 2. Baptism with Fire

- 1) In the Bible, fire symbolizes purification and judgment, burning away sin and sanctifying people (Malachi 3:2-3).
- 2) Fire also represents God's judgment: those who repent are saved, while those who do not are condemned (Matthew 13:40-42; Luke 3:17).

Author: Akinobu Kamachi

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■ The 65th Word Sharing

● First Reading: Micah 5:1-4

The prophet Micah, who was active in Judah during the same period as Isaiah, proclaims God's salvation filled with hope, foretelling the emergence of the Messiah from Bethlehem to rule Israel. Bethlehem, a small town, is described as the origin of a Messiah whose existence is "from ancient times," hinting at an eternal nature. Before the Messiah's arrival, there will be a temporary dispersion, but the Messiah (Jesus) will be born of a mother and reunite Israel as one nation. The Messiah's reign will be powerful, bringing peace and security, demonstrating God's authority and dominion. The Messiah's salvation will be universal, extending influence worldwide, and the Messiah himself will embody peace (Isaiah 9:6).

The Messiah is not only a bringer of physical peace or the cessation of war but also reconciliation with God and perfect spiritual peace. The term "peace" (Hebrew: shalom) encompasses not just the absence of conflict but also harmony and prosperity. The Messiah provides complete peace.

**[Ephrathah]** Meaning "fertile land," it refers to a clan or family within the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:11). It is also the ancient name or surrounding area of Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19).

**[Tribe of Judah]** Descendants of Abraham, with Judah being the fourth son of Jacob (Genesis 29:35). From this tribe, King David was born, forming the core of Israel's monarchy and holding a key position in the Messianic lineage (1 Samuel 16).

**[Bethlehem]** Meaning "House of Bread," it is linked to the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35). Located about 8 km south of Jerusalem, it is the birthplace of King David (1 Samuel 16:1; Luke 2:4) and, according to the New Testament, of Jesus, fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6). "Bethlehem Ephrathah" distinguishes it from other places with the same name.

● Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

The Letter to the Hebrews, though not definitively attributed to Paul, is a spiritual letter addressing Jewish believers. It emphasizes that sacrifices and offerings of animals under the Old Testament law (Psalm 40:6-8) do not bring true atonement. Only the offering of Jesus' body fulfills God's will and serves as a true redemption. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were human-initiated, temporary, and insufficient for eternal atonement. God was not pleased with these incomplete sacrifices (Isaiah 1:11-17; Hosea 6:6).

The Old Testament prophesied Jesus' mission (Isaiah 53). Jesus came to earth to fulfill God's will. In God's plan of salvation, Jesus' single act of self-sacrifice replaced the Old Testament's sacrificial system, offering eternal redemption. Believers who accept Jesus' Gospel (death, resurrection, and teachings) are fully cleansed (forgiven of original sin) and become righteous before God. They are called to live as holy people pleasing to God (1 Peter 1:15-16). After baptism, forgiveness of sins requires repentance, confessing one's sins (1 John 1:9), and striving to become more like Jesus (Romans 12:1-2). Forgiveness is also received through the Our Father prayer (Matthew 6:12) and forgiving others (Matthew 6:12).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-45

After the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel told Mary she would conceive the Savior (Luke 1:36), she learned of Elizabeth's (her relative's) pregnancy. Out of a desire to share in Elizabeth's joy, Mary traveled to greet her (a journey of about 80 km, taking several days). Upon their meeting, the child in Elizabeth's womb (John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner) leaped, sensing Jesus' presence through the Holy Spirit. (The Holy Spirit would later dwell permanently in believers after Pentecost, John 14:16-17.)

Elizabeth recognized the child Mary carried as the Savior and humbly expressed gratitude for Mary's visit. Mary, in

faith, trusted God's plan and responded, "I am the Lord's servant; may it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), receiving God's blessing.

Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, blessed Mary. Their meeting highlights the importance of mutual encouragement and recognizing God's grace.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ 66th Word Sharing

● First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

This event, dating back to around the 11th century BC, recounts the story of Hannah, wife of Elkanah, who prayed fervently to the Lord to be blessed with a child, saying, "If you take notice of your servant's misery... and give her a male child, I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11). God answered her prayer, granting her a son whom she named Samuel ("God has heard"), as her persistent prayers had reached the Lord. When Elkanah set out for Shiloh to offer sacrifices to God, Hannah chose to stay behind until her child was weaned. She declared, "I will present him before the Lord, and he will live there always" (1 Samuel 1:24-28), intending for her son to serve the Lord at the tabernacle in Shiloh for his lifetime. By faithfully keeping her vow and offering her only son, who was granted by God, back to Him, Hannah expressed her gratitude.

After weaning her son, she brought offerings of "a three-year-old bull, flour, and wine" to God, symbolizing her thankfulness. She told Eli, the priest, that she had prayed for a child at that place and that God had answered her prayer. In fulfilling her vow, she entrusted her son to Eli for God's service, demonstrating complete trust and dedication to the Lord.

【Elkanah】

A descendant of the Levite tribe, responsible for serving at the temple or tabernacle. He lived in Ephraim, led a devout life, and observed the Law by offering sacrifices at Shiloh annually (1 Samuel 1:3). Although he was not wealthy or socially prominent, he was a man of faith.

【Shiloh】

A key location in the Old Testament, situated in the hill country of Ephraim, and served as Israel's religious center. After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Shiloh was the site of the tabernacle (Joshua 18:1). However, it later fell into decline following the Philistines' capture of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4) and became a symbol of Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness (Psalm 78:60-61).

【Contents of the Ark of the Covenant】

The two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:2-5), a gold jar of manna (Exodus 16:32-34), and Aaron's staff (Numbers 17:23).

● Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Reflecting on the Father's love, consider this: we receive air for breathing (Psalm 24:1), health to walk to the local store, income from our work to purchase necessities, and countless other blessings. These reveal God's overflowing love and grace. At Christ's return, believers will be transformed to resemble His resurrected form. Christians who are free from guilt can pray boldly and confidently before God. Therefore, we should strive for daily self-reflection and inner peace. When we obey God's commandments—such as the commandment to love one another—and demonstrate our love through actions, our prayers will align with His will and be fulfilled (Philippians 4:19). Those who follow God's commands experience His presence through the Holy Spirit.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 2:41-52

Every year, Jesus' parents journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover. At the age of 12, when Jewish boys assumed religious responsibility, Jesus stayed behind at the temple, unknown to His parents, who assumed He was with the traveling group. Upon realizing He was missing, they returned to Jerusalem, finding Him in the temple astonishing others with His profound understanding of Scripture and the Law.

When Mary reprimanded Him as a concerned mother, Jesus explained that He was fulfilling God's plan. Mary, recalling the angel Gabriel's message about Jesus' divine mission, treasured these things in her heart. Jesus returned to Nazareth

with His parents, growing in favor with God and humanity.

**【Religious Responsibility】**

Internal: Living according to Scripture and teachings.

External: Practicing neighborly love (Matthew 22:37-38), engaging in social service, and spreading the Gospel (Matthew 28:19).

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

## The First Sunday of Advent

### ■ The 62nd Sharing of the Word

#### ● First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14?16

God declares that the days are coming when His promise to restore Israel and Judah will be fulfilled. He assures that this word will be faithfully kept and brought to fruition. From the lineage of David, a righteous Branch (the Messiah) will arise. The Messiah (Savior Jesus) will bring stability to the people of Israel, establishing God's perfect rule and spiritual righteousness. As a result of God's salvation and governance, Judah (the unified kingdom) and Jerusalem (the capital) will enjoy peace. Since "The Lord is our righteousness," God demonstrates to humanity the standard of righteousness through His works. Even though people cannot fully uphold this standard and may violate it through sin, they are forgiven and made righteous by God's love and grace. Reconciliation between God and humanity is achieved not through human effort or deeds but through God's acceptance. This reconciliation brings peace and hope for rest.

#### 【Israel and Judah】

After King Solomon's death, the Kingdom of Israel split into two: the northern kingdom, called "Israel," and the southern kingdom, "Judah." Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah was later destroyed by Babylon. Jeremiah, through God's message, foretold the reunification of these two peoples into one nation (later called Judah and then Israel). After the Babylonian exile and the return of the people of Judah, the distinction between Israel and Judah blurred, and the entire Jewish people came to be recognized as "the people of Israel."

#### 【The Role of the Messiah (Jesus)】

##### 1. Witnessing the Truth about God

- (1) God's salvation plan (John 3:16) sent Jesus for atonement, enabling the forgiveness of sins and granting eternal life (John 14:6).
- (2) Jesus proclaimed the arrival of God's Kingdom and urged repentance (Matthew 4:17).
- (3) At the end of the world, the final judgment will grant eternal life to the righteous and bring condemnation to the wicked (John 5:28?29).

##### 2. Through Jesus' atonement, the door to eternal life opens, ushering in a new era that fundamentally transforms humanity's future.

#### ● Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:12?4:2

Paul exhorts the Thessalonian believers to show unconditional love not only toward one another but also toward non-believers, following the example of Jesus. Such love is essential for the maturity of their faith. He encourages believers to practice love in their daily lives by caring for and helping others. Paul reminds them to be mindful of the Lord's return, resist the temptations of this world, and strive to live blamelessly before God. While the believers are already living according to the teachings they have received, Paul urges them to deepen their love further. There is no end to growing in faith, and daily acts of love are necessary. Jesus' "commandment" is to practice love that pleases God, manifesting it through their daily actions.

#### ● Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25?28, 34?36

Signs will appear in the sun, moon, and stars, and the seas will rage. As the world approaches its end, extraordinary cosmic and earthly phenomena will signify that the end of all creation is near. The "shaking of the heavens" implies a transformation of the entire universe and the manifestation of God's power. While the specifics of what will happen remain unclear, fear and anxiety will overwhelm people. For believers, however, this period marks the awaited return of Christ, who will come on the clouds. For the unbelieving, it brings personal judgment (Revelation 20:12?15), a source of great fear.

Believers are encouraged not to fear when these extraordinary events occur but to recognize that the hope of salvation

is near. They must remain prepared and vigilant for the end, as no one can predict when it will come. In their daily lives, they must avoid being distracted by worries, hardships, or pleasures that lead them away from the Lord's teachings. By maintaining prayer and vigilance, believers can stand unashamed before Jesus when He comes.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

## The Epiphany of the Lord

### ■67th Reflection on the Word

#### ●First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

This passage, often referred to as Third Isaiah, prophesies hope for the restoration and prosperity of Jerusalem to the people of Israel who returned from Babylonian captivity (586?538 BC). Though the world is shrouded in darkness, God pours light upon Jerusalem, and this light (hope) shines over the entire world. Kings from different nations are drawn to this radiance, and scattered sons and daughters of Israel return to Jerusalem. Wealth is brought across the seas, filling the city with prosperity. From Midian and Ephah come caravans of young camels, and Sheba brings gifts of gold and frankincense. The Israelites rejoice as Jerusalem's prosperity becomes international. The flourishing of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity signifies the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel. Through this miraculous restoration, people recognize God's greatness and power, spreading His glory across the world.

Explanations of Key Terms:

【Midian き g】

A nomadic people descended from Abraham, living in the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula and parts of Jordan.

【Ephah】 The name of Midian's son and the region where his descendants settled.

【Camel】 Used for trade, camels were essential for transporting goods over long distances.

【Sheba】 A city known for its thriving trade. Gold was a precious commodity, and frankincense was a costly and significant product used in trade.

#### ●Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2, 3, 5?6

Paul speaks of the mission given to him by God to preach to the Gentiles. The previously hidden plan of the Gospel is now revealed through the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul. Jesus unites Jews and Gentiles into one church, allowing them to share equally in God's promises.

【The Mystery of God's Plan】

1. Jews and Gentiles are united as one through Jesus.
2. The plan of redemption through the Savior's birth and sacrificial death on the cross (Galatians 4:4, 1 Peter 2:24).
3. In the Old Testament, salvation was understood collectively by nations, but Jesus' salvation is for all humanity (Psalm 22:27-28).
4. The Church becomes the place where God's plan is carried out concretely.

【Inheritance through Christ】

1. Becoming citizens of God's Kingdom (Matthew 25:34).
2. Gaining eternal life (John 3:16).
3. Receiving spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).
4. Sharing in Christ's suffering and glory (Romans 8:17).

#### ●Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

The Magi (Gentiles) from the East (likely Persia or Babylon) learn of the Savior's birth through a star (Numbers 24:17). They meet King Herod in Jerusalem, declaring their intent to worship "the new king." This announcement reveals God's plan of salvation but troubles the self-centered Herod. Gathering priests and scribes, Herod learns of the prophecy in Micah 5:2 that the ruler of Israel will come from Bethlehem.

Guided by the star, the Magi reach the house where Jesus was born. There, they worship Him and offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, symbolizing His kingship, divinity, and future suffering and burial. Warned in a dream, they return home by another route.



Herod, driven by power and greed, commits the sinful and destructive act of ordering the massacre of infants in Ramah (Jeremiah 31:15). Yet, this tragedy also points to future hope (Jeremiah 31:17).

【The Gifts】 Gold: Symbolizes Jesus' authority as king. Frankincense: Represents His divinity.  
Myrrh: Foreshadows His death and burial.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

## The Baptism of the Lord

### ■68th Session: Sharing the Word

#### ●First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

This passage, often referred to as Second Isaiah, contains prophecies concerning the Babylonian Exile.

God commands Isaiah to speak comfort to the people of Israel. This “comfort” signifies their liberation from the Babylonian captivity and the forgiveness of their sins. The repeated command “Comfort, comfort my people” emphasizes the certainty of God’s promise. God declares that the sins of Israel have been atoned for, their time of trial has ended, and calls for preparations for the coming of the Messiah.

This is similar to John the Baptist fulfilling his role as the forerunner of Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 3:3). The lowering of mountains and hills, the leveling of rough paths, and the widening of narrow roads symbolize repentance. Through repentance, God prepares the way for all people to partake in His salvation, revealing His glory and power.

Isaiah calls the people of Israel to climb high mountains and boldly proclaim the good news of salvation to many. God’s power symbolizes His authority and salvation, heralding the reign of God as a mighty king. The image of God as a shepherd portrays Him as a gentle and loving guide who protects and leads His flock with care.

#### ●Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Salvation from God is offered to all people through Jesus. The passage teaches us to renounce worldly desires, live pious lives in this world, and place our hope in the Second Coming of the Lord, avoiding an obsession with material possessions.

Through Jesus’ sacrificial death, we are freed from sin and made pure, instructed to be zealous for good works. God’s salvation is not based on our deeds but is entirely an act of His mercy and grace. Through baptism, we are united with God, richly blessed by the Holy Spirit, and given new life, fostering a close relationship with Him.

Being justified before God, we become heirs of eternal life, which is the ultimate hope for believers.

[About Titus]

1. Titus was tasked with appointing elders on Crete, a place influenced by other cultures and plagued with bad habits (Titus 1:5, 12).
2. He served as a role model, guiding believers to live devoutly (Titus 2), testify to God (Titus 2:7-8), and strengthen the church’s foundation.
3. He was a close collaborator of Paul, participated in the Jerusalem Council (Galatians 2:1-3), and supported the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:16-17).

[A Pious Life Includes]

1. Learning God’s Word and striving to live as He desires (Psalm 119:11), practicing love for neighbors (Mark 12:31), and daily self-reflection.
2. Seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance to recognize personal sins (Psalm 139:23-24), acknowledging one’s weaknesses, avoiding slavery to desires, and finding contentment.
3. Confessing sins (1 John 1:9), truly repenting, returning to the Lord, living in response to God’s love, and maintaining gratitude.

#### ●Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were eagerly awaiting the Messiah and wondered if John the Baptist might be the one. John clarified that he baptized with water, but the Messiah, who is greater, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (explained on the 3rd Sunday of Advent).

When Jesus was baptized by John, it signified: ① Taking His place among the people (Hebrews 4:15). ② Fulfilling all

righteousness (Matthew 3:14-15).③Marking the beginning of His public ministry as the Son of God.

This event revealed God's plan of salvation and declared Jesus as its central figure. The voice from heaven affirmed the special relationship between God and Jesus, marking the commencement of His ministry and clearly proclaiming His divinity and mission.

[Reasons for the Messianic Expectation]

1.In 63 BC, Rome conquered Judea, imposing heavy taxes and depriving the people of their freedom, leading to hopes for liberation from Roman rule.

2.Prophecies of the Messiah restoring Israel (Isaiah 9:6?7, Jeremiah 23:5?6) fueled their longing for fulfillment.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ 69th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

This passage, referred to as Third Isaiah, addresses the period following the return from Babylonian exile after Jerusalem's fall in 586 B.C. During this era, Isaiah himself was not active, but prophecies about Israel's restoration and its relationship with God are presented. God assures the salvation and restoration of Zion (Jerusalem), declaring that He will not remain silent until Jerusalem's salvation and righteousness are revealed. God promises to restore Israel as a glorious nation, bestowing upon it a new name and image to display its glory to the whole world. Jerusalem is depicted as a "crown" or "diadem" in God's hand, signifying its unique honor and beauty. Israel's past suffering and abandonment are over; God calls Israel "My Delight" and declares it "Married," symbolizing the healing of past hardships and the establishment of a new relationship with God. Through the image of welcoming Jerusalem as a bride and rejoicing over the union, the relationship between God and His people is illustrated. This demonstrates God's deep love and His desire for eternal joy with His people. (In this context, "Israel" represents both the land and its people as a unified entity.)

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The gifts given to each believer for their unique work vary, but they all originate from the same Spirit, forming the Church community. Though there are diverse forms of service, they are all done for the same Lord (Jesus). These gifts and services, enabled by the Spirit, are not for personal satisfaction or selfish desires but for the growth of the Church community and the benefit of others.

【The Holy Spirit gives】

1. Wisdom: Insight from God's perspective to discern the best solutions and guide others on the right path (1 Kings 3:16-28; Matthew 22:15-22).

2. Knowledge: Supernatural understanding of specific matters, enabling one to comprehend others' mental states, provide necessary words, and teach effectively (John 4:16-19; Acts 5:1-11).

Healing and Miracles: Abilities granted through faith and obedience to God (1 Corinthians 12:9; Mark 16:17-18; Acts 3:1-10). These miracles reveal God's glory and strengthen faith. The Spirit also enables prophecy, praying in tongues, and discernment to determine whether such gifts and works are from God. These gifts, distributed by the Spirit, are not based on individual merit or choice but on God's plan.

【Speaking in Tongues】

One of the gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, is a supernatural utterance that often cannot be understood by the speaker or others (Acts 2:4). It serves purposes such as praise, prayer, and spiritual growth.

● Gospel Reading: John 2:1-11

At the wedding in Cana, where Jesus' disciples (likely four or five at the start of His public ministry) were present, running out of wine was considered a major disgrace. Mary, out of trust in her Son and her intercessory role as the Mother of God, approached Jesus and simply informed Him, "They have no wine." Jesus replied, "My hour has not yet come," indicating that His salvific plan was already in motion. However, He cautiously responded to her request with a miracle. By using vessels from Jewish purification rituals, Jesus symbolized a transition from the law's cleansing methods to a new era of grace. The wine He provided was of the highest quality, signifying that what He offers surpasses earthly standards. This first miracle revealed God's glory, affirmed Jesus as the Messiah sent by God, and strengthened the disciples' faith.

■ The 70th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10

On the Feast of Trumpets (July 1), the people gathered voluntarily and requested that Ezra, the priest, read the Law to them. Ezra stood on a wooden platform and, along with many assistants (Levites), read and explained the Book of the Law (Torah) in a way that the people could understand. The passages read are believed to include Deuteronomy 28 (Blessings and Curses), Deuteronomy 31 (Command to Read the Law), Leviticus 26 (Blessings and Curses), and Leviticus 23 (Regulations for the Feast of Trumpets).

The people stood as a sign of respect for the Word of God, and the spirit of worship filled the entire assembly, leading them to respond in unison with "Amen" (a declaration of agreement and certainty). Since the people spoke Aramaic and the Book of the Law was written in Hebrew, the Levites translated and explained the text, enabling the people to understand it clearly.

When the people became aware of their sinfulness in light of the Law, they wept in repentance. However, Ezra encouraged them, saying, "Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep. Celebrate this day as a day of joy in the Lord." He urged them to transform the day into one of gratitude and celebration.

【Nehemiah】

After the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah received permission from the Persian king (Artaxerxes) to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and was even granted financial support (Nehemiah 2:6-8). This permission stemmed from political motives to strengthen and stabilize the region, trust in Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:11), and God's providence.

【Feast of Trumpets】

This was a sacred day to commemorate the start of a new year dedicated to serving God, marked by repentance and renewed devotion. Work was prohibited on this holy day (Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1).

【Rejoicing in the Lord】

Although the Israelites failed to fully keep the Law and committed sins, God's unchanging love, mercy, and forgiveness allowed them to return from exile and worship Him again. They rejoiced in God's abiding presence and grace (Psalm 103:8-12).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Paul uses the image of a body to explain the Church community. Just as the body is one but made up of many parts, so too is the Church—a single body comprised of diverse members. Even though the members come from different backgrounds, they are united as one body through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "drink of one Spirit" evokes the image of making the Spirit an integral part of oneself. Paul emphasizes that the Church's diversity should not lead to comparisons or self-deprecation. Every person is essential, and members are given different gifts and roles by God. These should be respected, as God assigns each person their unique function. The Church thrives on harmony, not uniformity, as members acknowledge the necessity and value of one another. Even the seemingly weaker parts of the body play indispensable roles, and in God's eyes, all are equally important and honored. Members must care for one another, sharing in both suffering and joy.

Since each believer is part of Christ's body, they are called to recognize their responsibilities and significance. When members are entrusted with spiritual gifts, such as teaching or leadership, they must fulfill their roles in unity to serve the Church's singular purpose. Gratitude for individual gifts and their full utilization are essential for the Church to function effectively.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Luke sets out to compile an accurate account of the events surrounding Jesus' ministry by examining oral traditions

and early writings. He meticulously investigates the events from the beginning of Jesus' life and writes this Gospel to assure Theophilus (meaning "lover of God," which could be a personal name or a symbolic title) that the teachings he received are reliable. This Gospel is both a personal dedication and a document intended for wider circulation. After overcoming trials in the wilderness, Jesus, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, returns to Galilee. News of His ministry spreads, and He gains respect in the synagogues where He teaches. Following His usual practice, Jesus enters the synagogue, takes the scroll of Isaiah, and reads a passage (Isaiah 61:1-2) that outlines the Messiah's mission of salvation. He declares, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," implying that He is the Messiah. Luke presents this declaration as Jesus' inaugural public message, marking the beginning of His mission to fulfill God's promise of salvation.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ The 71th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

The "messenger" mentioned here is considered to be John the Baptist, as recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2-3). The messenger has the role of preparing for the coming of the Lord (the Messiah). The Lord (God or Jesus) will suddenly come to His temple. The arrival of the Lord brings both joy and a day of fear and trial, for the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated, and the unjust will be judged (Malachi 3:5). Refining is the process of removing impurities to produce pure gold or silver. As a refining fire, the Lord purifies the Levites (priests), making them worthy to stand before God, serve Him, and offer sacrifices and worship that are pleasing to Him.

【About Malachi】

1. Malachi is considered the last prophet of the Old Testament, who was active after the Babylonian exile (around the 5th century BC). While the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt, the people's faith had declined, and worship had become mere formalism.
2. He pointed out the corruption of both the priests and the people, urging them to serve God faithfully and delivering words of hope (Malachi 3:16-18). The people were offering blemished animals in worship (Malachi 1:6-14), and the priests were failing to teach the law correctly (Malachi 2:7-9). Malachi called on the people to live according to the law and prophesied about the "Day of the Lord," which would bring both salvation and judgment. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the messenger (John the Baptist) who would prepare for Him (Malachi 3:1, 3:23-24).
3. As the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi serves as a bridge to the New Testament, preparing for the arrival of the Messiah (the Savior).

● Second Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Just as humans possess flesh and blood, Jesus also took on the same flesh (incarnation). The fear of death enslaves and binds people's hearts, depriving them of freedom. Jesus came to bring liberation from this bondage and to destroy death. The salvation through Jesus' atonement is directed toward humans, the descendants of Abraham. Through God's deep mercy, Jesus became the High Priest who atones for the sins of the people.

Jesus lived a fully human life, sharing in all human experiences. God understands the human heart, and through Jesus' actions, people can feel that they have shared the same experiences with Him. This eliminates the gap between God and humanity. The lesson here is not merely about understanding people based on personal experiences but about transcending one's own experiences, fully putting oneself in another's position, and imagining their circumstances. This enables deeper empathy, fostering a society of mutual support.

Although Jesus, as the Son of God, could have helped the suffering without personally experiencing trials and hardships, He intentionally chose to endure them so that humans could understand His love and sacrifice.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22-40

Jesus' parents brought their firstborn son (Jesus) to the temple to dedicate Him to God according to the Law of Moses and offered a sacrifice of the poor. Simeon, a devout and righteous man filled with the Holy Spirit, was in the temple when Jesus' parents arrived. He took the child in his arms, praised God, and proclaimed that Jesus was the light of salvation. His words astonished Mary and Joseph.

Simeon then told Mary that Jesus would cause the rise and fall of many and would face opposition. Mary must have been shocked to realize that Jesus' mission would lead to conflict, rejection, and suffering. The prophetess Anna also saw Jesus, gave thanks to God, and spoke about Him to those who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

After fulfilling the requirements of the law, Jesus' parents returned to Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus grew in wisdom, and God's grace was upon Him.

**【The Dedication of the Firstborn】**

1. "Every firstborn... whether human or animal, must be dedicated to Me and set apart as holy." (Exodus 13:2)
2. The final plague before the Exodus was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt?both human and livestock (Exodus 12:29).God instructed Moses to have the Israelites mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. That night, the angel of death "passed over" the houses with the blood, sparing their firstborn. In commemoration of this event, the Jewish people continue to celebrate the Passover to this day.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI



■ 72nd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-2, 3-8

In the year of King Uzziah's passing, Isaiah experienced a vision in the temple. When he saw the Lord exalted on His throne?with the hem of His robe filling the temple?he was overwhelmed by God's majestic presence and glory. The seraphim (the "burning ones") are humble angels who guard God's glory and holiness, always ready to spring into action to carry out His commands. The thrice-repeated cry "Holy, holy, holy" reveals God's absolute holiness; the title "Lord of Hosts" signifies that God reigns sovereignly over heaven and earth; and "the glory of the Lord" shows that His presence fills the entire universe. The trembling of the threshold's foundation manifests God's glory and majesty, while the rising smoke symbolizes His divine presence.

Confronted with these visions, Isaiah became acutely aware of his own sinfulness. The "uncleanness of the lips" signifies that sin dwells in one's heart and speech, and it is said that anyone who beholds the "Lord of Hosts" cannot live (cf. Exodus 33:20). The burning coal, taken from the altar, represents the purification and forgiveness of sins by God; when the coal touched Isaiah's lips, his sins were forgiven, he was cleansed, and he became an instrument for God's work. In this moment marked by his gratitude for God's forgiveness and his response to the divine call?the process of salvation and calling depicted in the Old Testament (awareness of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and justification by faith) is carried forward into the New Testament (cf. Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:20?25).

【King Uzziah (also called Azariah)】

King Uzziah organized a powerful army, fought victorious battles against neighboring nations, and expanded his territory (2 Chronicles 26:6?15). By improving irrigation systems and agricultural techniques, he enriched the land of Judah (Southern Israel) and spurred economic development. Although he had been an able ruler, in his later years he grew prideful and arrogant, disregarding the counsel of the priests. As a consequence, God punished him with a severe skin disease (leprosy). After his death (around 740?BC), the nation's political, economic, and religious life fell into chaos and decay. This turmoil set the stage for Isaiah and other prophets to arise, calling the people to repentance in the face of God's judgment and prophesying about the Babylonian captivity (which occurred around 586?BC).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1?11

Paul reaffirms the gospel that the Corinthian believers had received, emphasizing that steadfast faith is essential for salvation. The core of the gospel, as foretold in Scripture, is that:①Jesus died for our sins, and②He was raised on the third day(Psalm 16:10-11; Isaiah 53:6-12).

Cephas (Peter) is mentioned as a witness to Jesus' resurrection. As a central figure in the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 2:14?41), his leadership was trusted by the believers, and the testimony of many witnesses confirmed the reality of the resurrection. James also played an active role as a leader in the early church (around AD?30, when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit began; cf. Acts 15:13?21). Paul (formerly Saul) confessed that he had once persecuted the church, and he acknowledged that his transformation into an apostle and his ability to minister were solely due to God's grace, which he felt compelled to repay. Paul stresses that it is not about who speaks, but rather about the importance of what is believed.

【Regarding Corinth】

At that time, Corinth was flourishing as one of Greece's major commercial cities. However, the Corinthian church, affected by external influences and internal divisions, had become morally corrupt and faced numerous challenges. Paul wrote his letter to address these issues and to expound on the gospel with the aim of fostering growth and unity within the church.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 5:1-11

On the shore of Lake Gennesaret (another name for the Sea of Galilee), crowds gathered eagerly to hear God's teaching. As the fishermen were washing their nets, Jesus approached and requested that they board Simon's boat and go out into deeper water. Simon's immediate compliance was likely due to his reverence for Jesus (cf. Luke 4:38-39), the power of His words, and his humble spirit.

Jesus then sat down in the boat and began teaching them. His message (cf. Luke 4:43) centered on the kingdom of God, repentance, trust and obedience to God, and the grace that enables the fulfillment of what seems impossible. After teaching, Jesus told Simon to go out into the deep and let down his nets. Simon, a professional fisherman, treated this command as an exercise in faith. When he obeyed, a miracle occurred—a great catch of fish.

Overwhelmed by this abundance, Simon recognized both the divinity of Jesus and his own sinfulness. At that moment, as his companions marveled at the miraculous catch, Jesus declared, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." In response, they left behind their boats their means of livelihood and followed Him.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ 73rd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Jeremiah was a prophet who was active in the late period of the Kingdom of Judah (Southern Israel) around the 6th century B.C. He pointed out the sins of the people, prophesied the Babylonian exile, and suffered persecution. Those who rely on their own abilities, others, or material wealth are cursed and turn away from God. As a result, they encounter loneliness and difficulties, their vitality weakens, and they become like withered beings, distancing themselves from God's blessings. In contrast, those who trust in God are blessed, prosper like a tree planted by the water, and remain steadfast even in hardships (such as heat and drought). They accomplish God's works, bear abundant fruit, and experience peace and prosperity in life.

【Curse】

In the Old Testament, curses manifest as war, disease, famine, and other calamities (such as the Babylonian exile) (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). In the New Testament, a curse is the loss of eternal life, resulting in permanent separation from God (Matthew 25:41). It is not merely an accidental misfortune but is considered a material consequence from God. Depending on one's own strength or others' help leads to an unstable psychological state, as described in Jeremiah 17:6, causing constant fear and uncertainty. Jeremiah 2:13 states that human efforts apart from God are incomplete and useless, and turning away from God leads to a curse. Obeying God's teachings brings blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Those who sever their connection with God will experience emptiness and confusion, relying on themselves or worldly values, leading to an ongoing state of instability and difficulty in attaining peace.

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

In the church of Corinth, some denied the resurrection of the dead. Paul affirmed the truth of Jesus' resurrection, emphasizing that since Christ has already risen, the resurrection of the dead is indeed possible. Jesus' resurrection serves as proof that sins are forgiven. If Christ had not risen, the faith of believers would be meaningless. Those who died believing in Jesus would simply perish without hope. However, because of Jesus' resurrection, hope is granted to them as well.

The phrase "the most miserable" refers to the gap between "human expectations" and "God's plan." The former believes that faith in Jesus leads to success and blessings in this world, while the latter focuses on the assurance of "eternal life" through resurrection, rather than worldly success and pleasure (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). Jesus, as the "firstfruits" (the first harvest), guarantees our resurrection through faith in Him (1 John 3:2). Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50).

【Resurrection】

Lazarus (John 11:43-44) was temporarily revived in the flesh, but he eventually faced death again. Resurrection, however, is not merely a physical revival but a transformation by God's power into a new "spiritual body" (a glorified body). At the time of resurrection, believers become imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:42), and after resurrection, they will never die again (Romans 6:9).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 6:17, 20-26

Jesus descended from the mountain and began speaking to the people on a level place, which differs from the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5:3-12.

1. The poor (those suffering financially and seeking God's help) will be enriched by God.
2. The hungry (those longing for communion with God and thirsting for His love, as in Psalm 119:103) will be satisfied by God.

3. Those who weep (those suffering hardships and sorrow in this world) will receive comfort from God.
  4. Those who are hated, insulted, and falsely accused (those persecuted for following God) will be rewarded by Him (Matthew 5:11-12).
  5. The rich (those who have gained wealth and rewards in this world) will be far from God's comfort.
  6. Those who are satisfied now (those who feel no need for God) will distance themselves from Him and experience emptiness (Revelation 3:17).
  7. Those who laugh now (those who find joy and pleasure in worldly satisfaction) will eventually mourn.
  8. Those who seek praise from others (those who desire human approval and admiration) will not receive God's recognition (John 12:43).
- "The Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21).

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ 74th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12?13, 22-23

King Saul went to the wilderness of Ziph, seeking to kill David. The cause was the song of the people: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Sam 18:7). This stirred jealousy within Saul, along with the fear that David might seize the throne, and hostility grew in his heart.

David, fleeing the king’s pursuit, hid himself in the wilderness of Ziph, but the local inhabitants betrayed him. One night, David and Abishai (his sister’s son and a loyal warrior) infiltrated the enemy camp. They found King Saul and his guard Abner fast asleep. Abishai urged David, “Now is the chance” to strike down the king. But David firmly refused: “I will not lay my hand on the Lord’s anointed, for if I kill him, I will be guilty of sin” (1 Sam 26:9). David entrusted everything to the will of the Lord.

This reveals a faith grounded in the Law and a deep reverence for God (Exod 22:28). David lived by the conviction that “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). He took only the king’s spear and water jug, as proof that though he had the power to kill Saul, he chose not to. Scripture records that such restraint was possible because the Lord had caused them to fall into a deep sleep (1 Sam 26:12).

Later, David stood on the top of the hill, holding up the king’s spear and calling out to Saul’s army. He declared, “The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness,” showing a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness. From David’s words and deeds, we see his complete trust in God and his ideal of rule based not on force, but on faith.

The Wilderness of Ziph

Ziph was a hilly region south of Jerusalem, southeast of Hebron, well-suited for hiding. David used it as a base during his life as a fugitive. Later, Hebron became the first city he ruled as king (2 Sam 2:1?4) and the center of the tribe of Judah. This region would later become a stage for the division between the northern and southern kingdoms.

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Paul speaks about the nature of humanity and the hope of resurrection. The “first man” is Adam, of whom it is written: “The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). This describes a physical being with mortal life. Adam belonged to the earth and, through sin, brought death.

The “last Adam” refers to Jesus, who, through His resurrection, became a life-giving spirit. He came from heaven, belongs to heaven, and brings eternal life. Humans are born first in the likeness of Adam, with a physical body, but through faith in Jesus, at the resurrection we will be transformed into spiritual bodies.

Which “man” we belong to determines our destiny. At present, we bear the image of the man of dust, Adam, and cannot escape death. But by faith, we have the hope of also bearing the image of the man from heaven, Jesus. Those who trust in the risen Lord will one day be clothed with a glorious body and share in eternal life (Phil 3:21).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 6:27?38

In this passage, Jesus teaches His disciples the importance of loving and forgiving even one’s enemies, instructing them on the heart and actions befitting a child of God.

Do good to those who hate you means to act with active compassion toward neighbors, free from anger and resentment, practicing selfless love (Matt 22:37?40). If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other also means to break the cycle of anger and retaliation, seeking reconciliation through forgiveness and patience.

Give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand back reflects a heart detached from material possessions, remembering that all is given by God. Do to others as you would have them do to you the “Golden Rule” is the foundation of all human relationships, calling us to hospitality and empathy.

Doing good only to those who do good to us earns no reward from the Lord. Jesus Himself showed this unconditional love on the cross. The love that even cares for enemies is the life God blesses. Just as rain falls without discrimination, God bestows goodness on all people; we are to imitate this mercy.

Be merciful means to nurture a heart that shares in the suffering of others, as our Lord is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; forgive, and you will be forgiven. This follows the principle of sowing and reaping, calling us to reflect daily on our words and actions.

Give, and it will be given to you. Those who give generously will receive God's abundant blessing. The life of faith is to walk in gratitude for every grace received.

If you like, I can also prepare a more concise version of this translation so that it fits within word or character limits while keeping the theological richness intact. Would you like me to do that next?

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI

■ First Reading: Sirach 27:4-7

Just as pottery is strengthened in the kiln and its flaws become apparent, people are evaluated through conversation, revealing their true thoughts and weaknesses, which are usually hidden. Particularly, in times of trouble or during meals, a person's true nature is often revealed. As it is written, "A good tree bears good fruit," so a person with a good heart speaks good words, whereas a person with malice speaks foolish words (Matthew 7:16-20). When seeking to understand someone, it is important to listen carefully to their words first.

【About the Book of Sirach】

1.Period of Composition: Around the 2nd century BC, this book was compiled by Jesus ben Sirach, a Jewish scholar, and is named after him. At that time, due to the influence of Alexander the Great's conquests (4th century BC), he emphasized the importance of Israel's traditional wisdom (the teachings of the Law and the Prophets). His grandson later translated the book into Greek around 132 BC.

2.Main Themes

①Reverence for God.②Justice and integrity.③Words and actions.④Roles of family, society, and leaders

Observance of the Law.⑤This book belongs to the category of wisdom literature, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

3.Influence:

Although it is not part of the Hebrew Bible's canon, Jewish priests made use of it. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches consider it part of the Old Testament, while Protestants classify it as apocryphal (Deuterocanonical). The book has similarities with Japanese works such as The Analects and Caigentan and shares common wisdom with Japanese proverbs like "Words reflect a person's essence," akin to the saying, "A slip of the tongue can lead to disaster." Though rooted in Jewish tradition, its teachings are universally applicable and align with Japanese moral values.

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Paul proclaims victory over death through God's work Jesus' resurrection. Because Jesus triumphed over death, we no longer need to fear it.

At the time of Jesus' Second Coming, the "perishable body of this world" will be transformed into an "imperishable spiritual body," and death will be completely destroyed (Isaiah 25:8). As declared, "Death shall not have victory" (Hosea 13:14). Through the Law, we recognize sin and become aware of our transgressions (Romans 7:7-13). However, through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, we are freed from sin and granted eternal life a promise from God that will surely be fulfilled. Therefore, living according to God's will (His Word), proclaiming the Gospel (evangelization), and practicing love (the commandment of love) will never be in vain. Since we have received eternal life, we will be able to dwell with the Lord in the new Kingdom of God (Immanuel, Amen).

【On Aging and Death】

"Kodomatsu is like a milestone on the journey to the afterlife both a cause for celebration and a reminder of impermanence." Zen Master Ikkyu

New Year's celebrations bring joy, yet they also mark another step toward aging and death. Modern people seek comfort and pursue worldly desires, avoiding suffering. However, by preparing for the inevitable reality of aging and death, one can live happily both in this world and the next. (For details, see the supplement "Outline of the Book of Revelation" and "Present Life and Attainment of Happiness.")

● Gospel Reading: Luke 6:39-45

Jesus refers to the "blind leading the blind" as spiritually blind leaders (such as the scribes and Pharisees) who misguide others due to their lack of understanding of God's will. If such people lead, both the leader and the followers

will fall. A disciple learns and grows under a teacher. If the teacher spreads false teachings, the disciples will be influenced accordingly. However, if they learn from a righteous teacher, they will follow his example and do what he does (John 14:12). To discern whether a teacher is true or false:

- ① The Holy Spirit will guide you to truth (John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:12-14), so entrust yourself to the Spirit.
- ② Even teachings from authorities should be examined against the Word and Gospel (Galatians 1:8).
- ③ Look at the teacher's fruits, their way of life and actions (Luke 6:43-45).

Before criticizing others, examine yourself and avoid judging others. "Karma (cause and effect) is inevitable:" Good deeds bear good fruit, and evil deeds bear bad fruit. "Even unfavorable outcomes can be turned to good (Divine Providence):" Even if things seem to go wrong, the Lord can use them for good (Romans 8:28).

The state of one's heart is reflected in words, actions, and prayers. Thus, the key lies in how one disciplines their heart.

Author: Akinori Kamachi      Translation: AI



● First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

In the ritual of offering the first fruits of the harvest to God, the Israelites presented them at the altar through the priest as an expression of gratitude for God's blessings. The "confession" in this context recalls the roots of the Israelite people. The phrase "a wandering Aramean" refers to Jacob (also known as Israel, the father of Joseph), who migrated from Canaan to Egypt due to famine. Over time, by God's blessing, the Israelites multiplied and became a great nation. Fearing their growing strength, the Egyptians subjected them to harsh labor and oppression. The Israelites cried out to God for help, and God responded to their prayers. He devised a plan for their deliverance from Egypt, sending ten plagues upon the land through Moses and performing miracles such as the parting of the Red Sea. God's salvation plan was fulfilled as He led the Israelites into the Promised Land (Canaan), a land flowing with milk and honey, blessed by God. In response, the Israelites offered their first fruits to God, bowing down in worship before Him (Genesis 17:3; Joshua 5:14; Revelation 4:10).

As stated in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Therefore, worship ideally involves both an inner devotion (heart) and an outward expression (posture).

【First Fruits】

The Israelites, following the Law, offered the first fruits of their harvest to express gratitude to God.

1. By offering the first fruits to God, He promised to bless the entirety of the subsequent harvest (Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Joshua 5:10?12). Other references include Exodus 23:19, Numbers 18:12?13, Deuteronomy 18:4, Deuteronomy 26:4?10, and Leviticus 23:9?14. During the Festival of First Fruits (the day after the Sabbath following Passover), the first sheaf of the barley harvest was offered to God. In the New Testament, Jesus' resurrection took place on this day, signifying Him as the "first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20), guaranteeing the resurrection of believers thereafter.
2. In the Old Testament, offering the first fruits was a way to express gratitude to God and receive His blessings. In the New Testament, believers themselves become the "first fruits" through Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, undergoing sanctification the process of being made worthy to serve God (Romans 11:16; James 1:18).

● Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

Paul explains that the word of salvation is near within reach of the mouth and heart (Deuteronomy 30:14) and can be received immediately by faith. A person is saved by believing in their heart that Jesus was raised from the dead and by confessing with their mouth that "Jesus is Lord." Those who believe in the Lord will not be put to shame, as confirmed by Isaiah 28:16 (though there are variations in the Hebrew and Greek translations). God's salvation is not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles who believe in and follow Him.

【Salvation】

- ① Deliverance from sin and reconciliation with God (Romans 5:10).
- ② Receiving eternal life from God (John 17:3).
- ③ Entry into the new kingdom created by God (Philippians 3:20?21).
- ④ A gift from God, not attained by personal effort (Ephesians 2:8?9).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 4:1-13

After His baptism by John, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to begin His mission as the Son of God. The wilderness represents a place of testing (Deuteronomy 8:2?3) and is the foundation of Lent a period of fasting, prayer, repentance, and reflection on Jesus' suffering in preparation for Easter. The number 40 is significant, representing

Moses' encounter with God (Exodus 34:28) and the length of Lent.

The temptation to turn stones into bread represents the urge to satisfy personal desires. Jesus rebukes this by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone," rejecting self-centered gratification.

The devil tempts Jesus by offering Him authority over the world's power and glory in exchange for worship, but Jesus counters with Deuteronomy 6:13: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only," rejecting falsehood and temptation.

The devil challenges Jesus to prove His divine sonship by throwing Himself down from the temple, citing Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:16: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test," reinforcing trust in God without testing Him.

After these temptations, the devil departs, waiting for another opportunity (John 13:2; Luke 22:3).

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

●First Reading: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

God showed Abram the night sky and promised, "Your descendants (the people of Israel) will increase beyond number" (Exodus 1:7). Abram did not doubt God's promise but believed, and God reckoned his faith as righteousness (Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6).

God led Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans (his birthplace, an ancient city in southern Iraq) and promised him an inheritance of land even greater than Canaan (Ephesians 1:11). When Abram asked how this promise would be fulfilled, God spoke of the covenant ceremony, where both parties walk between the halves of sacrificial animals. This signifies that breaking the covenant would result in being torn apart like the sacrificed animals (Leviticus 1-3; Jeremiah 34:18-19).

Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness descended upon him symbolizing the future slavery of the Israelites in Egypt. However, in this covenant, only God alone passed through the halves of the sacrificed animals, symbolizing God's unilateral grace toward humanity. This act confirmed that God Himself guarantees the covenant.

The territorial promise to Israel under this covenant extended from the Brook of Egypt (likely the Wadi of El-Arish) to the Euphrates River. During the peak of Israel's kingdom under King David and King Solomon, Israel ruled over this region (1 Kings 5:1).

【Abram and Abraham】

1. Abram means "Exalted Father", emphasizing family, lineage, and status seemingly a personal name.
2. Abraham means "Father of Many Nations": "No longer shall your name be Abram; your name shall be Abraham... for This establishes Abraham as a source of blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:3) and clarifies his mission as the father of faith (Romans 4:16-17).

【Belief】

To believe means to rely on something firm, to stand firmly, leading to conviction. It corresponds to the English "Amen," meaning "So be it." Abraham's faith was evident in both his heart and his actions (Genesis 12:1-4; James 2:23). His righteousness was not through deeds but through trust in God? a complete surrender without doubting God's word (Romans 4:20-21). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The concept of righteousness in the Old Testament carries over into the New Testament (Romans 3:28). Abraham's faith was ultimately his unwavering trust in God's word until the very end.

●Second Reading: Philippians 3:17?4:1

Paul exhorts the believers in Philippi to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16, where Jesus also commands the same). This imitation includes: ①The state of the heart, ②The way of speaking, ③The way of acting, ④The way of praying.

(For details, refer to the appendix GENSEKQIYU 現生幸就 in the booklet on Sharing the Word.)

Within the church, believers are called to share their faith, encourage one another, and distance themselves from worldly values and fleshly desires. Those who cling to such desires are described as "enemies of the cross".

"Their god is their stomach" this phrase has interpretations linked to legalism and hedonism. The latter refers to those who live solely for their pleasure and desires, without concern for the afterlife. The outcome for both paths is destruction, severing their relationship with God and eternal life.

Our true citizenship is in heaven, making us "residents of heaven on earth." At Christ's return, our bodies will be transformed into glorious ones, fully prepared to enter God's new kingdom. This truth is a great encouragement in our faith journey.

The "crown" symbolizes the reward of this faithful life. Even amid trials and hardships, we press on, holding onto wisdom

and hope.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36

Eight days after Jesus spoke (Luke 9:18-27), He ascended a mountain with three disciples: Peter a leader (Acts 2:14-41), John a man of deep spiritual insight, who taught "God is love" (1 John 3:16), James the first martyr (Acts 12:2). Jesus took them up the mountain to grant them a profound spiritual experience. As He prayed, He was transfigured, revealing His divinity. Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets) appeared and spoke with Jesus about the fulfillment of His suffering, death, and resurrection as foretold in the Old Testament. Peter, overwhelmed by the sight, impulsively suggested building tents for them. However, God redirected their focus: instead of following their own ideas, they were to listen to Jesus and His divine plan? His suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection (Luke 24:26). This translation keeps the structure and theological depth of the original Japanese text while ensuring clarity and readability in English. Let me know if you'd like any refinements!

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

● First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

Moses, having fled from Egypt, was tending sheep in Midian when he came to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai, where he later received the Ten Commandments). The "bush that was burning yet not consumed" represents God's presence (Psalm 19:5-6, reminiscent of nuclear fusion energy). God told Moses, "Remove your sandals." In entering the temple or a sacred place, footwear was considered unclean (Joshua 5:15), and removing it symbolized humility and reverence before God.

The God of Moses' fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) remains the unchanging, true God. Moses covered his face out of fear of seeing God, as he was overwhelmed by divine fear and the radiance of God's glory (Exodus 33:20, Matthew 17:2). Seeing the suffering of the Israelites, God devised a plan to rescue them and lead them to the land of Canaan, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

When Moses asked what name he should use to tell the Israelites who had sent him, God instructed him to say, "I AM WHO I AM." This declaration signifies God's omnipotence, eternal presence, immutability, independence, and self-existence His "eternal name." Jesus also proclaimed, "I AM" (John 18:6).

【Midianites】 Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, in the land of Midian (Exodus 2:15-22).

【The Land of Canaan】

A collective term for various regions, Canaan is central to God's plan in both the Old and New Testaments:

- ①Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6-9)②Hebron (Genesis 23:2-20)③Shechem (Joshua 24:25)
- ④Bethlehem, "House of Bread" (Micah 5:2, Luke 2:4-7)⑤Gilgal (Joshua 5:9)⑥Beersheba (Genesis 21:31)
- ⑦Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17)

This was the land God promised to the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21). Declaring that He would lead the Israelites out of Egypt into Canaan (Exodus 3:8), God judged the three tribes already living there for their sins, including idolatry (Genesis 15:16). He brought the Israelites into the land (Joshua 3:6), not as conquerors but as recipients of His promise. However, some of the original inhabitants intermingled with the Israelites, later causing difficulties (Judges 2:1-3).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul references Israel's experiences in the Exodus: the "cloud" represents God's presence (Exodus 13:21-22), and "passing through the sea" refers to crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:22), symbolizing baptism and new life. Yet, despite these blessings, the Israelites remained unfaithful.

The "spiritual food" refers to manna (Exodus 16:4), and the "spiritual drink" refers to the water that flowed from the rock struck by Moses (Exodus 17:6). This rock symbolizes Jesus, who provides the true nourishment—the Word (water) that sustains the soul. Despite receiving abundant grace from God, some Israelites were judged for their unbelief and sin and were not allowed to enter Canaan (Numbers 14:29-30).

To receive God's blessings, believers must not be consumed by material values or fleshly desires (Galatians 5:19-21, Numbers 11:4-6) but must live by the commandment of love (Matthew 22:37-39) and the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17). Complaining and grumbling against God led to destruction (Numbers 14:2). The events of the Old Testament should not be read as mere historical narratives but as warnings for those journeying toward the end times, calling them to daily self-examination and repentance, returning to the Lord (Joel 2:13).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 13:1-9

Pilate mixed the blood of slain Galileans with sacrificial offerings, defiling the ritual. The people reported this incident to Jesus, as Pilate (a Roman) used such acts to intimidate and suppress the Jews. At the time, suffering

and disaster were commonly seen as divine punishment for sin.

Jesus warned that those who judge others while ignoring their own sins will perish unless they repent (which means not just regret but a complete turning toward God). The collapse of the Tower of Siloam, which killed 18 people, was an accident, not a punishment for sin?death can come unexpectedly.

The vineyard represents the Kingdom of God, which brings forth the harvest of God's glory (Isaiah 5:1?7), while the fig tree symbolizes faith that, when mature, bears abundant fruit. Here, the vineyard owner represents God, and the gardener represents Jesus. Seeing a fruitless tree (an unbeliever) after three years?symbolic of God's teachings being known but not practiced?God commands its removal. However, the gardener intercedes, requesting a one-year grace period. This parable emphasizes that repentance requires not only time but also proper spiritual guidance from a righteous teacher who understands God's will.

This translation keeps the original meaning intact while making it clear and readable in English. Let me know if you'd like any adjustments!

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 79th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Joshua 5:9, 10?12

The Lord said to Joshua (the leader succeeding Moses) that upon arriving at Gilgal (meaning "to remove," located on the west bank of the Jordan River), the disgrace of slavery in Egypt was removed, and a new journey for the people began. They celebrated the first Passover in the Promised Land (Canaan) on the plains near Jericho, close to Gilgal. The next day, for the first time in Canaan, they ate grain from the harvest?the firstfruits?prepared as unleavened bread and roasted grain (Leviticus 23:10-11, 14). God had provided manna for the people throughout their 40-year journey after the Exodus. Now that they had entered the Promised Land, their time in the wilderness was over, and manna was no longer necessary. They transitioned to an agricultural life, harvesting from their own land.

【Passover】

According to the Law, Passover is observed every year in the month of Nisan (March?April), on the evening of the 14th day (Leviticus 23:5, Exodus 12:6). Unleavened bread was eaten during the Exodus as it required no fermentation time (Exodus 12:39). Leaven (yeast) symbolized "sin" and "corruption" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), and Jesus also warned against the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:6). The bread used at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26) is believed to have been unleavened, signifying sinlessness.

● Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17?21

After Paul left the church in Corinth, false pastors and apostles emerged, criticizing him. In response, Paul wrote this letter to affirm his apostleship. Through baptism, believers are united with Jesus by the Holy Spirit and become a new creation (Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 2:20). Their past sins are erased, and reconciliation with God was accomplished through Jesus' death on the cross. We are entrusted with the mission of spreading this message of reconciliation. The Lord speaks to people through us, and the "way to reconciliation with God" is always open, leaving individuals free to accept or reject it. Though Jesus had never sinned, God placed the burden of human sin upon Him, and through His judgment as a sinner on the cross, we were justified before God.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 15:1?3, 11?32

Jesus loved those who were labeled as sinners and rejected by society. His words brought hope, and He shared meals with them. The Pharisees and scribes criticized Him for this, prompting Jesus to tell a parable about "repentance."

A father (representing God) had two sons?the elder (self-righteous) and the younger (a sinner). The younger son asked for his inheritance while his father was still alive (an act implying the wish for his father's death, applicable only to movable assets). He received his share and recklessly indulged in worldly pleasures, leading to his downfall. This reflects the principle of "reaping what one sows." The younger son squandered everything and faced famine. Reduced to caring for pigs (an unclean animal), he hit rock bottom?both physically and spiritually. He longed to eat even the carob pods fed to the pigs but could not. In his suffering, he reflected on his actions and decided to return to his father (God). It is in times of distress that we should seek and entrust ourselves to God (2 Corinthians 12:9). Seeing his son from afar, the father ran to him, demonstrating unwavering love and forgiveness despite his sins. This offers hope that all have a place to return to. The younger son confessed his sins and started anew. The father gave him "the best robe, a ring, and sandals" and celebrated with a feast by slaughtering a calf. The elder son, upon hearing of the celebration, became angry and confronted his father, expressing his frustration over his years of obedience. The father responded, "You have always been with me. But it is only right to rejoice, for your brother was dead and has come back to life." This illustrates that God's love is unconditional and a free gift.

【Sinners】

Sinners included those who committed offenses (prostitutes, thieves, criminals), socially despised tax collectors (seen as traitors and extortioners), and those who failed to follow the Law (the poor and the sick). The Pharisees and scribes imposed strict legal observance, causing ordinary people to be labeled as "sinners" for their inability to comply.

### 【Meals】

Meals were significant acts symbolizing "fellowship" and recognition of relationships (Galatians 2:12). Society had strict social and class distinctions regarding shared meals, yet Jesus broke these barriers, demonstrating that God's kingdom was near and sinners were invited.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI



■ 80th Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading: Isaiah 43:16?21

The Lord carried out the plan to deliver the people of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 14), dividing the Red Sea and creating a path through it, demonstrating that nothing is impossible for Him who has power over nature itself. The phrase "bringing them out together" refers to the salvation of the people and the defeat of the Egyptian army. This marks the beginning of a "new act of God's salvation." Instead of merely recalling past acts of salvation (such as the release from Babylonian captivity, salvation through the Messiah, or providing living water in barren lands), the Lord declares that He is doing something new, urging people to pay attention to it. God's grace is given not only to the people of Israel but also to all living creatures in nature, ultimately leading the whole world to recognize His presence.

The phrase "providing water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, and water for the chosen ones" implies that as the Israelites return from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, they will face harsh conditions and need "life-sustaining water" and food. This return is seen as a prophecy of salvation through the Messiah. Regarding "giving water," Jesus says, "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst" (John 4:14). In the final stage of the new Kingdom of God, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). This passage presents the grand vision of God's salvation beginning with the return from Babylonian captivity.

"Bringing them out together": God brings out (saves) the people of Israel and lures the elite forces of the powerful Egyptian army (chariots, horses, soldiers) into the Red Sea, where He defeats the pursuing army (Exodus 14:7).

● Second Reading: Philippians 3:8?14

Paul, who once belonged to the Pharisees and persecuted Christians as a Jew, came to realize the greatness of believing in Jesus. He considered all the things he once took pride in as a Jew to be loss because he encountered new "values" through fellowship with Jesus. The question is: what do we value in life?

【Values】

- 1.He regarded all earthly status, honor, personal righteousness, and pride as "loss" and "meaningless" (Philippians 3:5?6).
- 2.Rather than through deeds or achievements, one is accepted by God through righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus (Philippians 3:9).
- 3.Those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus overcome "sin" and "death" (Romans 6:4?5; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57), are given "new life" (Ephesians 2:5?6), "hope" (Romans 8:11), and ultimately receive "eternal life" (Philippians 3:10).
- 4.By sharing in the sufferings of Jesus, one lives together with Him (Philippians 3:10).
- 5.Through resurrection, one becomes like Jesus and lives with Him in the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:11).
- 6.Not being satisfied with the present, one continues to strive with the goal of imitating Jesus (Philippians 3:12?14).
- 7.By knowing Jesus, one receives wisdom from God and is guided to walk a righteous life (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).

● Gospel Reading: John 8:1?11

The Mount of Olives (east of Jerusalem) was a place where Jesus conversed with God in prayer (Luke 22:39). When Jesus entered the temple and was teaching the people, the scribes tried to trap Him by bringing a woman caught in adultery. According to the Law (Old Testament), she was to be stoned to death, and they asked Jesus for His opinion. Under Roman law, Jews had no authority to carry out executions; if Jesus opposed the death penalty, He could be accused of violating the Law, which the scribes hoped for.

Jesus is thought to have written the names of sinners or passages from the Law on the ground. His silent action stirred the hearts of both the accusers and the people. Then Jesus said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Eventually, only Jesus and the woman were left, and He said, "Neither do I condemn you." He offered forgiveness to the one who repented and led her to begin a new life (Romans 8:1).

**【Sin】**

- ① "No one living is righteous before You [God]." (Psalm 143:2) ② The law regarding adultery judges both the man and the woman (Leviticus 20:10), so judging only the woman is unjust and hypocritical (Matthew 23:27-28). ③ Exposing the sins of others is itself a sin. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." (Matthew 7:1-5)

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 81st Session: Sharing the Word

● Gospel of the Entry ? Luke 19:28-40

Jesus, at the foot of the Mount of Olives (home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary), prepares for His entry into Jerusalem. His instructions to two disciples fulfill the prophecy, "He comes riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). The crowd's acclamation, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:26), and their act of laying garments and branches on the road signify their recognition of Jesus as King and their welcome of Him as the Messiah. The angels praise, saying, "Peace in heaven..." (Luke 2:14). The Pharisees, not acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, demand silence; however, even if people were silent, the stones (representing all creation; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42) would cry out, revealing God's glory and unstoppable plan.

● First Reading ? Isaiah 50:4-7

The tongue of the disciple possesses God's wisdom, tasked with correctly conveying the Word, encouraging, and comforting the weary. By listening to God's teachings each morning and obeying them, the disciple fulfills this mission. The disciple listens and obeys God's commands, not retreating from any hardship, enduring physical suffering (being struck, having his beard plucked), and not avoiding disgrace or mockery, thus prophesying the Messiah's (Jesus') Passion (Matthew 26:67; 27:30). The people of Israel and the prophets, confident in God's help, do not falter under persecution, setting their faces like flint, and ultimately are not put to shame, as God's work is revealed.?

● Second Reading ? Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus relinquished His divine status to become human. By contemplating the hypothesis of Jesus coming into the world as God, we can understand why He came as a human. Reflecting on Jesus' humble actions toward God, we see that making oneself "nothing" means not prioritizing one's own thoughts but giving precedence to God's will and the thoughts of others. Meditating on Jesus' obedience before God, we recognize that through His "loving actions" and "active response to God's will," He was exalted through resurrection, ascension, and glorification. The name "Jesus Christ" was elevated, and all creation including angels, humanity, the dead, and evil spirits will kneel before Him, confessing "Jesus Christ is Lord (God and Savior)," and praising God.

● Gospel Reading ? Luke 23:1-49

Jesus is accused of rebellion for claiming to be the King of the Jews. Pilate and Herod (ruler of Galilee) find no guilt in Him and plan to release Him after flogging to prevent further unrest. However, succumbing to the crowd's demands, they sentence Jesus to the most brutal form of crucifixion. Simon carrying Jesus' cross recalls the words, "Take up your cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). To the faithful daughters, Jesus says, "Weep for your children," foretelling future suffering (the destruction by Roman forces in 70 AD; Luke 19:41-44). The statement, "Blessed are the barren..." indicates the extreme famine and massacres during Jerusalem's siege, leading mothers to despair, unable to nourish their children (Hosea 9:12; Jeremiah 19:9). Ultimately, Jesus speaks of God's judgment on earth. The plea, "Mountains, fall on us..." reflects humanity's desire to hide from God's judgment, but escape is impossible (Psalm 139:7-12); repentance and return to God are the only options. The "green tree" symbolizes Jesus, who endures temporary suffering, while the "dry tree" represents sinners facing God's judgment and eternal destruction. Jesus' words, "They do not know what they are doing," highlight the ignorance of those crucifying Him, yet God patiently invites them to salvation (Acts 17:30). One criminal repents, and Jesus assures him, "Today you will be with Me in paradise," indicating his entrance into heaven. The tearing of the temple veil signifies the removal of the barrier between God and humanity. Jesus' plea, "Father, forgive them..." (Luke 23:34), leads the centurion to declare, "Surely this man was the Son of God," recognizing the divine nature of Jesus' final words.

■ The 82nd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 10:34, 37-43

On Resurrection Sunday, the first reading is always from the Acts of the Apostles, reminding us of the early Church empowered by the risen Lord and guided by the Holy Spirit. This passage recounts Peter being invited to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, where he preaches about Jesus, of whom it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me... He has anointed me” (Isaiah 61:1).

Peter speaks of Jesus’ public ministry, which began after His baptism by John and spread throughout Galilee and all Judea. Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, is the Messiah and Savior appointed by God. Through His works healing and doing good? He saved people, and “God was with Him.” Thus, His words and actions were the works of God. The disciples, who witnessed His life firsthand, testify to this.

The phrase “They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree” (Deuteronomy 21:23) reflects the Jewish perception at the time that such a death signified a cursed person. Jesus’ resurrection on the third day aligns with Old Testament prophecies (Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17).

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared only to those “chosen by God as witnesses” (Acts 10:41; Acts 1:8)?those who were entrusted with the mission of bearing witness to His resurrection and through whom God’s plan for evangelizing the world had already been prepared (Luke 24:46-48).

At a person’s death, Christ becomes the Judge and carries out personal judgment (John 5:22-23; Luke 16:19-31), determining whether one goes to Hades, Heaven, or Hell. Later, those in Heaven and Hell will face the Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:27; Revelation 20:11-15) and enter the new Kingdom of God. (Refer to the "Sharing of the Word" supplement: Overview of the Book of Revelation.)

The Lord commanded His disciples to proclaim this message, and the prophets of the Old Testament also bore witness to the salvation that would come through Jesus (Isaiah 53).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Paul rebukes the church in Corinth for tolerating sin among them. He uses the metaphor of yeast (leaven) to explain his point. A small amount of yeast (symbolizing sin) can spread and corrupt the whole community.

Believers, through the death of Jesus on the cross, have removed the old leaven (their past sins) and have chosen to live a new life with Christ. Therefore, they are to celebrate the Passover with unleavened bread, signifying a life free from sin. In Christianity, the first day of this feast (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) corresponds with the Last Supper, where Jesus offered Himself as the Paschal Lamb, and Christians commemorate this through the Eucharist (Holy Communion).

【Yeast】

In a positive sense: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until it was all leavened” (Matthew 13:33). In a negative sense: “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod” (Mark 8:15). This illustrates how even a small amount of evil or malice entering a person can corrupt the whole.

● Gospel Reading: John 20:1-9

Early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene goes to Jesus’ tomb. The stone at the entrance had been rolled away by “an angel of the Lord... who rolled back the stone and sat on it” (Matthew 28:2). Since Jesus had already risen, there was no need to move the stone for Him, but rather it was moved for Mary and the disciples to witness.

The “other disciple” refers to the Apostle John (the son of Zebedee), though he is unnamed in the Gospel of John. John refrains from entering the tomb, possibly out of thoughtfulness and respect for Peter.

The linen cloths and the covering were found separately, indicating that the body had not been stolen but had truly risen. The disciples believed the body was gone, though they had not yet fully understood the resurrection.

The Old Testament contains references to the resurrection (Psalm 16:10?11; Jonah 2:1).

**【Why Mary Magdalene was the first to visit the tomb】**

1. Because Jesus had cast out “seven demons from her” (Luke 8:2), her deep love and devotion moved her to witness His death (Mark 15:40) and know where He was buried (Matthew 27:61). Meanwhile, the disciples were hiding in fear of persecution (John 20:19).
2. Due to time constraints, Jesus’ burial had been done hastily (John 19:42), and preparations like anointing the body with spices had not been completed. Women were in charge of these tasks, and they went to the tomb early in the morning to anoint His body (Mark 16:1).
3. It was God’s will that a woman would be the first to witness the resurrection and be given the mission of proclaiming it (John 20:17?18).

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

## Second Sunday of Easter

### ■ The 83rd Sharing of the Word

#### ● First Reading: Acts 5:12-16

The apostles, in the name of Jesus, healed the sick and performed miracles concerning the afflictions of the people, revealing God's works in ways people could understand. The apostles and believers, "being of one heart," gathered in Solomon's Portico, a part of the Jerusalem Temple, to learn the teachings of the Lord. Among the non-believers, some refrained from joining them due to fear of God after the incident where Ananias died because of his deceit (Acts 5:1-11), resentment toward the apostles from the elders, and a desire to avoid persecution. Nevertheless, the people were drawn to the Gospel, and despite external pressures and anxieties, the number of believers continued to grow. The early Church expanded rapidly, not merely through human effort but because God was working with them. As the apostles' good reputation spread, the people's hope and expectation grew; they carried the sick into the streets, actively seeking healing and to partake in God's salvation. The healings were complete, and news of them spread throughout the region, with every person being healed.

**【Being of one heart】** the core driving force behind the Church's growth.

1. Gathering with one heart provides the foundation for the Holy Spirit's work. When prayer is united, the Holy Spirit descends, hearts are moved, miracles occur, people are healed, and people are drawn to the Church, with the Lord fulfilling their desires. (Matthew 18:19)
2. In the early Church, believers shared their possessions and supported one another, manifesting love in concrete actions. Through this, they encountered the Lord and could feel His presence among them. (Acts 4:32)

#### ● Second Reading: Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19

(During the Second to Sixth Sundays of Easter in Year C, the second reading comes from Revelation; in Year A, it is from the First Letter of Peter; in Year B, from the First Letter of John.)

The apostle John, united with the faithful and the Holy Spirit as a brother, shares in the sufferings of Christ through many trials and is now exiled by the Roman Empire to the island of Patmos (a small island in the Aegean Sea). On the "Day of the Lord," filled with the Holy Spirit, he hears a clear and powerful voice like a trumpet, conveying God's majesty. The Lord assigns John a new mission: "Write down what you see in a scroll and send it to the seven churches." The vision John sees is not of the "heaven" people commonly imagine but of the "New Kingdom of God," where God's reign is complete. In heaven, human existence is likely in the form of the "soul." Upon entering the "New Kingdom of God," believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ. The seven golden lampstands represent the churches, and at their center stands the glorified Jesus. Seeing this vision, John falls in fear and awe, but the Lord places His hand upon him to encourage him. "The First and the Last" refers to the One who, at the beginning and end of Scripture, created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all." (Revelation 22:21) this is He.

Jesus alone holds the "keys" to life and death; human beings cannot decide these for themselves.

**【Reasons for the Selection of the Seven Churches】**

They were located along the postal route of the Roman roads and had geographical connections.

The strengths and weaknesses that the churches at that time faced were embodied in these churches.

**【Key】**

The Lord firmly holds the keys that govern birth and death. "There is a season for everything under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). With the Lord holding these keys, our lives are secured, and this becomes our hope after death.

Humans cannot determine their own life and death. (Psalm 139:16) No one can delay the time of death. (Ecclesiastes 8:8)

● Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

On the evening of the day Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples, in fear of the Jews and Roman soldiers and disheartened in their faith, locked the doors. Jesus entered and stood among them, saying, "Peace be with you," with this message:①To remove the fear and anxiety from having betrayed the Lord.②To offer forgiveness and reconciliation. ③To empower them with a new mission through the Holy Spirit.

Their hearts were ignited with a flame, and they resolved to devote their lives fearlessly to proclaiming Jesus' message. This moment became the very origin of Christian world missions, leading to a missionary movement that would have the greatest impact in human history. Jesus bestowed upon the disciples the authority to forgive sins and told Thomas to "believe without seeing." This message extends to us as well: To believe in the risen Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Faith means "believing without seeing" (Hebrews 11:1, 2 Corinthians 4:18), which calls for contemplation (imagining). To become one who believes without doubting. (Matthew 14:31)

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 84th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 5:27-32, 40-41

Peter and the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews, and were accused of defying the command not to teach in the name of Jesus. The council's reaction was driven by jealousy over the apostles' growing popularity among the people, resistance to being blamed for Jesus' execution, and their attachment to power. The apostles declared, "We must obey God rather than men." This recalls the moment in Daniel 3:17-18 when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, "The God we serve is able to deliver us from the blazing furnace... but even if He does not, we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up," showing their willingness to risk their lives rather than betray their faith. Like them, the apostles chose a way of life that proclaims, "God alone is our Lord."

Our God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand as "Leader" and "Savior" (the right hand symbolizing authority and glory?Psalm 110:1; the left representing judgment or rejection?Matthew 25:33-43). The apostles were entrusted with the mission of witnessing (through their lives) the truth of Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and salvation (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit empowered them to be "witnesses."

When we face persecution or hardship, if we are guided by the Word and the Holy Spirit, we will come to see such trials as sharpening stones that refine us and rejoice in them with faith.

【Teaching in the Name of Jesus】

①God made Jesus Lord (Messiah) and Savior (Acts 2:36).②Through His death, sin was atoned for, and He was raised from the dead (Acts 4:10).③The risen Jesus now sits at God's right hand (Acts 3:15).④Those who believe in Jesus, repent, and are baptized receive forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life (Acts 2:38).

⑤Salvation comes through faith in Jesus, not through works (Acts 4:12).⑥Believers receive the Holy Spirit, come to know the truth, are guided by the Lord, and become witnesses (Acts 1:8).

● Second Reading: Revelation 5:11-14

The scene John describes is a grand vision of worship: countless angels, all creatures, and the twenty-four elders (symbolizing the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament) surrounding God's throne and the Lamb (Jesus), praising them. This vision reflects the glory of the "New Kingdom of God" to come. To Jesus, who died on the cross, seven praises are offered: "power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing." In heaven, angels; on earth, people and animals; under the earth, souls of the dead and those in Sheol; and in the sea, fish and sea creatures?all creation praises God and the Lamb.

The "four living creatures" (Revelation 4:6-8) have faces like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, each with six wings. Their proclamation of "Amen" ("Truly, so be it") is a response to the seven praises offered to Jesus. The elders fall down and worship the One on the throne.

【Falling Prostrate (Worship)】

In the Bible, Moses hides his face before God (Exodus 3:6), and people fall prostrate before Jesus seeking healing (Matthew 8:2). These gestures express the posture of the heart lowering the head and lying down on the ground. Through this, one feels compelled to "surrender everything to the Lord," and such outward posture shapes the heart and deepens one's devotion to God.

● Gospel Reading: John 21:1-19

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (another name for the Sea of Galilee). Peter, who had returned to his former trade as a fisherman, was unsuccessful in his catch. Jesus asked, "Do you have any fish?" They answered, "No." Then He instructed them, "Cast the net on the right side of the



boat" the direction of the Lord. Obeying His command brought a great catch.

Although Peter had not yet recognized Jesus, he followed His voice, perhaps because: 1) "My sheep listen to my voice" (John 10:27), or 2) a "gut feeling" or inspiration. When he heard, "It is the Lord!" his remorse for having denied Jesus and his love for the Lord compelled him to jump into the lake. On the shore, a charcoal fire had been prepared, showing Jesus' thoughtful hospitality anticipating the disciples' needs. When Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught," it affirmed the truth of His word and hinted at the call to service.

Jesus asked Peter three times to "Feed my lambs" and "Take care of my sheep," emphasizing both forgiveness and the weight of the mission. Then He said, "Follow me."

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 85th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52

Paul and Barnabas arrive in Antioch and take their seats before the audience in the synagogue to preach on the Sabbath. After the gathering ends, they encourage Jews, Gentiles, and converts from Judaism to live in God's grace. In Antioch, those who had been taught for a year were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26), though the term "Christianity" did not yet exist. Believers were known as "followers of the Way" or "disciples of Jesus."

When Jewish leaders saw the large crowd gathering to hear the two men, they were filled with jealousy. Paul and Barnabas told them, "Since you reject the Word... we will turn to the Gentiles." They added, "I have made you a light for the nations... so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). This shows that God had already planned the evangelization of the Gentiles, and it clearly presents a vision of mission that moves beyond a religion for one people to one for the whole world.

Upon hearing this, the Gentiles rejoiced and praised God. Those who accepted God's plan and had hope in eternal life came to believe. The word of the Lord spread throughout the region. However, as persecution rose, the two shook the dust from their feet (Mark 6:11) and went to Iconium. Even though the disciples faced persecution, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and demonstrated joyful faith.

【Barnabas】

His real name was Joseph, called "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36), a Levite born on the island of Cyprus. A devout man filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:24), he encouraged others, sold his property to offer it to the church (Acts 4:37), and became a model believer in the early Church. Though Paul had once persecuted the Church, after his conversion, Barnabas introduced him to the disciples (Acts 9:27). When Paul's faith had matured, Barnabas went to Tarsus to bring him (Acts 11:25?26), and this cooperation formed the foundation of their missionary partnership (Acts 13:1?3).

While praying at the church in Antioch (the base for Gentile mission), the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work I have called them to." After receiving prayer and the laying on of hands from the church, the two set out on their "first missionary journey."

● Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14?17

John sees a new Kingdom of God where a multitude?so vast it cannot be counted?from every nation gathers before God and Jesus. They wear white robes (symbolizing martyrdom and forgiveness of sins) and hold palm branches (a sign of victory and joy, John 12:13).

When John asks the Lord who these people are, the elder answers. In the divine order of heaven, elders and angels often serve as mediators who convey God's truth (as Moses did). The elder explains: "[These martyrs and tribulation survivors] suffered persecution and trials for their faith, and their sins were atoned for by the blood (death) of Jesus on the cross, thus they wear white robes."

This multitude worships God forever. To "spread His tent" means to dwell with the Lord, symbolizing close communion with God. In God's Kingdom, they are freed from the thirst that comes from seeking to satisfy earthly desires (John 4:15).

In this world, Jesus is the Savior and Shepherd, the source of the fountain of life (eternal life, the Holy Spirit, God's grace; Revelation 21:6). Those who trust in the Lord will become a people whose "tears are wiped away"?a people comforted and healed, even in the face of suffering.

※Martyrs: individuals who died in specific cases.

※Great Tribulation survivors: those who endured trials at the end times.

● Gospel Reading: John 10:27-30

(The Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Easter is always read from John chapter 10, which speaks of the Good Shepherd and His sheep.) Jesus is the "Good Shepherd," and those who follow Him are His "sheep."

To "follow" means to hear the voice of the Lord, believe in it, and live in accordance with His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit?whether one is already a believer or not.

"I know them," Jesus says, referring to a close relationship through prayer. The first step of that relationship is baptism. Baptism is the public declaration of faith, a visible act of following Jesus.

This aligns with the command: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

However, to avoid baptism becoming a mere formality (Romans 2:28-29), daily practice and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the commandment of love?are essential.

Those who believe in the Lord have already received eternal life. In the new Kingdom of God, they are securely saved and protected by God, and nothing evil can snatch them from the Lord's hand.

Believers are entrusted to the Lord by God and, without submitting to any worldly power or authority, walk in assurance. God and the Lord are one in "purpose, work, and will," and believers are firmly held and protected by His hand able to follow in peace and trust.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 86th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27

This passage recounts the return journey of the first missionary trip, culminating in their arrival back at their point of departure, Antioch (in present-day Turkey). During this journey, the words that strengthened and encouraged the disciples include: ① “I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5) ② “Do not fear, for I am with you... I will help you and strengthen you in your time of suffering.” (Isaiah 41:10) ③ “I have loved you with an everlasting love... I have loved you.” (Jeremiah 31:3) ④ “Even if mothers forget, I will never forget you.” (Isaiah 49:15) Despite the risks, Paul and his companions visit the churches and appoint elders (leaders) without fear. At that time, the church in Antioch (in Syria) was a crucial base for missions to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas report the results of their mission, sharing how many Gentiles accepted Jesus and how the door of faith had been opened to them.

[Main Route and Plan]

Antioch (Syria starting point) → Seleucia (port city) → Salamis (Cyprus) → Paphos (Cyprus) → Perga (region of Pamphylia) → Antioch in Pisidia → Iconium → Lystra → Derbe (final stop) (Return route) → Lystra → Iconium → Antioch in Pisidia → Perga → Attalia (port city) → Antioch (Syria ? return point)

This mission was not pre-planned with a specific route but was initiated by the calling of God, as stated in Acts 13:2-3: “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” The island of Cyprus was the birthplace of Barnabas. When they crossed into Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), they used large cities as bases and prioritized towns with Jewish synagogues. When facing persecution or danger, they flexibly changed their route as needed.

● Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-5

The “new heaven and new earth” symbolize the end of the current world and the beginning of a new kingdom created by God. The absence of the sea signifies the removal of evil and fear, as ancient people believed the sea housed dangerous creatures and symbolized chaos.

The “New Jerusalem” does not refer to a physical city on earth but to a perfect community prepared by God—a place where God and humanity dwell together eternally. The “bride” represents those who are saved through faith in Jesus. The “bridegroom” is Jesus, and their union symbolizes the eternal fellowship between God and humanity.

The “dwelling place of God” (tent/tabernacle) in the Old Testament represented the presence of God. Now, God will dwell with humanity, fulfilling the prophecy of “Immanuel” (God is with us ? Matthew 1:23). Thus, sorrow, suffering, lamentation, death, and sin—all former things—will pass away. God will renew all things, transforming the world and human existence, and proclaiming the arrival of His perfect new kingdom.

● Gospel Reading: John 13:31-35

The Gospel for the 5th Sunday of Easter recalls Jesus’ words at the Last Supper and invites us to reflect on how His commandment is fulfilled in the resurrection.

This passage begins with Judas leaving the room to betray Jesus. Jesus speaks of being “glorified” through Judas’s betrayal, meaning His death on the cross and resurrection, through which “Jesus is given the name above all names” (Philippians 2:9-10). God is glorified through Jesus because salvation for humanity is completed. As Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God,” and Isaiah 6:3 proclaims, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” these are now fulfilled.

The term “children” reflects how the disciples are still immature and fearful like little children. After His resurrection, Jesus will stay with them for a time, but then return to Heaven, and they will no longer see Him.

Jesus gives them a “new commandment”: “Love one another.” The greatest commandment in the Law is to love God

and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus warns them not to treat the law merely as formality or obligation, but to practice:①Humble service ? demonstrated by washing the disciples' feet.②Self-sacrifice shown by His death on the cross. We are called to follow this example of "loving one another." By practicing this love (doing things that make others say "thank you," putting others first and rejoicing in their joy), disciples and believers can be recognized as followers of Jesus even by non-believers. In this way, we fulfill our role as "the salt of the earth and the light of the world."

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 88th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

Luke (the author of the Gospel of Luke) sends this letter to “Theophilus.” He appears to be someone interested in faith, and his name also appears in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:3). The phrase “instructions through the Holy Spirit” refers to the mission given to the disciples to spread Jesus’ teachings to the world (Matthew 28:19?20). For 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus spoke to the disciples about the “new Kingdom of God.” The “promise” of God refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16?17). “Baptism with water” is a sign of repentance, while Jesus’ “baptism with the Holy Spirit” brings a spiritual experience connected to God’s power and life, along with wisdom and transformation. When the disciples asked Jesus about “restoring the kingdom,” it reflected their expectation of political change. However, Jesus’ “Kingdom of God” is a new, spiritual kingdom where God reigns with love, justice, and peace. He explains that the “time” of its full arrival is in God’s hands (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Jesus says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,” meaning that God gives courage, love, and wisdom, making it possible to do things one could not do on their own. With this power, the disciples become “witnesses of Jesus,” testifying to the Lord through their words and actions in their current environment.

In the Old Testament, a “cloud” symbolizes God’s presence (Exodus 13:21). When Jesus is “covered by a cloud,” it means He is enveloped in God’s glory. He ascended because His mission on earth—to reveal God’s love and to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), guiding them to the new Kingdom—was complete. The angels’ message that “Jesus will come again” is a divine prophecy promising His Second Coming and giving believers hope (Revelation 22:7).

● Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24?28; 10:19-23

In the Old Testament era, the high priest (who was a sinner himself) entered the Tabernacle (where God’s presence dwelled) once a year to atone for the people’s sins with the blood of bulls and rams (Leviticus 16). Jesus, however, entered not a man-made copy of the sanctuary but the heavenly one itself. On earth, He atoned for human sin through His blood on the cross (Mark 10:45), and through His resurrection, He granted eternal life (Romans 6:4?5). He holds the “key to open the door” to salvation from God. In heaven, Jesus brought His own blood, entered the “Most Holy Place” (God’s very presence) once, and completed the atonement for sin (Hebrews 9:12).

Humans are judged after death. (At the individual judgment, one’s faith in Jesus and actions are assessed, leading to either Hades/hell or heaven.) Jesus also died once to atone for sin, and at His Second Coming, He will appear again to bring full salvation to those who eagerly await Him (Matthew 24:30?31).

We are confident that we may enter the heavenly sanctuary because the “new and living way” has been opened through the Lord’s blood (John 14:6), allowing believers to draw near to God directly. Our hearts have been cleansed by the blood of the cross, and our bodies purified by the water of baptism, enabling us to approach God with sincere faith, repentance, and obedience (Psalm 51:19). Through the forgiveness and cleansing of sins, a new form of worship fellowship with God has been made possible.

The Lord who promised eternal life is true and never lies (Numbers 23:19). We hold fast to this publicly declared hope, study the Word, pray, and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24?25).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 24:46?53

Jesus told His disciples, “The Messiah (Savior) must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day” (Hosea 6:2, Psalm 16:10). (Note: Jesus studied the Old Testament between the ages of 12 and 30.) As prophesied, Jesus descended into Hades like other humans (1 Peter 3:19), and there He proclaimed salvation even to those present.

“Repentance and forgiveness of sins” will be preached in Jesus’ name (His authority and saving power) to all nations (Acts 4:12). The proclamation begins in Jerusalem because Zion (Jerusalem) is the center of God’s plan (Isaiah 2:3).

From here, the Gospel will go out to the entire world.

The disciples become “witnesses,” entrusted with the mission of telling what they saw and heard?Jesus’ death, resurrection, and miracles. What the Father “promised” refers to the “Holy Spirit” (Joel 2:27; Acts 2:1?4). The “power from on high” refers to the Holy Spirit’s power, which enables the disciples to proclaim the Gospel without fear.

Jesus led the disciples to Bethany?the place of Lazarus’ resurrection (John 11)?symbolizing the power of life. His blessing gave them God’s peace and their mission (Numbers 6:24?26). After Jesus was taken up into heaven, the disciples bowed in worship and returned to Jerusalem with great joy because they had been given the hope that Jesus is still alive and will return again (Acts 1:11).

In the temple, they continually praised God, their hearts full of gratitude and joy for His work of salvation (Psalm 100:1). To testify of the Lord, trust in God's promises, and praise the Lord daily this is our calling.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 89th Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading: Acts 2:1?11

This passage is an important one that is read every year.

It marks the starting point of Christianity's mission to the whole world, showing the work of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.

Pentecost (\*Note 1) is a feast celebrated 50 days after the Resurrection of the Lord. On this day, believers from various regions make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. While about 120 people (disciples and believers) are praying, suddenly a sound like a violent "wind" comes from heaven. In the Old Testament, "wind" symbolizes the Spirit of God (Ezekiel 37:9-14), signaling the beginning of a new era. "Fire" represents God's presence (Exodus 3:2), and "tongues" signify speech and mission.

The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, speak in many languages about "the mighty works of God":

① The redemption through the cross, ②The resurrection, ③Eternal life. The people are astonished to hear this in their native languages. This is not merely a reversal of the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-7), but rather, through the Gospel, God is gathering people into one people again (John 17:21).

Most of the disciples were born in Galilee and had no special abilities. Speaking in many languages was a work of God (a miracle). The listed regions were all under Roman rule at the time, showing that God's salvation is aimed at the whole world.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, fear is turned into hope, and the power to speak is given. The mighty works of the Lord continue even today.

\*Note 1: Pentecost, also known as the "Feast of Weeks," marks the culmination of the harvest festival. God planned it as a feast harmonizing the Old Testament festivals with the New Testament salvation. The Passover is a festival during the time of the Lord's death and resurrection.

● Second Reading: Romans 8:8?17

Those who are under the control of the flesh prioritize their desires (Galatians 5:19?21) and values, which is equivalent to bearing the original sin of Adam in the Old Testament (Genesis 3), thus being cut off from God.

Believers, however, have the "Holy Spirit" dwelling in them (1 Corinthians 3:16), making them temples of God and vessels where the Holy Spirit resides (John 14:17).

Through the death of Jesus on the cross, we are justified (declared righteous) and our relationship with God is restored (John 11:25). "To give life even to our mortal bodies" is not only a hope for the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52), but also means that even in this life, we receive new life through the Holy Spirit.

Believers have a "single obligation": to walk according to the Spirit.

Living according to the flesh leads to spiritual death (James 1:15), but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are guided to eternal life by overcoming selfish desires (Galatians 5:16?17).

Those who are led by the Spirit become "children of God," filled with freedom and love, and can call God "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36). The Holy Spirit testifies that we are children of God (Ephesians 1:13-14).

God's children become heirs with Christ of the new Kingdom of God, sharing both in the joy of glory (Luke 9:23) and in the suffering of the cross (Matthew 5:10-12).

Though we are naturally self-centered and driven by desires, the guidance of the Holy Spirit shows us "the way we should walk." Even amid trials, we can call out "Father God," receive His quiet helping hand, and walk with hope and assurance.

● Gospel Reading: John 14:15?16, 23?26



To “love” (agape) Jesus is to care for Him and follow Him in trust.

“Keep my commandments “Love one another” (John 13:34) is a command from Jesus (John 15:17) and includes love for God and love for people (Matthew 22:37-40).

The “Advocate” refers to the Holy Spirit (the Helper, the one called to be beside us). The Holy Spirit dwells permanently in believers (Romans 8:9-11).

To “keep His word” means listening to sermons in worship (Romans 10:17), studying the Bible, and putting it into practice.

Since humans cannot fully keep the Word (Romans 7:18?19), they rely on the help of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). “The Father and I will dwell with them” means that one’s heart becomes a temple where the Lord dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16). When the heart is agitated (with anger or anxiety), it is no longer a comfortable temple for the Lord. By maintaining a calm and clear heart, one can sensitively feel the Holy Spirit (Proverbs 4:23).

Those who “do not keep the word” are those who know the Word but do not obey it.

The Word is truth entrusted by God to Jesus (John 7:16).

Jesus spoke these things at the Last Supper to remove the disciples’ anxieties.

The Holy Spirit is “the teacher who teaches all things” (giving knowledge, understanding, guidance, and strength), and “reminds” us.

To be reminded means storing up the Word (using collections of scriptures like MyBible: Treasure Box of the Word Practical Edition I & II), inputting it so the Holy Spirit can recall and guide us when needed (Psalm 119:11).

To know whether the Holy Spirit is working in us, we can check for the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

■ 90th Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading: Proverbs 8:22-31

This passage speaks of “wisdom” as if it were a person: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work” (Proverbs 8:22). It is expressed as having existed with God even before the creation of the heavens and the earth. A key point is found in “I was beside him, like a master worker” indicating that “wisdom” participated in the creation of the world. This “wisdom” seems to symbolize Jesus as the “Word (Logos)” (John 1:1-3). Since wisdom delighted in God and “rejoiced in the human race,” we can see that God finds great joy in creating and in fellowship with humanity. This is affirmed when God says that what He created was “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

God says, “Wisdom is more precious than pearls; nothing you desire can compare with her” (Proverbs 8:11). When Solomon prayed not for long life or riches but for discernment to carry out just judgment, God responded:

“Since you have asked for discernment... I will give you a wise and discerning heart. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for both wealth and honor” (1 Kings 3:11-13). Thus the glorious Solomon dynasty was born.

“Wisdom” is not merely knowledge but also includes the work of the Holy Spirit, who helps us judge and act according to God’s will (James 3:17). This passage was chosen for Trinity Sunday because it shows how: God plans creation, The Son (wisdom/the Word) participates in it, and The Spirit (wisdom) works in harmony with them.

Wisdom and the Holy Spirit are always, everywhere, and endlessly at work. When we listen to the Word and follow it, we walk the right path and grow in our relationship with God.

● Second Reading: Romans 5:1-5

By believing in Jesus (the Son) in His death and resurrection we are justified by God (the Father), our relationship with God is restored, and we are no longer enemies but welcomed into His family. Now we have peace (shalom) with God (John 3:16; Romans 3:22-24). The grace we have received includes: Being justified, Living in God’s love and presence, Fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit, Becoming people whose prayers are heard, and Receiving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 4:6). This grace is the result of: The Father’s plan of salvation, The Son accomplishing redemption, and The Spirit guiding us together they uphold our faith. Moreover, “we boast in the hope of sharing the glory of God” (Romans 8:17), which means we are assured of living in glory with God in His Kingdom and having eternal fellowship with the Lord when Christ returns (Colossians 3:4).

We can “boast in our sufferings” because suffering produces endurance (trusting God and standing firm), endurance produces character (true faith and proven character), and character produces hope (a firm confidence that God will surely do good). (James 1:2-4)

“Hope does not disappoint us,” because “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5; Galatians 4:6).

This “love” means that in every situation, we can experience God’s presence and His wisdom, guidance, comfort, healing, and actions everything related to human life (Psalm 23:1-6). We are sustained by the love and grace of the Triune God, live by faith, are filled with hope, and supported by love, as we await the glory that will be revealed.

[The Trinity]

God (the Father) planned salvation to restore the relationship with humanity. Jesus (the Son) accomplished redemption through His death, resurrection, and led us to peace and grace. The Holy Spirit pours out love, makes God’s presence real, and confirms our hope.

● Gospel Reading: John 16:12-15

Jesus did not speak to His disciples about the Holy Spirit before His resurrection because they had not yet received the Spirit. Without God’s Spirit, a person cannot understand God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Spirit would be poured

out on the disciples after Pentecost (John 7:39).

The Holy Spirit guides the disciples into all truth, which concerns God's salvation, His will, and the coming of the Kingdom (John 14:6).

Truth is understood through prayer, the Word, and worship, as the Holy Spirit speaks and brings conviction (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). The Spirit declares what has been revealed by the Father and the Son (John 15:26) and announces "what is to come"—God's future plans, the Second Coming, fulfillment of the Kingdom, and the journey of the Church.

The Spirit reveals the glory of Jesus: His death on the cross, His resurrection, and the greatness of His words.

To "declare" means to cause us to understand the truth of Jesus' teachings.

"All that the Father has" refers to God's wisdom, truth, salvation plan, authority, and what has been entrusted to Jesus.

"All that belongs to the Father is mine" shows that the Father and the Son are united and share all things (John 10:30), including God's authority and revelation.

God gives to Jesus, Jesus to the Spirit, and the Spirit to us?so the teachings of Jesus are continually conveyed to us as needed, offering spiritual knowledge and leading us into practice.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

## The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

### ■ 91st Sharing of the Word of God

#### ● First Reading: Genesis 14:18-20

(The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is celebrated on Holy Thursday and once again after Easter, to deepen our reflection on the mystery of the Eucharist.)

In this passage, Abram defeats his enemies with only a few trained men in order to rescue his nephew Lot. After the battle, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High (El Elyon), blesses Abram and offers "bread and wine," which foreshadows the Lord's Supper.

"El Elyon" is a title referring to the one Creator God, while "Yahweh" is the name revealed to Moses, meaning "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Jesus also used this phrase (John 18:6). Though the names differ, they refer to the same God.

Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils this becomes the origin of the "tithe," expressing gratitude to God, which later became a legal requirement under Moses' law (Leviticus 27:30).

In the New Testament, Paul says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

In Malachi 3:10, God says, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse... and put me to the test." This shows that those who give by faith will receive God's blessing.

Today, tithing is no longer mandatory but is seen as a guideline of gratitude. What matters is the attitude of a thankful heart, which pleases God (<sup>MOUKOKISHU</sup> 忘己喜主: forget self, please God) and turns away from sin (<sup>ZENGYOUZAIDAN</sup> 善行罪断: good deeds cut off sin). Those who live this way will be blessed (Matthew 6:33).

#### ● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

In this passage, Paul explains the meaning and origin of the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). He was addressing the divisions and selfish behaviors in the Corinthian church that had caused the true essence of the Lord's Supper to be lost.

"The night he was handed over" refers to the Thursday night when Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested (Matthew 26).

Despite facing death, Jesus offered a prayer of thanksgiving?an act of deep trust in God's will and obedience to the plan of salvation, even in despair.

The Greek word for "thanksgiving" (eucharistia) is the root of the word "Eucharist."

The phrase "He broke the bread" refers to Jesus' body being broken on the cross, fulfilling the prophecy: "He was pierced for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

The Lord's Supper commemorates Jesus' self-sacrificing body.

To "remember" means to never forget the event of the Cross, to give thanks, and to approach it with a humble heart (Psalm 103:2).

When Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant," He was referring to a relationship of trust?a solemn promise.

The "new covenant" was foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34: "I will make a new covenant."

While the old covenant (Mosaic Law) was written on stone tablets, the new covenant is written on human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

The new covenant began the moment Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood.

Through this covenant, we are forgiven of our sins by Jesus' blood (Hebrews 9:15-22) and enter into a new relationship of direct connection with God.

"To proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" means to continue this sacred meal until the day of Christ's return, bearing witness to His atoning death on the Cross (Matthew 5:16).

The Eucharist remembers the past (the Cross), renews the present (faith and gratitude), and looks forward to the

future (the Second Coming).

By partaking in this rite, we are invited to offer ourselves to God (Romans 12:1) and to live each day in love and devotion.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 9:11?17

As Jesus' name became known, Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) began to wonder, "Who is this Jesus?" This passage provides the answer.

Jesus teaches the crowds about the "Kingdom of God," describing it as a realm where God reigns perfectly, filled with love and justice (Matthew 6:33).

When Jesus heals the sick, He uses various means laying on of hands, words, even saliva (Mark 7:33; Luke 4:40)?all demonstrating God's authority and compassion.

At evening, the disciples' suggestion to send the crowd away was a reasonable and considerate idea, but Jesus said, "You give them something to eat," inviting them into training.

Organizing the crowd in groups of fifty provided orderly distribution and evokes the image of God's people in the wilderness (Numbers 2).

Jesus:①Looked up to heaven,②Offered a prayer,③Broke the bread,④Gave it to the disciples? This sequence mirrors the Last Supper (Luke 22:19) and forms the foundation of the Eucharist.

The twelve baskets of leftover fragments symbolize the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament, showing the abundance and completeness of God's grace (Exodus 16:1?18).

Through this miracle, Jesus reveals that He is the one who brings the Kingdom of God and fulfills both spiritual and physical needs. It is also an answer to King Herod's question: Jesus is the Savior.

Author: Akinori Kamachi Translation: AI

■ 92nd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 12:1-11

Peter's miraculous rescue reveals (1) God's plan that surpasses human understanding, and (2) the earnest, unified prayers of the Church. These two elements sustained the work of the apostles, and Peter became a witness to them (cf. Romans 8:28). King Herod Agrippa (grandson of Herod the Great), seeking favor with the Jews, began to persecute the Church. Christianity, seen as a deviation from Jewish tradition, was resented by both the Jewish people and their leaders. James was executed "by the sword" because he did not hold Roman citizenship, becoming the first martyred apostle. Peter, His execution was delayed due to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which follows the Passover and lasts seven days (cf. Exodus 12:15-17). Meanwhile, the Church offered "fervent intercessory prayer" on Peter's behalf prayers of total devotion, reminiscent of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. God heard these prayers and sent an angel.

Peter was chained and "sleeping between soldiers" because he had previously escaped miraculously (Acts 5:19), prompting stricter security this time. Yet again, an angel appeared and released him.

Angels, as spiritual beings under God's command, speak in human-understandable language, act to assist, and lead people toward salvation.

Encounters with angels are sometimes described as "visions" in both Old and New Testaments (e.g., Daniel 10:5-21; the Annunciation to Mary in Luke 1:26-38). Angels appear on God's mission and vanish once their task is done.

The "Jewish plan" was to put Peter on trial and execute him publicly.

✂ Angels were created by God in the early stages of creation (cf. Psalm 148:2-5; Colossians 1:16). They are distinct from humans and serve roles such as guardians and worshippers of God.

● Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Paul's declaration that he is being "poured out like a libation" refers to his approaching martyrdom (cf. Philippians 2:17).

"Departure from this world" means giving up one's life for faith.

"To have fought the good fight" means to spiritually endure persecution and hardship while remaining faithful.

"To finish the race" means to faithfully complete the apostolic mission of preaching to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:47).

"To keep the faith" means to trust in Jesus and follow the Word of God, no matter the suffering.

The "crown of righteousness" is eternal life and entry into God's kingdom, awarded on the day of the Lord's return (cf. James 1:12).

The "righteous judge" refers to Jesus, whose judgment will ask: (1) Did you believe in God? (2) Did you accept Jesus as Savior? (3) Did you walk according to the Word? (cf. John 12:48)

"On that day" refers to the Second Coming of the Lord (cf. Matthew 25:31-34), and this hope is given "to all who long for His appearing."

"Paul's Gospel" is the message of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, addressed to all humanity (cf. Romans 1:16).

"The Lord stood by me" refers to the presence of Jesus through the help of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17).

"The mouth of the lion" refers to death and the devil (cf. 1 Peter 5:8), from whom the Lord protected Paul spiritually and physically.

"To be rescued from every evil deed" means being protected by the Holy Spirit from desires and temptations.

The "heavenly kingdom" is the new kingdom of God an eternal dwelling filled with righteousness and peace (cf. Revelation 21:1-4).

Finally, the phrase "To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen" is a word of praise and prayer, declaring that all glory belongs eternally to God.

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-19

The region of Caesarea Philippi was strongly influenced by Gentile culture and relatively free from the influence of Jewish religious leaders.

There, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They replied with names such as John the Baptist (cf. Matthew 14:2), Elijah expected to return at the end times (cf. Malachi 4:5), or the sorrowful prophet Jeremiah indicating that even the disciples had not yet fully grasped Jesus as the Messiah.

Then Jesus asked, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered on behalf of the group, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

This confession of faith had been nurtured through witnessing Jesus’ miracles and teachings.

Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah,” because this revelation came from the Father in heaven.

Faith is not just knowledge, but a gift revealed and guided by the Spirit (cf. John 6:44).

“I will build my Church upon this rock” means that the Church, gathered by faith, is built upon Peter’s confession, and it will overcome death and the power of evil (Hades).

When Jesus gives Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” it symbolizes the Church’s mission of outward evangelism (Peter) and inward pastoral care (Paul), entrusting the building up of the faithful to them.

“To bind and to loose” refers to decisions related to forgiveness and Church discipline, which are also recognized in heaven (cf. John 20:23).

When the Church acts in accordance with God’s will, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, God Himself guarantees and supports those actions (cf. Matthew 18:18-20).

Your personal response to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” will become the foundation of your life of faith.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 93rd Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14

This passage is a prophecy of Jerusalem's restoration following the Babylonian exile. It speaks of God's motherly love and comfort, and the rebuilding of the relationship between God and His people. Jerusalem is personified as a mother and referred to as "she." The command "Rejoice" indicates that the restoration between God and His people has already begun, and the city that was devastated during the exile is once again becoming a source of joy.

Those who "mourned for her" are those who grieved over the destruction of Jerusalem and shared in the suffering of the exiled people. For them, restoration becomes a source of joy. Jerusalem is depicted as a mother, and her "breasts" and "glory" represent the abundance by which her people are nourished. The restored city becomes a place of both spiritual and material satisfaction for the people and fulfills the role of a nurturing mother.

The phrase "peace like a river" signifies God's blessings flowing continuously and abundantly. "The wealth of the nations" indicates that even the riches and glory of other nations will flow into Jerusalem. "You shall be carried in her arms and fondled on her knees" expresses the gentle and abundant peace and blessing from God, like that of a mother. This expression is rare even in the Old Testament. Jerusalem, as a place of comfort, becomes the center of communion and restoration with God. God's love is shown to be even deeper in comfort than a father's; it is motherly. As the people are restored, "their hearts shall rejoice" and "their bones shall flourish like grass," signifying renewal and strength both inwardly and outwardly.

Meanwhile, "the Lord's indignation" is directed at His enemies. He brings judgment upon them to demonstrate His justice. God blesses His people, holding both restoration and justice together. The same God who allowed the experience of "severance" during the exile now heals and nurtures His people abundantly.

● Second Reading: Galatians 6:14-18

Paul says, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." This means that he does not boast in honor, achievements, or the fulfillment of worldly desires, but in the fact that through Jesus' death on the cross, our sins have been forgiven (Galatians 2:20). He has cut ties with the values of this world such as wealth, honor, and various desires and now lives according to a completely new set of values, unaffected by worldly influences.

To be "a new creation" means to put an end to the old self through Jesus, to be led by the Holy Spirit as a child of God, and to be transformed into a new being (2 Corinthians 5:17). This transformation is not the result of human effort, but a gift of God's unilateral grace.

Paul prays that "peace and mercy" may be upon those who live by this principle of faith. "The Israel of God" refers not only to the Jewish people, but to all who belong to God through faith (Galatians 3:7, 29).

"Let no one cause me trouble" is Paul's appeal, expressing his weariness from debates with legalists. The "marks of Jesus" refer to the scars of persecution he bears on his body as a sign of belonging to Christ.

Finally, "the grace of our Lord Jesus" refers to: ① The unmerited love by which we are saved through faith (Galatians 2:16), ② The new life lived together with the Holy Spirit.

Paul leads people to live a life of faith that is free from the law through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

Jesus appoints 72 others, in addition to the 12 disciples, and sends them out two by two for mission. This is based on the principle of "two witnesses" (Deuteronomy 19:15), and it is to ensure they encourage one another in difficult missions. When Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," He means there are many waiting for the Gospel, but few workers to deliver it. "Sending you out like lambs among wolves" means they are to go forth with faith, even into hardship and persecution.



“Carry no purse, no bag…” means they are to trust in God’s provision and not rely on their own judgment or possessions. He also instructs them to skip formal greetings and focus solely on their mission. In each house they enter, they are to say, “Peace be to this house.” If the house is receptive, the blessing of peace will remain.

A “son of peace” is one who accepts God’s peace. Missionaries are to be content with what is given and are not to go from house to house. This indicates that they should stay in one place and dedicate themselves to preaching. Their reward is rightful (1 Timothy 5:18), and God will bless the faithful worker. If a town rejects them, they are to “shake the dust off their feet” and move on, warning that those who directly reject the Gospel will face judgment “on that day.”

When the disciples return, rejoicing that demons submitted in Jesus’ name, Jesus tells them to rejoice instead that “your names are written in heaven.” This means that eternal communion with God is the true joy (Exodus 32:32; Revelation 3:5).

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

● First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of sermons delivered by Moses in Moab (east of the Dead Sea) before his death. As the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land (Canaan), Moses looked back on their journey and God's laws, urging the people to renew their covenant with God.

Chapter 30 especially gives hope that even if the Israelites sin and stray from God, if they repent and return to the Lord, He will forgive them.

"Repentance" means regretting one's sins and changing one's actions to turn back to God. Before baptism, it marks the first step toward God; after baptism, it is an act of restoring fellowship with Him.

On the other hand, "conversion" is the determination to live a God-centered life after baptism. Even though we may not succeed every day, it is a journey of continually returning to God through daily conversion.

"Obeying the voice of the Lord" means listening to and practicing God's Word.

"Commandments" refer to divine orders like the Ten Commandments, while "statutes" refer to rules for worship and rituals.

Jesus summarized these commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) and statutes into the twofold law of love: love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 7:12). Thus, love is the foundation of all law.

When it says God's Word is "not in heaven or across the sea," it means that it is not something distant or unreachable, but rather, "in your mouth and in your heart" it can be understood and practiced by all people.

This encourages us that God's Word is not far away but open to everyone, and if we believe, we can obey.

Paul affirms this in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

The core of the Old Testament (the Law) is a life of loving God and neighbor. The New Testament centers on Jesus' teaching: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

The entire Bible, through these commandments of love, consistently teaches: "Live a life of love."

Here, "love" is not a mere feeling, but compassion in action, doing what pleases God and others. When others respond with a heartfelt "thank you," that gratitude reflects the true fruit of love.

What the Bible demands is living love that comes from the heart and shows itself in action.

● Second Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

God is spirit and invisible, but Jesus appeared as the visible image of God (John 14:9).

The phrase "firstborn of all creation" means that God planned creation (Genesis 1:1; Ephesians 1:3-10), Christ carried out the work of creation (Colossians 1:16), and the Holy Spirit breathed life into creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4).

Each person of the Trinity fulfilled their role in the creation of heaven and earth.

"All things were created through the Son and for the Son" both the universe and humanity are created to be completed through Jesus.

He is also said to be "the firstborn from the dead," meaning that Jesus, as a human, died and rose again the first in human history to conquer death and receive new life (1 Corinthians 15:20).

With His resurrection, the new spiritual creation began. Jesus, as the first fruits of this new life, became the head of humankind, and the Church is His body.

Believers are united in this Church (Ephesians 1:22-23).

When it says that God caused "all His fullness to dwell in Him," it means that the full nature of God was given to Jesus, and through Him, God's plan of salvation was brought to fulfillment, which pleased God greatly.

This is a crucial declaration that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, God and humanity were reconciled, and this reconciliation extended to "all things in heaven and on earth."

The Church is the proof of this reconciliation and continues to live as a new community and a living vessel.

This passage proclaims that Jesus is preeminent in all things.

#### ● Gospel Reading: Luke 10:25-37

In modern times, "receiving eternal life" begins with baptism.

In Jesus' day, the scribes believed that keeping the law such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and various regulations made a person righteous.

But Jesus emphasized the heart, not just outward form.

The scribe quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus tells him: "Do this and you will live" underscoring that faith must be practiced, not just known.

Jericho was a dangerous area at that time, notorious for robbers.

The priest and the Levite, both religious leaders well-versed in the law, passed by on the other side, likely to avoid ritual impurity from touching a possibly dead body.

The Samaritan, however despised and rejected by Jews was moved with compassion, drew near, and cared for the injured man.

Jesus shifts the focus from "Who is my neighbor?" to "Who acted as a neighbor to the one in need?"

By putting oneself in the place of the person in need (Matthew 7:12), one can see what love requires this is the heart of customer orientation or omotenashi.

Jesus says, "Go and do likewise," teaching the importance of overcoming prejudice and practicing love.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 95th Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading: Genesis 18:1-10

In this passage, God appears to Abraham under the oak trees of Mamre (located about 36 km south of Jerusalem). Upon seeing the three visitors, Abraham immediately runs to greet them, bowing low to the ground. Of the three, one is considered to be God and the other two are angels (cf. Genesis 19:1). Abraham intuitively recognizes them not as ordinary travelers but as "holy beings" and zealously welcomes them, determined not to miss the divine visitation. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, hospitality to travelers was a vital social and religious duty. Washing the feet with water was a gesture of compassion to relieve the fatigue of long journeys. Abraham invites the visitors to rest in the shade, prepares bread from fine flour (about 13 kg), and serves a meal including a calf and dairy products. This act of hospitality goes beyond mere courtesy; it becomes a form of worship, expressing love and reverence rooted in faith (cf. Hebrews 13:2).

Abraham's posture of standing and serving the visitors demonstrates humility someone of wealth and status serving others and serves as a model for believers (cf. Luke 22:26). When the disciples argued about "who is the greatest," Jesus taught them, "The one who rules should be like the one who serves" (Luke 22:26).

The visitor's words, "Let it be as you have said," echo Mary's response: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), symbolizing complete acceptance of God's plan. Sarah, obedient to her husband Abraham, fulfills her role as the mistress of the household. Her respectful obedience calling Abraham "lord" is noted as a model of faith (cf. 1 Peter 3:6).

The promise that a child would be born to the aged Sarah demonstrates the truth that, even when something seems impossible to humans, "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). From the son Isaac, who would later be born, the genealogy leading to the Messiah would eventually unfold.

The name change from "Abram" (exalted father) to "Abraham" (father of many nations) was commanded by God based on His covenant (Genesis 17:4-5). Likewise, the change from "Sarai" (my princess) to "Sarah" (noblewoman) signified a transition from personal to universal motherhood.

● Second Reading: Colossians 1:24-2:8

This passage is from a letter Paul wrote from prison to the church in Colossae. When Paul says he "rejoices in his sufferings," he refers to the mission he bears for the Church, sharing in the work of God (cf. Philippians 1:29, Romans 5:3-5). The phrase "what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" refers to the persecutions and hardships the Church endures after Christ's ascension.

Paul's mission was to "fully proclaim the word of God" (Acts 20:27) to preach the truth of the Gospel to all people, both Jews and Gentiles. His means included preaching, prayer, letters, and the founding of churches.

The "mystery" refers to God's plan of salvation prepared before the foundation of the world redemption through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 13:8). The "saints" refer to all believers who walk by faith in Jesus (Romans 1:7). The inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation was a groundbreaking message at the time and represented the "glorious hope" (Romans 9:11). The "hope of glory" (Romans 8:18) is the promise that Jesus dwells within believers and that they will enter the new Kingdom of God.

Paul's statement that he becomes "all things to all people" (1 Corinthians 9:22) means that he communicates in a way that people can understand, using "wisdom from above" (James 3:17) to lead others to maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13). He gently instructs others to correct error and lead them to truth (2 Timothy 2:25).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 10:38-42

This story takes place in Bethany, a village near Jerusalem (cf. John 11:1), where the sisters Martha and Mary lived

with their brother Lazarus. Martha, who deeply trusted Jesus (cf. John 11:5), welcomed Him into her home. Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet to listen to His word (Luke 10:39), embodying the principle that "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17).

Meanwhile, Martha was distracted by "hospitality." Though she was doing something good, she had lost sight of "the most important thing." Frustrated that Mary was not helping, Martha asked Jesus to intervene. But Jesus gently called her name twice, "Martha, Martha," and advised her to step away from worldly worries and focus on "the one thing necessary" (Luke 10:42) communion with God.

This passage teaches the importance of balancing "service (action)" and "worship (faith)," with the priority placed on listening to the word of God.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 96th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

God and two angels appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre and came down to verify the outcry against the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-21). Sodom ("burned") and Gomorrah ("buried") were located in the southern region of the Dead Sea. Their sins included: ① Sexual immorality (Ezekiel 16:49-50; Jude 1:7) ② Lack of mercy toward the weak (Ezekiel 16:49) ③ Corruption of the entire society. Because of these, they faced God's judgment.

The "outcry" refers to the voices of the oppressed and also indicates the overflowing state of sin. The "righteous" are not merely those who suffer but those who walk by faith and obey God (Psalm 1:1-6; Genesis 15:6). God's judgment is based on His standard, which considers both the spiritual condition of a city and the number of righteous people. Therefore, those who cry out are not necessarily counted as righteous.

The two angels went to investigate Sodom's current condition, while Abraham began to intercede before the Lord. He asked, "If there are 50 righteous people, will You not destroy the city?" God answered that He would forgive the entire city for the sake of those 50. The number gradually decreased to 45, 40, 30, 20, and finally 10, and each time God promised forgiveness. However, as even 10 righteous people could not be found, the city was ultimately destroyed.

Lot's family was saved through the angels' guidance, but Lot's wife looked back her heart drawn to the past and became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26; 2 Peter 2:7).

This passage speaks of God's justice and mercy, intercessory prayer, the influence of even a few righteous people on society, and the divine judgment that comes upon deep spiritual corruption.

● Second Reading: Colossians 2:12-14

Baptism is a spiritual sign of the "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38) and of being "buried with Christ... and raised from the dead" (Romans 6:4). In the baptismal rite (immersion), being submerged in water symbolizes death to sin (Ephesians 2:1) and burial with Christ. Emerging from the water represents being "made alive (resurrected)... and saved" (Ephesians 2:5). This marks the beginning of a new life of faith and becoming a member of God's family the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Baptism replaces the Old Testament rite of circumcision as the New Testament sign of the covenant (Romans 2:29), symbolizing inner transformation.

Through baptism, original sin and all personal sins committed before baptism are forgiven. Sins committed afterward require a repeated cycle of repentance and forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

In the Catholic Church, this is the "Sacrament of Reconciliation," while in Protestant churches, fellowship with God is maintained through ongoing repentance.

The Law serves as the standard for judging sin, and the "record of debt" is like a certificate that lists our sins. Jesus nailed this to the cross and abolished it (Romans 8:1-3).

Those who are baptized strengthen their faith through love for neighbors and trials (James 1:2-4), grow spiritually through fellowship in the Church, and live out the mission given by God.

Delaying baptism may result in missing God's grace and opportunities for repentance, especially since death comes without warning (Luke 12:16-21). Thus, "If you hear His voice today, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15).

Baptism is a "confession of faith," entrusting one's life to God, and God delights in genuine faith.

To return to God now and live in His forgiveness and guidance is truly the best life one can choose.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 11:1-13

Jesus made "prayer" a daily habit (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18). The "prayer that John taught" refers to a format or attitude of prayer.

Here is the formal version of the “Lord’s Prayer” (cf. Matthew 6:9?13):

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

In the parable Jesus gives, a man seeks bread to “welcome” a traveler. This aligns with the love of neighbor and the spirit of hospitality at the time, and teaches “Ask, and it will be given to you.”

The message is that prayers born of consideration and love for others will certainly reach God.

“Ask, seek, knock” is not an encouragement of self-fulfillment but rather assurance that God answers those who act in accordance with His will. Specifically:①That God’s name be glorified ②That we fulfill our mission and responsibilities ③That we practice love for our neighbor Just as a parent gives their child what they truly need like a fish or an egg the heavenly Father will give something far better. Above all, what we must seek from the Lord is the “Holy Spirit.” For further insight on how prayer is answered, please refer to “MyBible: Treasure Chest of the Word Practical Edition: 33. Prayer.”

Author: Akinori Kamachi Translation: AI

■ The 97th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

This book has traditionally been attributed to King Solomon. However, based on the style, language, and philosophical elements, scholars believe it was actually written by an anonymous sage between the late 3rd century and early 2nd century BCE. The text exhibits late Hebrew with influences from Aramaic and Persian, and even contains elements of Greek philosophy.

This passage reflects the background and teaching of the book. The central theme is the vanity of life, expressed in the words: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2) The author, despite using all his wisdom and abilities to gain wealth, knowledge, and status (Ecclesiastes 2:4-9), laments that in the end, all is lost in death. The fruits of his labor are passed on to an heir who has done nothing to earn them (Ecclesiastes 2:21), and he cannot know whether that person will be wise or foolish (Ecclesiastes 2:19). He mourns this as truly “a grievous evil.” (Ecclesiastes 2:21)

In response, one should prepare for the end of life and entrust everything to the Lord. The author concludes that “there is nothing better for people than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live” (Ecclesiastes 3:12). However, even this joy is a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 2:24) and cannot be attained by human effort alone (Ecclesiastes 2:26). Life is full of pain and anxiety, and even at night there is no rest (Ecclesiastes 2:23). Therefore, he concludes: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

We are called to walk each day with gratitude for the grace given by the Lord, placing our hope in the “eternal life” and “resurrection” that have been promised to us.

● Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

To say that believers have been “raised with Christ” means that through baptism, the old self has died and a new spiritual life has begun (Romans 6:4-5). Thus, the call to “seek the things that are above” invites us to pursue the will of God, heavenly values, and Christlikeness.

Conversely, the warning not to be drawn to “earthly things” refers to the temptation of sin selfishness, pleasure-seeking, and greed. The phrase “you have died” means that we have been spiritually freed from the power of sin, and “your life is hidden with Christ in God” signifies that our life will be revealed in glory when Christ returns (see Matthew 24:30; Philippians 3:21).

The expression “Christ, who is your life” teaches that Jesus himself is the very source of our life. He not only guides and teaches us but also lives within us as the power of life itself (John 14:6). To “put off the old self” refers to abandoning our self-centered nature that does not know God, and to “put on the new self” means daily becoming more like Christ. This spiritual journey, guided by the Holy Spirit, deepens our relationship with God and leads to “true knowledge.” Greed is described as idolatry because it prioritizes material things and desires over God, turning them into idols. Moreover, the statement “there is no longer Greek or Jew...” proclaims the essential truth of the Church that in Christ, all are one, regardless of ethnicity or status (Galatians 3:28).

Although division and conflict are often seen in real-world churches, it is precisely in such situations that we are called to “put off the old self” and strive to walk daily as “new people” in imitation of Jesus.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 12:13-21

In Jewish society at the time, inheritance was determined according to the Law (Deuteronomy 21:17). Disputes were common, and rabbis often served as mediators. One man in the crowd asked Jesus to resolve an inheritance issue, viewing him as a rabbi or legal teacher. But Jesus, whose mission was to proclaim the kingdom of God, refused to act as a secular judge.



Instead, he warned: “Be on guard against all kinds of greed,” because greed leads to idolatry (Colossians 3:5) forgetting God and seeing only material things. The statement “life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” means that while wealth may offer temporary security, it cannot guarantee eternal life.

The rich man in the parable focuses not on how to find peace in God but on how to store up his harvest. He builds bigger barns to gain a false sense of security. Jesus teaches that “security through possessions” is unstable and uncertain. When the rich man says, “Take it easy; eat, drink, and be merry,” God calls him a “fool” and declares that his life will be demanded that very night. This reveals the folly of relying on wealth and neglecting preparation for eternal life (Sirach 11:19).

Both life and death are in God’s hands. Jesus concludes: “One who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God” is truly poor. A rich life is not defined by material wealth but by deep fellowship with the Lord, a life of love, faith, and good works. Jesus ultimately challenges us: “What is it that you treasure most in your life”

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 98th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading ? Wisdom 18:6-9

This passage recalls the “night of the Exodus (Passover night)” and praises both the life of faith of God’s people and His salvation (Exodus 12:1-49). “That night” refers to the night when God struck down the firstborn of Egypt as the final plague, while the Israelites were spared from death through the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:1-29). “Our ancestors” (the people of Israel) obeyed the command of God as spoken by Moses that night. The phrase “forewarned” means that they were saved by following God’s instruction to put the lamb’s blood on their doorposts. They continued to believe in “Your promise,” which refers to God’s covenant with Abraham to give him the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1-3), and thus they welcomed the Passover night “without fear or hesitation.” “The salvation of the righteous” means that by obeying God’s command, they were spared from death. “The destruction of their foes” refers to the judgment upon the rulers of Egypt who defied God and oppressed the Jewish people (Exodus 12:29). “Opponents” refers to Pharaoh and all who did not obey God. God judged them, but at the same time “called” His people Israel and granted them “glory.” “The holy children of the good” refers to the people of Israel and their descendants who live by faith. The Israelites, in secret, offered the “Passover lamb” as a “sacrifice” and resolved to keep, as a community, God’s command, which is a “sacred ordinance.” In this way, they were able to “accept both prosperity and adversity together,” and even in hardship, they shared their faith and continued to move forward. At this time, they praised God’s salvation and mighty works, as expressed in the “Song of Moses” (Exodus 15:1?3), which is the song of their ancestors.

● Second Reading ? Hebrews 11:1?2, 8?19

Faith is the conviction that what God has promised will surely be fulfilled, and the meditation on both the process and the goal. Abraham obeyed God’s voice, leaving Haran without knowing his destination (Genesis 12:1, 4). Though he arrived in Canaan, he did not settle permanently but lived as a foreigner because he was looking forward to “the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Revelation 21). Sarah, at the age of 90 (Genesis 18), gave birth to a child, and Abraham, nearly 100 years old, who thought he could not have a child (Genesis 17:17), was granted descendants “as numerous as the stars and the sand.” The phrase “they had the opportunity to return” means that Abraham and his family could have gone back to Haran, their homeland, but they chose to keep moving forward in God’s promise. They died without seeing the city of God, acknowledging that “on earth they were foreigners and strangers” (Genesis 23:4; Psalm 39:13). “Seeking a homeland” means they were longing for the heavenly home (the Kingdom of God), for “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). God was not ashamed to be called their God but was proud of them, saying, “My people” (Exodus 3:6). “God had prepared a city” refers to the new Kingdom of God, completed at the end of time (Revelation 21), where the faithful will dwell forever. God commanded Abraham to “offer your son Isaac as a burnt offering” (Genesis 22). Abraham was convinced that God could raise the dead, and at the very moment he was about to bring down the knife, he obeyed the voice that said, “Stop,” and instead offered a ram as a burnt offering. This event foreshadows the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

● Gospel Reading ? Luke 12:32?48

“The little flock” refers to the disciples who believed in Jesus, who were comforted by the promise that the Kingdom of God, completed at the end of time, would be given to them. “The Kingdom of God” is the new Kingdom that will be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus; it is not attained by human effort but is given to those who believe in God (Ephesians 2:8?9). Jesus’ words, “Sell your possessions and give alms,” encourage breaking free from attachment to wealth and practicing love toward the poor. Such almsgiving is like a “spiritual purse” that will never wear out, becoming eternal “treasure” stored in heaven as a reward before God. “Where no thief comes near and no moth destroys” means that the treasure stored in heaven is guarded by God and cannot be ruined. “Gird your loins and keep your lamps

burning” means living spiritually awake and ready, echoing the parable of the wise virgins (Matthew 25:1?13). “The master serving” is a reversal in which the Lord will reward the faithful servant with love and joy, referring to the heavenly banquet (Isaiah 25:6). “The Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect” means living each day prepared for the Lord’s return. In this parable, “faith” is depicted not merely as believing, but as a journey of holding hope, enduring patiently, remaining prepared, and walking faithfully in the Word.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 99th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

This scene takes place in 588?586 B.C. King Zedekiah outwardly submitted to Babylon, but secretly conspired with Egypt to rebel. As a result, Jerusalem was besieged once again by the Babylonian army. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed: "Surrender is the will of God; it is the only way for the city to survive." However, his words were regarded as defeatism and treason. The royal officials (the rulers responsible for national governance) accused him of discouraging the people and demanded his execution.

Zedekiah was a puppet king appointed by Babylon, powerless against the military and his officials "a king who could do nothing." The role of prophecy was to deliver God's word according to the people's situation: not only messages of hope and peace, but also calls to repentance, warnings of judgment, and disasters even words the prophet himself did not wish to speak. In this way, Jeremiah fulfilled his mission as a "prophet of judgment."

The officials, attempting to evade responsibility, threw Jeremiah into a muddy cistern to die of starvation. Being lowered into the mud meant being left without food or water, awaiting death in a cruel and inhumane environment. At this moment, Ebed-Melech, a foreigner and Ethiopian eunuch (a court official of lower rank than the royal officials, but one who held the king's trust), courageously intervened. He pleaded with the king to save Jeremiah, risking his own life. The king sent thirty men to rescue Jeremiah. Ebed-Melech's action was acknowledged by God as an act of faith, and he later received the promise of deliverance (Jeremiah 39:15?18). Likewise, Jesus blesses those who are persecuted for the sake of truth (Matthew 5:10).

This passage portrays several figures the prophet who faithfully proclaims God's word, the king swayed by others, the officials seeking self-preservation, and the foreign eunuch who lives by faith. Through them, we are reminded that true faith requires us to go beyond our position, interests, and advantages, and to live in obedience to God's will.

● Second Reading: Hebrews 12:1-4

"We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" refers to the faithful of the Old Testament (such as Noah and Abraham), who continue to encourage us. To inherit their faith, we are exhorted to cast off "every burden" (our anxieties, past regrets, pride, and self-centeredness) and the "sin that clings to us" (things that draw our eyes away from God). We must run with perseverance the race set before us, each on the path marked out by God.

Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of faith," endured the suffering of the cross, fixing His eyes on the joy that lay beyond: the redemption of humanity and the completion of salvation. He despised the shame and endured the agony of the cross (cf. Isaiah 53), and now, seated at the right hand of God, continues to intercede for us (Romans 8:34).

The exhortation "Consider him" means that when we face hardship and suffering, we should remember how Jesus endured hostility and pain at the hands of sinners. By doing so, we receive renewed strength to rise again. Our struggles have not yet reached the point of shedding blood; thus, the letter encourages us not to abandon faith under present suffering. This passage teaches the severity of the life of faith, urging us to follow the example of Jesus and the faithful who went before us, never losing sight of the goal, but pressing forward with hope (2 Corinthians 4:16?18).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 12:49-53

The "fire" that Jesus speaks of represents God's judgment, spiritual awakening, and the burning away of sin, bringing purification and new strength. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and many think of Him as the one who brings peace. Yet, in this passage, Jesus reveals that He also came to bring "division and conflict." His desire is that people awaken to the truth of God and live accordingly.

The "baptism" Jesus refers to is His death on the cross, which He knows He must endure until it is fulfilled. True peace comes only when the relationship between God and humanity is restored. This requires a personal choice?whether

to accept or reject the Gospel. Such a choice impacts even the closest family ties, causing division and removing any possibility of neutrality.

Thus, the mission of Jesus brings both salvation and the uncompromising demand for decision. Faith can at times bring loneliness and division, but this is a necessary passage on the way to awakening to judgment and sin, being purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and ultimately arriving at true peace.

Would you like me to polish this translation further into natural liturgical English (like what is usually used in missals and lectionaries), or should I keep it in this study-style English that closely follows your original text?

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 100th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

This passage is addressed to the Jewish community after the Babylonian Exile. In a time shaken by religious confusion and the challenges of dealing with foreigners, it declares that God's salvation is universal and that His glory will also be revealed to the Gentiles. In Isaiah 66, the final chapter, we see an eschatological vision of judgment and hope, God's victory, and the emergence of a new people of God. The Lord knows the deeds and thoughts of the people of Israel, and at the end of time He will gather all nations to reveal His glory. When God gives a "sign," it means that He grants miracles and divine power to those specially chosen, sending them throughout the world to proclaim His presence and glory. This is a prophetic foreshadowing of mission to the Gentiles and of the Church's calling in the New Testament (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43). Messengers are sent to the nations symbolizing the ends of the earth (such as Tarshish and Put) to proclaim God's glory to those who do not know Him. The description of horses, chariots, and camels as means of transport portrays how these emissaries will bring back God's people from every corner of the world as if they were an offering to the Lord an image of eschatological return. Furthermore, God declares that He will also choose priests and Levites from among the Gentiles, revealing a new order of service to Him (1 Peter 2:9). This prophecy proclaims salvation and the Gospel for all humanity.

● Second Reading: Hebrews 12:5-11, 12-13

Hebrews 12:5 cites Proverbs 3:11-12, teaching that God disciplines us as His "children." Here "discipline" is not punishment but training. Therefore, we must not lose heart or despise it, because discipline from God is a father's training meant to help us grow. This discipline is not extraordinary, but rather part of ordinary life. God has already provided both "a way of escape and the strength to endure" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Just as the proverbs say, "Send your beloved child on a journey" or "The lion pushes its cub down a cliff," people are strengthened through training (Hebrews 12:8-11). To be "scourged" means not to be neglected, but to be seriously guided. The term "training" (tanren) comes from the teaching of Miyamoto Musashi in The Book of Five Rings: "One thousand days of practice is forging; ten thousand days of practice is tempering." When believers are called to "endure," it does not mean mere resignation, but trusting and accepting God's purpose. "Perseverance" is likened to the heart of a blade—enduring and strengthening the spirit. Even if we cannot understand the training in the moment, later we will see that it produces personal and spiritual growth, becoming "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Romans 8:28). The exhortation to "strengthen the weak hands and feeble knees" (Isaiah 35:3) means that when one is weary in faith, one should encourage both oneself and others. Since the walk of faith influences not only oneself but also others, walking uprightly leads those who are weak to healing and to the way of the Lord.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 13:22-30

This passage takes place as Jesus was traveling toward the cross, preaching the Gospel in towns and villages. Someone asked Him about "the number of those who will be saved." At that time, many believed that the majority of Israelites would be saved. But Jesus shifted the focus from numbers to the true way of entering salvation. The "narrow door" represents repentance (turning from sin) and conversion (turning to God). Only through these can one stand at the narrow entrance of salvation; an easy, self-centered, or merely formal faith cannot bring one there. The command to "strive" means "to give all effort." Salvation requires decision and action, and missing the opportunity results in being too late. The "master of the house" represents God, and the "shutting of the door" signifies the closing of the opportunity for salvation at the final judgment. When He says, "I do not know where you come from," it refers to those who live a superficial religious life. True, deep faith is cultivated through prayer with the Lord. Even if one has encountered Jesus and heard His teaching, without repentance (Luke 22:61-62; 1 John 1:9) and conversion

(Philippians 3:7-8), there is no salvation. The “workers of iniquity” are those who do not obey God and remain in sin. To share in salvation, one must move beyond being a nominal believer to being a believer whose faith is evident in words and deeds. The Jews were shocked to hear that Abraham and the patriarchs would be in God’s kingdom, while they themselves would be cast outside. The “weeping and gnashing of teeth” express regret and despair. The image of people coming from east and west, north and south signifies the prophecy of Gentile salvation?that salvation extends beyond Israel to the whole world. “The last will be first, and the first will be last” means that the chosen people (Israel) who rejected God will be left outside, while the Gentiles will be accepted. Likewise, superficial believers will be excluded, while humble believers and sincere seekers will be welcomed.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 101st Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

This book, also called “Ecclesiasticus,” belongs to the wisdom literature and was written in the 2nd century B.C. In the Catholic Church it is considered part of the Deuterocanonical books. The author (Sirach), speaking like a father, calls out to “those who desire to learn wisdom and walk in the way of God” with the words “My child.” Gentleness means not wielding power or authority, but becoming a self-disciplined person who treats others calmly, imitating Jesus who was “gentle and humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29). More than giving material goods, warm words and attitudes move people and are pleasing to God. As wealth or status increases, one must not become proud, but rather “bow like a ripening ear of grain,” giving thanks for God’s grace. God delights in a humble, contrite, and obedient heart (Psalm 51:19; Isaiah 66:2; Micah 6:8). God’s majesty is manifested in creation and His plan of salvation throughout history, which reveals His greatness beyond human understanding. A humble person does not boast but praises God, and in seeing this, others come to revere God. On the other hand, the arrogant (pride, conceit, self-exaltation) destroy human relationships and invite God’s judgment (Proverbs 16:18). Those who reject counsel cannot be saved; sin and false values take root, and those accustomed to them need conversion. A wise person possesses not only knowledge but also flexibility and sincerity, fearing God and acting rightly. Meditating on proverbs and applying them in daily life is the key to growth; thus the Bible contains collections of proverbs such as Proverbs, the Book of Wisdom, Sirach, and the Psalms.

● Second Reading: Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24

“Something that could be touched… the sound of a trumpet” refers to Mount Sinai (in the land of Canaan), where the Law (the Ten Commandments) was given. The people of Israel, witnessing thunder, lightning, clouds, trumpet blasts, and fire, were overwhelmed by God’s presence and voice and begged Moses, “Let God not speak to us anymore.” In the Old Covenant, Mount Sinai was so holy that people, except priests or in special cases, could not approach. In the New Covenant, however, through Christ’s redemption, believers can draw near to God. “Mount Zion… the assembly” represents the Kingdom of God and the fulfillment of salvation. “Mount Zion” is the Temple in Jerusalem, while “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” refers to the heavenly dwelling of God (Revelation 21). The “festal gathering of countless angels” signifies heavenly worship celebrating the completion of salvation. Believers saved by Jesus are called “the firstborn,” whose names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). “God, the judge of all” will, at the Last Judgment, judge all humanity: the faithful will be rewarded with entry into God’s Kingdom, while the unbelievers will be cast into the “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15), suffering eternally. To “enter the Kingdom of God” one must: (1) believe in Jesus as Savior (John 3:16), (2) repent (Acts 3:19), (3) be baptized (Mark 16:16), (4) confess faith (Romans 10:9), (5) obey the Word (James 1:22), (6) witness to Jesus in daily life (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15), and (7) walk by the Spirit’s leading (Romans 8:14). Salvation unites faith and works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Through Christ’s redemption believers are justified, and “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” are rewarded before God. By Jesus’ death on the cross, God and humanity are reconciled, and believers may draw near to God directly (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 14:1, 7-14

In this passage, the Pharisees and legal scholars strictly observed the Sabbath regulations (Exodus 20:8-11), judging others by formalistic rules. To correct their legalism, Jesus deliberately attended a Pharisee’s banquet, where He was also being tested. In Jewish society of the time, seating at a banquet reflected one’s rank and honor. Jesus taught the importance of humility by saying, “Take the lowest seat, so that you may be invited to move up.” “Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted,” showing that the values of God’s



Kingdom reverse worldly values (Proverbs 25:6-7; Matthew 23:12). In Japan, wedding seats are usually pre-assigned, so such situations rarely occur, but in the ancient world flexible customs often led to competition for honor. Reciprocity (“inviting those who had invited you”) was also common. Jesus encouraged inviting the poor and the disabled society’s outcasts so that His followers might imitate His selfless love, which seeks no return (“almsgiving”). (Matthew 25:35-40). “The resurrection of the righteous” means that at the end of the age God will raise the just and grant them eternal life (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29). To be “repaid” means that those who serve others in selfless love will be honored in God’s Kingdom with eternal life and glory not with human praise or material satisfaction, but with eternal communion with God.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 102nd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Wisdom 9:13?18

The Book of Wisdom, considered deuterocanonical in the Catholic Church, was written around the first century B.C. The author teaches that “true wisdom is given by God, leading people on the right path to salvation.” From the time of creation, “Wisdom (the Holy Spirit)” was working alongside God (Proverbs 8:22?31). Human beings cannot understand God’s plan or will on their own; this becomes possible only through the Holy Spirit (Wisdom 9:17). In the New Testament it is written that “through the Spirit we understand all things” (1 Corinthians 2:10?12). Since “human thoughts are shallow and uncertain,” people often err, unable to foresee the future. God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8?9). God’s plan is vast, and His wisdom is certain (Job 38). The expression “the body is a burden upon the soul” refers to how, after death, the soul is separated from the body. The “earthly tent” represents the human body, which is bound by illness and sin, hindering both the body and the Spirit’s activity (2 Corinthians 5:1). The phrase “we can hardly guess the things on earth” means that even in trying to understand nature or human society correctly, errors abound, whether in scientific inquiry or political judgment. Thus, how much more difficult it is for humans to grasp “the heavenly things (God’s plan).” “Wisdom” here refers to “spiritual wisdom from God,” namely, the Holy Spirit. Since only when God gives His Spirit can people know His will, the Holy Spirit is essential. By sending the Spirit into the world?through the prophets in the Old Testament and at Pentecost in the New Testament?God enables people to know Him and follow Him. In this way, people walk on the right path and arrive at salvation. (For more on the Holy Spirit, see MyBible Practical Edition II, section on the Holy Spirit.)

● Second Reading: Philemon 1:9?10, 12?17

Paul’s letter appeals to Philemon, a wealthy man in Colossae, “out of love.” The phrase “a prisoner for Christ” means that Paul was imprisoned because of his faithfulness to Christ (Acts 28). “My child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment” refers to Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon, who encountered Paul in prison, accepted the Gospel, and became a believer?a spiritual son to Paul. Paul calls Onesimus “my own heart,” bound to him in faith. Though Paul wished to keep Onesimus with him, he respected the law and social order, sending him back to Philemon. If Onesimus were to serve Paul, it should be with his master’s consent. Paul’s returning of Onesimus was therefore a good act carried out voluntarily. Furthermore, Paul interpreted Onesimus’ escape as part of God’s plan: “You were separated for a while so that you might have him back forever.” Onesimus is now no longer a slave but, through Jesus, a “child of God” and a “beloved brother” in faith. Finally, Paul asks Philemon to “welcome him as you would welcome me,” thus transforming the relationship from “slave” to “brother.” Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was based on the biblical truth that “all people are equal before God,” and Paul’s words, “no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother” (Philemon 1:16), inspired historical reform.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25?33

This scene takes place as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He teaches the crowd the conditions of becoming a disciple (or minister). To “hate” in this context means to “place Jesus’ teaching above all else.” Though this is a difficult demand, it becomes possible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Carrying one’s cross” refers to the cross as a symbol of execution in that time, meaning “to follow Him at the cost of one’s life.” To become a disciple is to “renounce one’s own will and commit to living in obedience to the Lord.” The parables of the tower builder and the king going to war teach the importance of planning and strategy: one should not rashly decide to become a disciple, for if unable to endure hardship and sacrifice, the path of discipleship may end in failure. Thus, discipleship requires both “resolve to persevere to the end” and a “serious commitment.” The command to “renounce all your possessions” means willingly letting go of material goods and status, cutting off attachments, and putting the Lord first. The path of

discipleship is not easy; to follow Jesus means being “called” by Him, and it demands “resolve and right priorities,” along with “sacrifice and decisive commitment.”

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 103rd Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Numbers 21:4?9

This passage recounts an event from the Exodus. The people of Israel forgot the purpose of their deliverance from Egypt freedom from slavery and the journey to the Promised Land. Although they had been slaves in Egypt, they remembered eating good food and meat to their fill. Unable to endure their present hardships, they grumbled against the “miserable food” (manna), committing sin against God by showing ingratitude and forgetting to give thanks for His blessings. The “fiery serpents” carried venom that burned like fire and represented God’s judgment. In response to the people’s sin, God sent these serpents. As Scripture says, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and “A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7?8). This event illustrates these truths. The people recognized their sin, repented, and asked Moses to intercede with God a first step toward salvation. Yet God did not remove the serpents; instead, He commanded Moses, “Make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. Whoever looks at it shall live.” This was a call to look up in faith to God’s salvation. Those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed. This became a prototype of the faith that looks up to “Jesus on the Cross.” Jesus Himself referred to this event: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14?15).

● Second Reading: Philippians 2:6?11

Paul, writing from prison to the church in Philippi, teaches about walking according to the Gospel. Though Jesus was the Son of God, He did not cling to His divine authority but humbled Himself by becoming man. By “emptying Himself and taking the form of a servant,” He became the Savior who could empathize with human weakness, since people cannot directly comprehend God. He was born, ate, rejoiced, suffered, and died (Hebrews 2:17). Humility is difficult for us, so Scripture teaches us: (1) to know our limits and recognize our pride (Psalm 103:14; Proverbs 16:18), (2) to experience God’s unconditional love (Romans 5:8), (3) to trust that His love never changes (Jeremiah 31:3), and (4) to follow Jesus’ example of service (John 13:14?15). These help us learn humility. As for obedience, through silent contemplation of God’s love “He did not spare His own Son” (Romans 8:32)?we are drawn closer to His will and naturally grow in obedience and trust. As Jesus was obedient to the Father’s love (John 14:31; Philippians 2:8), so believers follow Him. God exalted Jesus and gave Him “the name above every name,” referring to His resurrection and ascension. Ultimately, all beings in the universe angels, humans, and the dead will acknowledge that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10?11; Revelation 5:13; Habakkuk 2:14). Since it is impossible for us to achieve true humility and obedience by our own strength, it is through God’s love and the Spirit’s help that we can follow Christ’s example. God has shown us true humility and obedience through His Son. In our daily lives, we are called to walk with lowly hearts, seeking the Spirit’s guidance so that we may live this out.

● Gospel Reading: John 3:13?17

This passage describes the nighttime visit of Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish leader, to Jesus. Jesus revealed that He alone had come down from heaven and is the one who connects heaven and earth. The words “No one has ascended into heaven” mean that no human has ever reached God by their own power; only Jesus can reveal God’s salvation. Referring to Numbers 21:8?9, Jesus said: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.” Those who look in faith to Jesus on the Cross are saved from sin. The famous words that follow “For God so loved the world” express the Father’s love, shown in creation and in giving His only Son on the cross to save sinners, revealing His self-giving love. The human proverb “Only when one has a child does one understand a parent’s love” may open a doorway to understanding unconditional love, yet it cannot reach the depth of God’s love sacrificing His only Son for others. God’s love surpasses human limits. We are called to embody this love, making it part of our very flesh and blood, shaping our lives by it. To “not perish” means never being

separated from God but remaining in eternal fellowship with Him. God sent His Son not to condemn the world but to open the door of salv

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 104th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Amos 8:4-7

Amos, who was a shepherd in Judah, was called by God and sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel around the 8th century B.C. There he severely criticized rulers and the wealthy who exploited the poor and enriched themselves through dishonest trade. The words, “Hear this” are spoken directly by God to merchants and rulers who oppressed the poor. As God’s spokesman, Amos declares, “Your deeds are known to God.”

The “new moon festival” and the “Sabbath” were holy days of worship when business was to cease, but dishonest merchants despised God and worship, impatiently wishing for these days to end so that they could resume their trade. Their aim was profit rather than honoring God. “To sell grain” refers to unjust dealings to gain profit. “To sell the refuse of the wheat” means selling inferior grain as if it were good. “Making the ephah small” refers to reducing the standard measure (about 23 liters) to cheat customers. “Making the shekel great and using false balances” means placing heavier weights on the scales to make customers pay more, thus gaining illicit profit. “Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals” condemns the practice of buying people as slaves for a mere trifle. “Selling the refuse of the wheat” again refers to passing off inferior goods as quality grain.

Finally, “The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob” means that the God of Israel declares, “I will never forget any of their deeds.” On the day of judgment, their sins will be brought to account. Yet if they repent, God will forgive their sins, and they will not be remembered on the day of judgment (Hebrews 8:12; Isaiah 1:18). Without repentance, however, sins will be judged at the final judgment. This passage also teaches us about integrity in business (Matthew 7:12).

● Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

The so-called “Prison Epistles” are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. In his letter to Timothy, Paul speaks about “prayer and life” in the Church. He urges that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings” be offered for all people, because God desires the salvation of all humanity. This includes not only believers but also unbelievers and even opponents. He specifically commands prayer for “kings and all in authority,” which today corresponds to rulers such as prime ministers, cabinet ministers, and bureaucrats. At that time, such rulers persecuted Christians. Yet Paul encourages prayer for them because their decisions greatly influence society as a whole. Through such prayer, believers can live a “peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way,” which becomes a foundation for spreading the Gospel.

Praying with specific rulers in mind becomes true intercession and is pleasing to God. Here, “the truth” refers to forgiveness of sins through Christ’s death on the cross and eternal life through His resurrection. Jesus is the only Savior (John 14:6). There is one God, and one mediator Christ Jesus. “The testimony given at the proper time” refers to God’s plan, fulfilled when Jesus came into the world and accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection (Galatians 4:4). Paul worked as an apostle to the Gentiles and also served as a teacher, encouraging believers with truth, spoken without deceit. “Without anger” means that anger hinders prayer and clouds judgment. (Tokugawa Ieyasu’s testament also states: “Regard anger as an enemy.”) “Lifting up holy hands in prayer” refers to the common prayer posture of that time.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 16:1-13

In those days, landlords owned property and entrusted it to managers. The manager’s defense before his master represents the final judgment before God. God entrusts people with life, talents, and time, and will one day demand an account. The manager soberly assessed his own ability, prepared for the future, and built new relationships with debtors. This is not an endorsement of dishonesty but a lesson about anticipating crises and the need for wisdom and action.

By reducing the surcharges he had added to the promissory notes, the manager caused no loss to the master, gained a good reputation, and won gratitude from debtors, resulting in a “triple benefit.” Jesus teaches that “the children of this world are more shrewd than the children of light” and exhorts His followers, “Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). “Faithful in little and in much” emphasizes the importance of building trust. “If you are not faithful with unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you true riches?” means that if one cannot be trusted with worldly wealth (money or possessions), God will not entrust eternal life. “If you are not faithful with what is another’s (God’s), who will give you what is your own?” teaches that earthly goods and talents are entrusted by God and must be used faithfully. “You cannot serve two masters” reminds us to set our priorities clearly between God and wealth, choosing faithfulness and wisdom.

※ In those times, a manager held a “privileged position.” The bar for attaining it was high, but once in office, he could wield great authority and secure personal gain.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 105th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Amos 6:1, 4?7

Amos was a prophet of the 8th century B.C. (during the reign of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel). At that time, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was at the height of its prosperity. Yet behind this prosperity lay a system built on the sacrifices of the poor, where luxury and corruption abounded. Amos prophesied that, as God's judgment, destruction and the first Babylonian exile would surely come. "Woe" refers to the rulers of Zion (Judah in the south) and Samaria (Israel in the north), who assumed they were "protected by God" and indulged in ease. "The foremost of nations" points out that the people of Israel, though chosen by God, failed to live up to this calling and instead pursued pleasure. Ivory beds symbolized luxury, and the rulers, ignoring the poor, reclined on couches and spent their days in feasting. While David used "music" for "worship," they corrupted its purpose by using it merely for entertainment. Moreover, while eager for luxury items such as wine and fine oils, they remained indifferent to the suffering of their fellow Israelites and the decline of their nation, revealing their self-centeredness. As a result, God's judgment decreed that they would be the first led into exile, their wealth and luxuries proving useless, and those who indulged in ease would be the first to suffer humiliation.

● Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:1?16

Paul writes to Timothy, the leader of the church in Ephesus, addressing him as "man of God"?a term describing one who belongs to God and lives under His mission. In the Old Testament, Moses and the prophets were called this (Deut. 33:1; 1 Kings 13:1). Paul warns against: (1) indulging in false teaching and disputes, (2) using faith as a means of financial gain, and (3) living enslaved to wealth and desire (1 Tim. 6:3?10). Instead, he urges Timothy to pursue: (1) righteousness (actions in line with God's standards), (2) godliness (honoring God first), (3) faith (enduring trust in God's promises), (4) love (concern for others), (5) endurance (waiting on God through trials), and (6) gentleness (humility and kindness). To "fight the good fight of faith" means resisting temptation and false teaching, remaining steadfast in faith amid persecution and hardship, and thus gaining eternal life. Timothy had already professed his faith at his baptism and ordination. Paul urges him to keep this confession faithfully before the Creator, just as Jesus declared before Pontius Pilate that He came to "testify to the truth" (John 18:36?37). Believers are called to live "without spot or blame," faithfully observing "this commandment" rooted in the "law of love" and the Ten Commandments by guarding their faith and living in purity. The "appointed time" refers to Christ's Second Coming, which God alone has determined (Matt. 24:36). Paul concludes with a doxology, praising the King of kings and Lord of lords, the only immortal One, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen, to whom honor and eternal dominion belong. His charge to Timothy is based not merely on personal thought or experience but on God's supreme authority (1 Tim. 6:13?14; 2 Tim. 4:1?2; Gal. 1:12).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 16:19?31

In Jewish society at the time, the rich were seen as "blessed by God," while the poor were thought to be "sinners." Jesus, however, teaches that true blessing lies not in wealth or status but in one's relationship with God. Lazarus, abandoned by society, received compassion from dogs (considered unclean animals). Eventually, he was carried by angels to the heavenly banquet with Abraham. The rich man, on the other hand, went to "Hades" (the place of waiting for judgment after death see the diagram of Revelation). Lazarus' "evil circumstances" symbolized hunger, sickness, loneliness, and social discrimination conditions in which no one cared for him. The rich man (representing the Pharisees) was not condemned merely for his wealth, but for his indifference toward Lazarus at his gate, his lack of love and mercy, and his self-centered life. This led him from Hades to eternal damnation. Between heaven and Hades lies a great chasm, making it impossible to communicate with God after death; judgment can only be awaited. Therefore,



reconciliation with God must be made in this life. The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, but Abraham replied that they already had “Moses and the prophets” (the Old Testament Scriptures), through which they could know God’s will. When the rich man insisted that they would repent if someone returned from the dead, Abraham declared that those who do not believe the Scriptures would not be convinced even by a resurrection a truth fulfilled when many did not believe even after Jesus rose (cf. Matt. 28:11?15). This reveals the principle that miracles alone cannot produce faith. Judgment rests on how one lives in this life whether choosing God above wealth and pleasure, and whether one walks in obedience to the Scriptures.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 106th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

The Book of Habakkuk was written toward the end of the 7th century B.C. At that time, society was filled with injustice, violence, and corruption, and the righteous were suffering. The prophet Habakkuk brings this painful reality before God. He sees that the righteous are oppressed while the wicked flourish, injustice goes unpunished, and evil prospers. Although he believes that God is just and will judge the wicked, he feels as though his prayers have been ignored and that God remains “silent.”

However, God was not silent. He already had a plan to execute judgment at the appointed time. God allowed Habakkuk to witness the violence and corruption for two reasons:

So that the prophet himself might experience the people’s cries and recognize his calling to intercede before God.

So that he might grasp the actual situation and proclaim God’s coming judgment and salvation to the people.

God commands Habakkuk to write down clearly the “vision” of His coming judgment and salvation. This means that “the proud (the wicked) will be judged, but the righteous shall live by faith.” The proud are those who boast in their own power and prosperity while ignoring God. The righteous are those who trust in God and patiently wait for His timing.

Even if the fulfillment of the vision seems delayed to human eyes, it will surely come. God’s promise never deceives.

The “vision” refers both to “the judgment through the Babylonian exile” and to “God’s salvation at the end of time.”

To “live by faith” means not to be swayed by the violence and injustice of the world, but to endure patiently and wait for the time of salvation, holding fast to God’s promise. (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38)

● Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

In his final years, Paul writes from prison in Rome to his disciple Timothy, who leads the church in Ephesus, encouraging him to persevere in faith and ministry even amid persecution. Timothy’s foundation was the “sincere faith” handed down from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. The phrase “laid hands on you” refers to ordination when Paul laid hands on Timothy, the Holy Spirit imparted the gifts necessary for ministry.

These “gifts” include preaching, teaching, guiding, and enduring as a shepherd. To “rekindle” the gift means to actively use it, keeping the fire of the Holy Spirit burning. God’s Spirit does not make us timid but gives us “power, courage, strength, and love,” enabling us to serve others with compassion and to act with “prudence, self-control, and wisdom.” To “bear witness to the Lord” means boldly expressing faith in Jesus through words and actions. “A prisoner for the Lord” describes Paul’s imprisonment for following Christ. “Do not be ashamed” means to hold fast to faith without fear of persecution or ridicule.

Proclaiming the Gospel entails suffering, yet Paul urges endurance, for God Himself provides the strength to persevere.

To live “with faith and love” means not to stop at knowledge alone, but to act from trust in God and love for others.

To “hold to the standard of sound teaching” means to use the truths Paul taught as a model. The “good treasure” refers to the Gospel and faith, which are safeguarded not by human strength but by the indwelling Holy Spirit, as Scripture says: “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 17:5-10

In the preceding section of this chapter, Jesus teaches His disciples: “If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

Overwhelmed by the difficulty of this command and aware of their own weak faith, the disciples plead, “Increase our faith!” To “increase” faith means to have complete trust in God and to entrust oneself entirely to Him. Forgiveness and

obedience are impossible by human effort alone they are made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. The “mustard seed” is the smallest of seeds. Jesus’ point is not about the “size” of faith but its presence or absence. Even a tiny amount of genuine faith can accomplish what seems impossible. “Self-suggestion” means believing in oneself; faith, however, is trusting and surrendering to God.

When we are convinced that our actions align with God’s will and entrust the outcome to Him, we find peace.

The parable of the master and servant illustrates the attitude of one who acts by faith. Faith is not a special power but a humble service fulfilling one’s duty before God. The servant carries out the master’s command without seeking thanks or reward, saying, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.”

Jesus teaches that true faith expresses itself in humility, without pride in one’s deeds, recognizing that “we live and act only by God’s grace.”

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 107th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17

Naaman was a commander serving the king of Aram (Syria) who suffered from a severe skin disease. A young Israelite girl serving his household told him, "The prophet Elisha can heal you." With the king's permission, Naaman set out for Israel, bringing rich gifts. Elisha did not meet him directly but sent a messenger instructing, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River." Angered, Naaman was about to leave, but persuaded by his servants, he immersed himself seven times in the Jordan and was healed.

The number "seven" symbolizes completeness; the healing did not come from the river's power but as the result of obedience to God's word. Though a Gentile, Naaman confessed his faith, saying, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel." He offered gifts of gratitude, but Elisha refused to receive them, lest it be misunderstood that God's grace could be bought with payment. Elisha's attitude "both healing and salvation are free gifts from God, and all glory belongs to Him" agrees with the words, "For by grace you have been saved... it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Later, Elisha's servant Gehazi secretly took the gifts and was judged for it.

Since people in those days believed that gods dwelt in each land, Naaman requested "as much earth as two mules can carry." He spread this soil as a foundation upon which to build an altar to the God of Israel. As a sign of conversion and loyalty, he vowed, "I will no longer offer sacrifice to any god except the Lord." In a polytheistic world, this was an extraordinary confession of faith in the one true God.

● Second Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8?13

Paul writes to his disciple Timothy from prison, encouraging him to "remember." To "remember" means to keep Christ the center of faith always in mind. By recalling Jesus' death and resurrection, we find strength and hope. Paul's "Gospel" proclaims that Jesus, born of David's lineage, died on the cross and rose on the third day to bring salvation (Romans 1:3; Luke 24:6?7).

"Chained like a criminal" refers to Paul's imprisonment under Emperor Nero for preaching the Gospel. Yet "the word of God is not chained," for although the messenger is bound, God's word cannot be confined, and through Paul's prison letters, the number of believers continued to grow. "The chosen ones" are all people called by God to salvation.

To "endure suffering" is not easy by human will alone; it becomes possible through prayer (Luke 22:40), remembering God's word (Psalm 119:50), the support of the community (Galatians 6:2), following the example of Jesus (Hebrews 12:2-3), and the help of the Holy Spirit.

"Salvation and eternal glory" mean that through Jesus' death on the cross our sins are forgiven, and by His resurrection we receive eternal life to live forever with God in His Kingdom (John 14:2?3; Revelation 21:3?4). "If we die with Him, we will also live with Him" refers to baptism (Romans 6:4?5): being immersed in water symbolizes dying with Christ, and rising from the water means living a new life. "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" points to the final day, when those who denied Christ will be judged (Matthew 10:33), but those who remain faithful will reign with Him. "Christ remains faithful" means that even when humans are unfaithful, Jesus never denies His identity as Savior; His truth endures forever (Hebrews 13:8).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 17:11?19

This scene takes place as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem, where He will face His passion and the cross. Ten men with a severe skin disease (leprosy) considered "unclean" and excluded from society stood at a distance and cried out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Their plea was a desperate cry for healing and restoration. Jesus told them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests," because according to the Law, priests confirmed healing and permitted a person's return to society (Leviticus 14).

As they went in obedience to His word, they were cleansed just as Naaman was healed when he obeyed Elisha's command (2 Kings 5). One of them, a Samaritan, realizing that the healing was God's work, returned, praising God in a loud voice, and fell at Jesus' feet, giving thanks. God's grace transcends all boundaries and distinctions among people. The other nine, satisfied with their healing, forgot to give thanks to God. Jesus' question, "Where are the other nine" teaches us the importance of gratitude for God's grace. How often do we, too, take His blessings for granted and forget to give thanks Scripture reminds us, "Rejoice always... give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-8). Here, "faith" means more than simply believing in healing it is the attitude of recognizing the great God behind the miracle, bowing before Him in gratitude. Such faith leads Jesus to say, "Your faith has saved you."

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 108th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Exodus 17:8-13

This passage describes the first battle of the Israelites after escaping from Egypt and journeying through the wilderness. Though they suffered from hunger and thirst, God sustained them as they moved forward. The Amalekites, a nomadic tribe, attacked the Israelites when they were weary and weak (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). This battle was not fought to conquer Canaan but simply to survive.

In the New Testament, we read, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” a phrase pointing toward the fulfillment of God’s kingdom. However, here, the Israelites are engaged in a defensive battle fighting to survive and pass on God’s promise to the next generation. Moses appoints Joshua as “commander of the army,” marking Joshua’s first leadership role.

The “staff” in Moses’ hands is the same one he used to part the Red Sea and to bring water from the rock. Standing on the hill with the staff raised in both hands, Moses symbolizes that “the battle belongs to the Lord.” Aaron, Moses’ brother, was the high priest, and Hur, the husband of Moses’ sister Miriam, was a trusted relative and supporter. The posture of raising one’s hands in prayer is frequently seen in the Old Testament (Psalm 28:2). Moses, by raising his hands and holding up the staff, shows his dependence on God’s power.

When Moses grew weary and lowered his hands, Israel’s army began to lose ground. So his companions brought a stone for him to sit on, and Aaron and Hur supported his hands on either side. This scene teaches that “God’s work is accomplished not by the strength of one leader but through the support of the whole community.” God protected the Israelites so that, by their continued existence and faithfulness, the promised Messiah would one day come through them. This battle, therefore, is not merely one of bloodshed but a spiritual battle fought through faith and prayer, teaching us “the importance of relying on the Lord.”

● Second Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

This passage was written by Paul near the end of his life, just before his martyrdom, while he was imprisoned. In it, he emphasizes the authority of Scripture and the mission to proclaim the Word. The “conviction” Timothy learned refers to:

- ① The truth of the Gospel taught by Paul,
- ② The fulfillment of the Old Testament promise of the Messiah, ③ The Gospel he heard through missionary work, and The faith he confirmed in his own life.

Timothy inherited his faith from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, and learned apostolic teaching from Paul. The word “Scripture” here refers to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. From the 1st to 4th centuries, these sacred texts were gradually gathered and recognized by Christians as “the Bible,” the written Word of God.

The “wisdom that leads to salvation” means coming to know Jesus through the Scriptures, believing in Him, and understanding the way of salvation. Paul teaches that “all Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit,” and thus is useful for teaching truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and training in righteousness. In this way, believers are equipped to do good works, follow God’s will, and endure trials and fulfill their calling.

The phrase “to judge the living and the dead” refers to God’s universal judgment over both those now alive and those who have died and dwell in Sheol. The expression “I solemnly charge you” means that Paul, taking the Lord as his witness, gives a grave and life-risking command: to proclaim the Word and lead people back to the truth. Practically, this means preaching the Word “in season and out of season,” patiently teaching, correcting errors, and encouraging believers. Ultimately, this faithfulness will lead to intimate communion and joy with the Lord in His coming Kingdom.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 18:1-8

Before this passage, Jesus told the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God is among you,” and here He teaches His disciples

“the importance of continual prayer until the end.” When prayers seem unanswered, people may feel that “the Lord is silent,” lose heart, and stop praying. But Jesus urges us to “trust in God continually” and to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

The judge in this parable is corrupt, yet he finally grants the widow’s request because of her persistence. In those days, widows were socially vulnerable and had no one to defend them if their property was taken away. The Old Testament commands, “Protect the orphan and the widow” (Deuteronomy 10:18). If even an unjust judge responds to persistent pleading, “how much more will God surely hear the prayers of those who cry out to Him.”

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Himself prayed in deep anguish (Luke 22:44), and the blind man’s fervent plea, “Lord, let me see again” (Luke 18:41), was answered. Prayers go unanswered only when our motives are wrong (James 4:3), or when “everything has its appointed time” (Ecclesiastes 3:1 that is, God’s time has not yet come. Thus, we must pray with perseverance until we are convinced that God has heard our prayer.

Finally, Jesus asks, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth” a question pointing to the great tribulation of the end times, when faith will grow scarce. Therefore, persistent faith expressed in prayer is essential for those who await the Lord’s return.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 109th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Sirach 35:15?17, 20-22

This week's theme is God's righteous judgment and prayer. God shows no partiality and judges with perfect justice. He especially listens to the prayers of the socially weak the oppressed, the orphan, the widow, and the humble. Since "the Lord is the judge," those who will be judged are the unjust, those who oppress others, and those who ignore righteousness without revering God. On the other hand, the deeds of the righteous will be rewarded. God sees both the heart and the actions of every person.

Humans, however, tend to show favoritism based on status, position, nationality, or religion. Scripture teaches that the longing for God is written in every human heart (Romans 2:14?15). Thus, the cries, laments, and pleas that come sincerely from the heart whether from believers or non-believers become prayers that reach God. What matters is not outward form, but the truthfulness of the heart.

"God's will" means living according to His justice, love, and truth. Those who follow the teachings of the Law, the Prophets, and the Word loving their neighbor and serving God offer prayers and actions that are pleasing to the Lord. The phrase "Prayer reaches the clouds" expresses confidence that prayer ascends to heaven and surely reaches God. "Prayer pierces the clouds" means that prayer breaks through all obstacles to reach God, who listens. Therefore, even if God's answer seems delayed, one should wait patiently. To those who continue to pray humbly, "the Most High" will eventually come and respond.

The statement, "The Lord judges the righteous and upholds justice," refers to the Final Judgment, when God will condemn the wicked and save the righteous. Scripture testifies that God executes justice: Exodus 3:7?8, Psalm 103:6, Isaiah 1:17, Luke 1:52?53, Acts 10:34?35.

● Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6?8, 16?18

This passage is Paul's letter to his disciple Timothy, written from prison shortly before his martyrdom. The word "offering" refers to the Old Testament ritual of a "libation" pouring out wine on the altar symbolizing Paul's life being offered to God through martyrdom. The phrase "the time of my departure" indicates that his death under Emperor Nero's persecution is near.

"I have fought the good fight" means he has obeyed God's word and resisted carnal desires, persecution, and false teachings. "I have finished the race" signifies that he has completed the mission given by God: proclaiming the Gospel to the Gentiles. "I have kept the faith" shows that, despite hardships, Paul never abandoned his trust in Christ.

The "crown of righteousness" represents the victory crown of eternal life, which the righteous Judge, Christ, will bestow not only on Paul but on all believers who long for His return. Paul's greatest reward, however, is the salvation of others. At his first trial in Rome, Paul was deserted by his companions, yet his prayer of forgiveness recalls Jesus' own words on the cross (Luke 23:34). Through the Holy Spirit, Paul's missionary work spread throughout the vast Roman Empire, laying the foundation for global evangelization. Guided by the Spirit, endowed with wisdom and strength, he fulfilled his divine mission.

The "lion" symbolizes persecution and Satan, but Paul was protected by the Spirit until his task was complete. "Evil deeds" refer to all forces that hinder the Gospel. Protected from these by the Holy Spirit and received into the new Kingdom of God, Paul ends with praise: "To Him be glory forever and ever."

● Gospel Reading: Luke 18:9?14

In the preceding parable of the widow and the unjust judge, Jesus spoke of perseverance in prayer and God's justice. In this passage, He teaches about the attitude of prayer.

Those who "trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others" believe they can be saved by their own strength



and fall into pride. The Pharisees, zealous observers of the Law and models of society, lack God's perspective an overview from above. The tax collector, on the other hand, was despised as a "sinner" for exploiting others through unjust taxation. Although the Pharisee's prayer begins with words of "thanksgiving," it is in fact self-praise. The tax collector, unable even to look up to heaven, beats his chest and says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus hears this humble confession and declares that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, went home justified his relationship with God restored.

"All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." God looks at the attitude of the heart, judging and blessing according to it. This calls us to daily reflection on our walk before Him.

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Luke 5:31) means that the Lord's mercy healing and forgiveness is poured out precisely upon those who repent.

Similarly, in the Japanese classic Tannish, the saying "Even the good person attains salvation how much more the evil person" teaches that those who acknowledge their sinfulness and repent sincerely are the ones to whom the gate of salvation is opened.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ The 110th Sharing of the Word of God

● First Reading ? Wisdom 3:1-6, 9

This passage teaches that the death and suffering of the righteous those who follow God are not tragedies, but are instead surrounded by God's protection and eternal hope. It reveals the assurance of hope after death and the certainty of God's judgment.

The "souls of those who follow God" refers to people who fear the Lord, keep His law, live in faith and righteousness, and center their lives on God. "Being protected by the hand of God" means that though their bodies may decay and they may face suffering or death, their souls are never destroyed or lost in despair they are securely held in God's hand. "They shall not suffer torment" means they will not face punishment for sin or eternal destruction after death, but instead receive everlasting rest from God. "The foolish... thought they had died" expresses how those without faith see the death of the righteous as defeat, the end of life, a misfortune, or ruin. Yet in God's eyes, "the righteous are in peace." The "discipline" given to the righteous is not punishment but the process of divine training and salvation. "The hope of immortality" means that the souls of the righteous will not perish but, through temporary trials, are led to eternal life and receive abundant grace from God. God tests and refines the righteous to confirm that they are truly worthy. Like "gold tested in a furnace," they are purified through fire and offer themselves completely as a burnt offering to God.

"Those who trust in the Lord... shall live with Him" means that beyond death and suffering, they come to the truth of God's love and eternal life, living in communion with Him. "Those purified by the Lord... shall receive His visitation" refers to the forgiveness of sins and the gift of salvation, and through the Lord's return, their relationship with God will be perfectly restored.

● Second Reading ? Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

This passage concludes the previous chapter, declaring that though all people are under sin, God has justified them God's children, the Spirit's intercession before God, and the fullness of salvation's grace.

"The one who opposes us" refers to persecutors, sin, Satan, or worldly powers and sufferings but since God is on our side, none of them can prevail. "All things" includes forgiveness, justification, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life all spiritual blessings essential for salvation. The God who did not spare His own Son but gave Him for us will also graciously bestow upon us every spiritual blessing, ultimate glory, and all that we need for life (cf. Matthew 6:33).

"Those chosen by God" are those justified by faith in Jesus. Though Satan seeks to accuse them (Revelation 12:10), it is God who justifies. Therefore, as Paul declares, "No one can condemn them." Jesus, seated at the right hand of God as the High Priest, intercedes for believers before the Father (Hebrews 7:25), making forgiveness absolutely certain. Those who try to "separate us from the love of Christ" include Satan, sin, and every adversity. These may attempt to sever believers from God's love but they will fail. "Tribulation... or sword" represents the means by which God's love might seem divided, yet even through persecution and martyrdom in the early Church, such attempts to separate believers from God's love did not succeed.

"All these things" refers to the trials faced by believers, and "victory" means that, strengthened by the Lord's word and the power of the Holy Spirit, they do not yield to suffering but keep their faith to the end, thus gaining eternal life. Paul concludes with a firm declaration of faith: "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

● Gospel Reading ? John 6:37-40

This scene follows the crowd coming to Jesus after witnessing the "miracle of the loaves." The "bread" that Jesus gives represents eternal life. The passage reveals the will of God and the mission of Jesus.

“Those whom the Father gives” are people who are not drawn by their own strength or knowledge but are led by God (John 6:44). “To cast out” means to reject, but Jesus promises never to reject anyone whom the Father gives Him; rather, He always receives them (John 6:37; 17:11?12).

Human beings have free will: those who turn away from Jesus fall into ruin, but those who repent are led to salvation (Luke 15). The will of God who sent Jesus is His plan to free humanity from sin and grant eternal life through the Resurrection. Another aspect of God’s will is that none who believe in the Lord should be lost, but that each will be raised on the last day to walk with Him in the new Kingdom of God.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 111th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading ? Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

This passage is called the “vision of the life-giving water flowing from the temple” and offers restoration and hope to the people of Israel who had lost sight of God during the Babylonian exile. The “water of life” refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). It gives the impression of “dry ice spreading along the ground like mist.” In the vision, God’s messenger (angel) leads Ezekiel to the eastern entrance of a new, yet-to-be-realized temple and shows him water flowing from beneath the temple, the “source of life.” This water symbolizes God’s power, blessing, and healing, demonstrating a spiritual force that gives life to all. Jesus also speaks of the same truth: “Whoever believes in me... rivers of living water will flow” (John 7:38).

The east, the front of the temple, symbolizes God’s presence and a new beginning, while the altar is located in the south. The water flows from under the threshold of the eastern entrance, passes beneath the southern altar, flows out from under the south wall, and then continues eastward. This flow represents God’s grace overflowing from the temple (His presence), being purified through the altar (sacrifice and forgiveness), and bringing life and healing to the whole world. The water nourishes the Arabah (the wilderness) and even cleanses the “sea of death,” symbolizing God’s grace purifying “sin and death.”

The phrase “all living creatures shall live” signifies that God’s life (the Holy Spirit) overcomes death. The water flowing from God’s temple enables fruit trees to bear fruit continuously (Revelation 22:1?2), and its leaves become a healing medicine. God’s grace is unceasing, symbolizing eternal healing and blessing. This vision serves as a prophecy of the “completion of God’s kingdom.”

● Second Reading ? 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17

At that time, divisions had arisen in the Corinthian church, such as the “Paul faction” and the “Apollos faction” (1 Corinthians 1:10?12), with members competing in evangelistic work. Paul instructs them to correct this. “We” refers to Paul and Apollos, working together to spread the gospel with the purpose of leading people to God. “God’s building” refers to the church established by God. “Grace from God” signifies the mission received from God to build the church (Ephesians 3:7). The “foundation” is salvation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus; faith that is not centered on Him will eventually collapse (Matthew 7:24?27).

“Building the house” refers to the life of faith, the formation of the church, and personal growth, working with Jesus as the foundation. Regarding careful building, just as good materials create a strong structure, faith and church life are evaluated by actions and teaching. Therefore, one must act sincerely in faith, love, and truth, building a church and life of faith that can stand before God. Self-centered individuals will have their work tested by fire, as Paul says (1 Corinthians 3:13).

“You are God’s temple, and God’s Spirit dwells in you” means that God’s presence is in the church community and, simultaneously, the Holy Spirit dwells in each believer (1 Corinthians 6:19). Those who “destroy the temple” are those who damage hearts, faith, or the church community; causes include anger, dissatisfaction, fear, sorrow, jealousy, division, and false teaching. By purifying the heart and maintaining a state of “one mind” and “clarity,” the soul becomes a temple suitable for the Holy Spirit, and this purity is reflected in one’s face, words, and actions. God delights in such a pure heart (Psalm 51:10?11).

● Gospel Reading ? John 2:13-22

This passage follows the sign at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine, and depicts the cleansing of the temple. Pilgrims from all over the world gathered in the Jerusalem temple, which had been rebuilt over 46 years by King Herod, for the Passover. In the outer court, animals for sacrifice were sold, and money exchange from Roman

currency to temple currency took place. The temple had become a place of commerce, and Jesus was deeply angered by the loss of reverence for God. He made a whip from cords to drive out the animals, cleansing the temple and asserting God's authority.

Even the normally gentle Jesus took this vigorous action because God's name was being profaned and faith had become empty. His declaration, "Do not make my Father's house a house of trade," calls for the temple to be restored as a house of prayer. This is a lesson for the present: whenever faith or church practices become empty and profit-driven, Jesus would act similarly. "Zeal for your house consumes me" (Psalm 69:10) foretells the rejection and suffering Jesus would endure on the cross due to His zeal for God's house.

When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," He was referring to His body as the temple, announcing His resurrection. The temple is His body, and after the resurrection, the church follows: temple → Jesus' body → church. The disciples, through Jesus' resurrection, realized that the Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 16:10) and Jesus' words were fulfilled, understanding that His resurrection is the "key" to faith.

If you like, I can also create a slightly more concise version suitable for a church bulletin or sharing booklet while keeping all theological nuances.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 112th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Malachi 3:19-20

This passage was written after the return from the Babylonian Exile. Although the Temple had been rebuilt, the priests had become corrupt, and the people's faith had grown empty and superficial. Malachi proclaims that "the day is coming" when God's judgment will arrive, and He will clearly distinguish between the righteous and the wicked (Malachi 3:18), calling the people to repentance.

"That day" refers to the Day of the Lord, when God's justice will be fully revealed, the wicked punished and righteousness established (Joel 2:1; Amos 5:18).

The description "a day blazing like an oven" depicts God's inescapable judgment, in which the arrogant and evildoers will be consumed like straw.

"The Lord of hosts" signifies God's majesty and sovereignty over all powers.

"Leaving them neither root nor branch" means the complete destruction of the wicked, the loss of both the source of life (root) and the hope for the future (branch).

By contrast, "those who fear my name" refers to the faithful who continue trusting and obeying God even amid suffering. God listens attentively to them (Malachi 3:16).

For them, "the sun of righteousness shall rise" the light of God's salvation and justice shining upon the world, healing souls and restoring life. Jesus, as "the light of the world" (John 8:12), brings this righteousness and salvation. The phrase "with healing in its wings" expresses God's protection and tender mercy (Psalm 91:4), through which people's sins and sufferings are healed.

● Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

In the Thessalonian church, some believed that since the end of the world was near, there was no need to work. This led to idleness and dependence on others. Paul corrects this misunderstanding, teaching that work is an expression of faith.

"You" refers to the believers, and "we" refers to Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy). Even during their mission work, they labored with their own hands so as not to burden anyone.

"Among you" refers to Thessalonica, a major city in northern Greece.

The phrase "we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it" means they refused to live off charity. Instead, Paul worked as a tentmaker "laboring night and day" so that the gospel could be offered freely and as a model for the believers.

Although he had the right to receive support (1 Corinthians 9:14), he did not use this right, knowing that the labor of God's servants is never in vain and will be rewarded in the eternal Kingdom (Galatians 6:9; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

"Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" addresses those who had become idle due to misguided expectations about the imminent end times, reminding them that work is a duty before God.

"Busybody" describes those who, instead of working, meddled in others' lives and disrupted the community.

Paul, as one "in the Lord," urges them to "work quietly and eat their own bread," entrusting the timing of the end to God. Believers are not to fear or be anxious but to wait for the Lord's return while faithfully "blooming where they are planted."

● Gospel Reading: Luke 21:5-19

This passage contains Jesus' final teaching in the Temple, often called the "Olivet Discourse" or "Eschatological Prophecy," in which He speaks about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the signs and endurance related to the end of the age.

- “ Some people” refers to the disciples; “gifts” were ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones.  
“Not one stone will be left upon another” foretells the destruction of the Temple by the Roman army in AD 70 burned and dismantled so completely that no stone remained atop another.  
The disciples asked, “When will this happen? What will be the sign?” seeking to know both the Temple’s destruction and the signs of Jesus’ return.  
“Many will come in my name” refers to false messiahs and false prophets. Jesus warns not to be deceived by those claiming, “The time is near.”  
Wars and uprisings are not signs of the end; God’s appointed time will arrive later than people expect.
- “ Nation will rise against nation” refers to large-scale wars and ethnic conflicts.
- “ Fearful signs in the heavens” means cosmic disturbances.  
Before the end, believers will face persecution, but this will become an opportunity to bear witness. God will give them wisdom through the Holy Spirit, so they need not prepare their defense in advance.  
Though believers may face betrayal and hatred, “not a hair of your head will perish” assures God’s complete protection (Luke 12:6-7; 1 Samuel 14:45).
- “ By your endurance you will gain your lives” promises that those who persevere through persecution and remain faithful will receive eternal life.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

■ 114th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Around the 8th century B.C., the Kingdom of Judah enjoyed economic prosperity, yet society was corrupted by idolatry and injustice. In this reality, Isaiah proclaimed the “hope for the coming of God’s Kingdom.” The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, received a divine revelation concerning the future of Judah and Jerusalem, shown to him as a “vision” of the spiritual arrival of God’s Kingdom.

The end of the world is not the “last day” itself; rather, through the Second Coming of Jesus, God’s rule will be completed in the new Kingdom of God. Mount Zion, which symbolizes God’s presence, is called “the mountain of the Lord’s temple,” representing the spiritual Kingdom.

“All nations shall stream toward it” expresses the universal salvation of all peoples seeking God. The people of Israel are referred to as “Jacob,” and the temple is “the house of God.” The act of people worshipping God and following His teaching is described as “going up,” and God’s instruction which guides people to live in justice, love, peace, and truth is expressed as “the Lord will teach us His ways,” leading them to “walk in His paths.”

Since “instruction will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,” God’s truth spreads from the temple to the whole world. “The Lord shall judge between the nations,” and through His justice, true peace is established. God admonishes the people and leads them back to Him.

When “swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks,” weapons become tools for cultivation, war ends, and true peace (shalom) is realized. The people will no longer “train for war.” Now that we are illuminated by God’s truth and light, we are exhorted to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

● Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

In the earlier part of the chapter, Paul exhorts believers to “live within God’s order” and to “fulfill the law through love.” In this passage, he declares that the completion of salvation is drawing near, and therefore “now is the time” to awaken faith. A state of indifference or sin is “sleep,” while awakening to God’s will leads to a life of sensitivity and readiness, lived with awareness of the Second Coming.

“Salvation is nearer” for all humanity, and we are now in the process of its completion. “The night is far spent,” drawing near to dawn; the age of sin and evil is nearing its end, and the completion of God’s reign is close at hand “the day is near.”

Acts contrary to God (Romans 13:13) are “works of darkness,” while the “armor of light” is the spiritual protection (Ephesians 6:13-16) by which we resist evil. Before God, we hide nothing and walk “honorably as in the day” with sincerity, transparency, modesty, propriety, kindness, and self-control.

Examples of “works of darkness” include “revelry and drunkenness, debauchery and lust, quarreling and jealousy.” Instead of being ruled by desires or emotions, believers live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By “putting on” the heart, words, actions, and prayer of Jesus, we make them our own flesh and blood and aim for a “new way of life.”

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:37-44

In Jesus’ “Olivet Discourse,” He speaks about the destruction of the Temple and the end times. The disciples ask about the signs of these events (Matthew 24:3). Jesus teaches that “no one knows the day or the hour” (Matthew 24:36) and that the end will come suddenly.

The Second Coming will be “as in the days of Noah.” People then ignored the warning and continued their ordinary lives, and were destroyed by the flood. The same will occur at the Second Coming it will certainly arrive without prior notice. Jesus warns against lives consumed by worldly pleasures and desires “eating, drinking… marrying” while neglecting God.



He warns against “carelessness, indifference, and unbelief.” At the Second Coming, those who follow God will be “taken” into the new Kingdom, while those without faith will be “left” for judgment, descending to Sheol. Even in the same place, destinies will differ depending on faith. The same applies to the “two women” at the mill. Like the “wise virgins” (Matthew 25:4), we must practice the Lord’s teaching, remain “awake,” and live so as not to be ashamed when He returns. The parable of the thief coming at night teaches: “Do not be careless; serve God and be prepared for the end.” It calls for a life lived with a holy attentiveness.

#### 【Christmas】

“Christ-Mass” began in the 4th century, when Christianity was legalized, becoming associated with the Roman winter solstice festival. Its essence is worship that commemorates the event of salvation.

It is the day when the Son of God was born as the Son of Man, in order to redeem humanity’s sin through His death on the cross. It is a day of “quiet and profound joy” a “day of holy silence.”

#### 【Advent】 Four Themes

Reflecting on the four stages of salvation history in the Old Testament.

Meditating on the four comings of Christ: prophecy, first coming, present coming, and second coming.

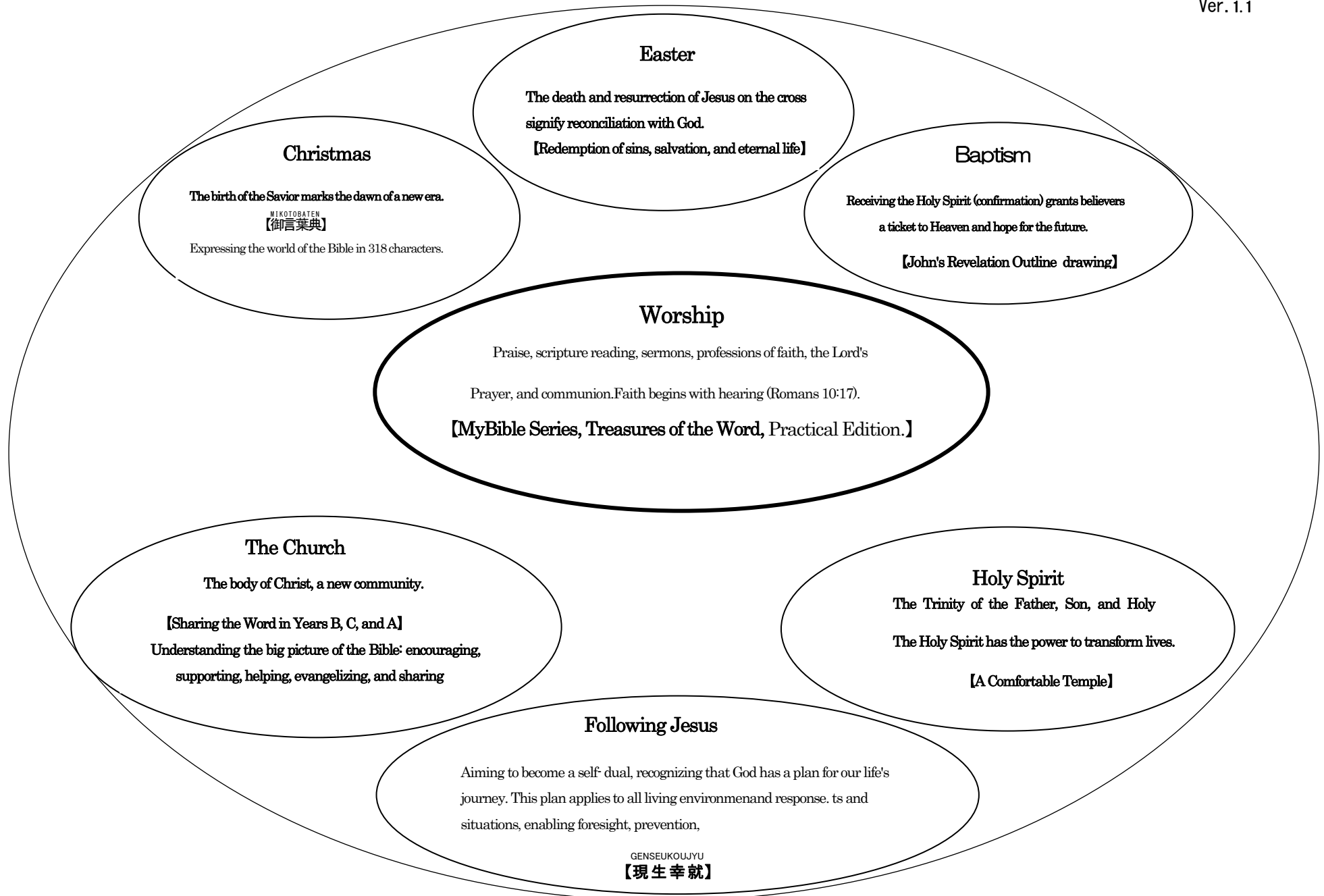
Symbolizing the Gospel spreading in four directions (east, west, south, north).

The historical development of a four-week period of preparation.

Author: Akinori Kamachi    Translation: AI

# Life Total Solution - Overview Diagram

Ver. 1.1



• In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

• May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all (Revelation 22:21).

## Life Total Solution - Overview Diagram Explanation

### ◆ Overview

Believers not only understand life in this world, but also the journey toward the new Kingdom of God. Their assurance of eternal fellowship with God gives birth to an everlasting hope. This becomes a driving force that enables them to overcome trials and hardships in all areas of life whether at work or in society. A life enriched by love and forgiveness becomes the foundation for realizing one's dreams.

#### 1. Easter

Through the death of Jesus, humanity's sins are forgiven, and salvation is granted. His resurrection brings eternal life and reconciliation with God, marking the day believers receive new life.

#### 2. Baptism

1) Through baptism (confirmation), the Holy Spirit is poured out, granting a ticket to heaven. Eternal life is secured, the conditions for entering the new Kingdom of God are met, and believers devote themselves to living in this present world.

2) Baptism marks the beginning of the believer's life as a child of God. It is the first step toward eternal fellowship with God, spiritual growth, and faithful  
【John's Revelation Outline drawing】

#### 3. Holy Spirit

1) The Holy Spirit guides the decisions and words of believers, granting them gifts that cannot be attained by human effort alone. Therefore, believers must maintain a state of "one heart" where the Holy Spirit (God) constantly dwells in their hearts.

2) The Trinity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit): Just as the element symbol of water is H<sub>2</sub>O though its forms differ as water (God), ice (Jesus), and steam (Holy Spirit) its essence remains the same.  
【A Comfortable Sanctuary】

#### 4. Worship

On the Sabbath, believers praise the Lord, listen to the Word, and strengthen their faith. Through confession, the Lord's Prayer, and communion, they partake in the Lord's guidance and grace. This clarifies life's decisions and direction, nurtures faith through close fellowship with God, and empowers a confident and vibrant daily walk.  
【Utilization of the MyBible series, all six volumes】

#### 5. Following Jesus

1) Believers take the Lord as their model (in heart, speech, action, and prayer), aiming to become self-disciplined individuals. Rather than treating faith as a tool, they live according to God's scenario, gaining personal growth and joy through trials and difficulties.

2) The teachings of the Lord apply to all aspects of life. Living out the commandment of love (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) leads to a richer life.  
GENSEKOUJYU  
【現生幸就】

#### 6. Christmas

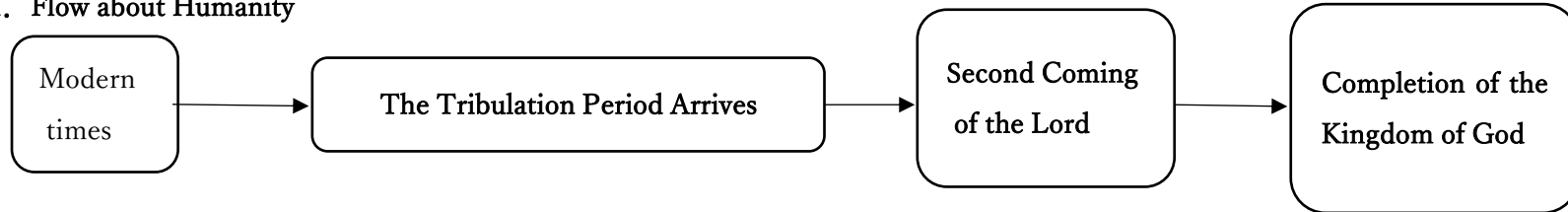
The birth of the Lord, fulfilling prophecy, marks the arrival of a new era aimed at the salvation of all humanity and the calling of all to become children of God. It is a time to give thanks for the hope and joy of the future and to embrace reverent silence.  
MIKOTOBATEN  
【御言葉典】

#### 7. The Church

Within the faith community of the church, believers share their faith, the Word, experiences, and wisdom, thereby recharging their faith. Missionary activities involving support, service, and the sharing of grace become a training ground for spiritual growth. The church deepens, strengthens, and expands faith, becoming a powerful stronghold to face life's challenges.  
【Sharing and Reflecting on the Word: Utilizing Years B, C, and A】

## John's Revelation Outline drawing

### 1. Flow about Humanity

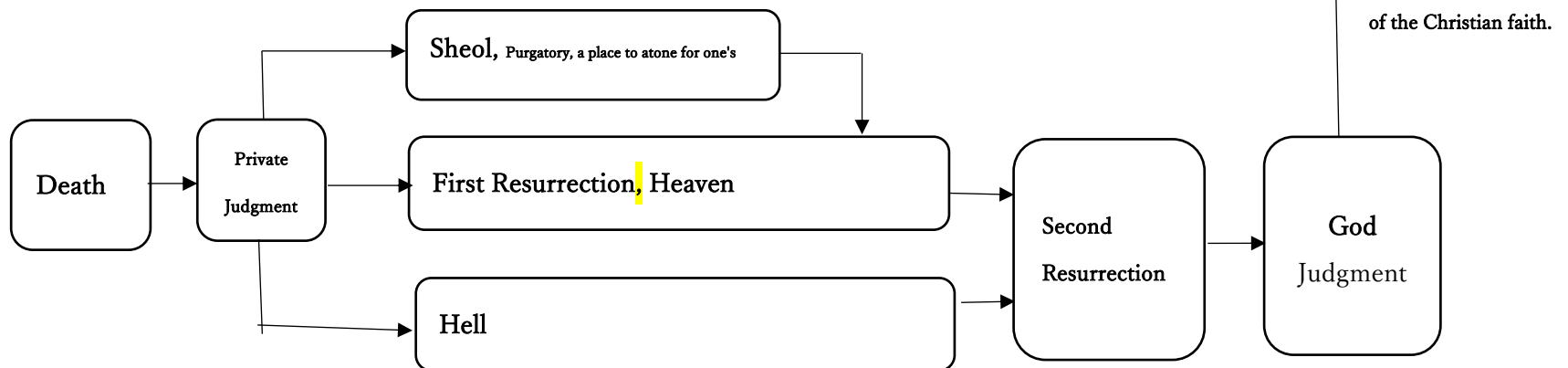


\*More severe than the tribulation that occurred before the Exodus journey began.

\*The coming of the age of the loss of faith.

### 2. Flow about after death of a person

\*Like a wise maiden, make preparations for the world to come.



\*The foundation of the soul is those who imitate the Lord (heart, word, deed, and prayer)



Live in this life with hope in the grace of the Lord's death and resurrection

GENSEKOUJYU

## 現生幸就

God created humans to lead a happy life.

Ver1.8.6

1. There is nothing better for people than to be joyful and enjoy life while they live. (Ecclesiastes 3・12)
2. The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered in everything he did. (Genesis 39・2)
3. Those who meditate on His law day and night... everything they do prospers. (Psalm 1・2-3)
4. Faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the conviction of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11・1)

### I. Overview

1. Observe desires, anger, and worldly attachments from a higher perspective (mindfulness), becoming a temple for the Holy Spirit, fearing God, and gaining the wisdom of the Lord.
2. Approach : Follow the Lord, learning the ways of heart, words, actions, and prayer, and strive to become a self-disciplined person.

### II. The Nature of the Heart

- (1) 恩恵に感謝し報いる (2) Sin 逆恩 (3) 忘己喜主・忘己喜他 <sup>MOUKOKISYU MOUKOKITTA</sup> (4) Self-love <sup>EGO</sup> 愛・肯定 (5) 芥子種の信仰で願いは適う (6) Love (7) 試練は魂を磨く砥石 <sup>TOISHI</sup> (8) 不安・心配は妄想 <sup>MOUSOU</sup> (9) 疑い迷いを断つ (10) み言葉 (命のパン・真鏡) を聞く (11) Patience (12) Meditation (13) 前後際断 <sup>ZENGOSAIDAN</sup> (14) 身心一如 <sup>SHINSHINICHINYO</sup> (15) とわの連峰路を断つ <sup>RENPOUJI</sup> (16) 報復・復讐 <sup>FOUFUKU FUKUSYU</sup> は主に委ねる (17) 欲の奴隷 <sup>KAWA TARU</sup> は渴き足を知る (18) 主の轡 <sup>KUBIKI</sup> を負って任せる (19) 怒りは敵 (20) 主に従順 (21) 未来は永遠の命が希望 (22) Adonai-Ehre (23) Immanuel

### III. The Nature of Words

1. Words That Bring Happiness.: Praise, "I love you," "Thank you," happiness, joy, gratitude, forgiveness, "I'm lucky." Compliments, tolerance, politeness (healing to the bones).
2. Words That Invite Unhappiness: Complaints, grumbling, dissatisfaction, discontent, envy, jealousy, gossip, slander, defamation. Restrain your lips and try reframing your perspective.

### IV. Behavioral Approach

1. Good deeds bear good fruit, while bad deeds bear bad fruit. The Lord turns all things into fruitful results. Happiness and grace, as seeds of evangelism, bear 30 to 100 times the fruit when sown on good soil.
2. 知行合一 <sup>CHIKOUGOUITSU</sup> : "Striving to practice what I have learned... diligently devoted myself to good deeds" (Sirach 51:18). 善行罪断 <sup>ZENGYOUZAIDAN</sup>, The practice of the love (The regulation of the love, Ten commandments, 情けは人の為ならず, 喜捨 <sup>KISYA</sup>), おもてなし <sup>OMOTENASHI</sup> (Matthew 7:12), Sincerity.

### V. The Nature of Prayer

Praise and thanksgiving to God, the Lord's Prayer, practicing prayers that are heard, prayers for peace, and the Rosary prayer.

# 御言葉典

神天地創造 土男骨女生蛇喰罪入神人間  
溝生贖主誕生預言 聖靈救主誕生主受洗  
神国宣教開始 癒慰勵喜奇跡 最後晚餐主体  
食血飲 受難十字架刑 三日目復活 昇天  
聖靈降臨 受洗罪赦 人死煉獄罪償天国地獄  
父子聖靈三位一体 体靈宿神殿 欲執着苦招  
主提十戒 一心成 他許寬容 善聰惡疎先祖敬  
主畏知恵得 恐失望主不在 試練訓練 忍耐救  
主山備有無所有 悩断 愛人思心 思悩妄想  
言葉実践 主道真理 悲死招 疑怒断復讐主委  
苦悩主軛負 主正人報 不誠実滅 陽気良薬  
陰気骨枯 銭慾惡 惜与善 言葉言霊舌制成功  
真福八端 主心言葉行動祈 倣自律人 主感謝  
求与探見叩開 主神僕遜 前後際断 忘己喜他  
霊満熱心祈委 疲黙想 言葉主知恵健康財産  
命捨与守失 造福音宣教 信仰望保証見確信  
言葉羅針盤 見栄虚栄断 主霊繫言葉有望叶  
知恵英明良動機祈叶 主祈薔薇唱 信祈全叶

大司教 菊地功殿 多様性一致實現祈念

第一卷 平成三十年七月吉日 蒲池明憲謹書

## 御言葉典

神は天地を創造された 土から男が骨から女生まれ蛇に 唆そそのか 罪が入り神と人の間に

溝が生まれる 贖い主の誕生を預言 聖霊で救い主誕生 主の受洗

神の国は近いと言って宣教開始だ 癒いやし慰め励まし喜びの奇跡を行う 最後の晩餐で主の体を

食べ血を飲む 受難と十字架刑 三日目に復活 昇天

聖霊降臨 受洗罪は赦される 人は死で煉獄にて罪を償い天国又は地獄へ

父と子と聖霊の三位一体 体は霊宿る神殿 欲や執着は苦を招く

主の掟と十戒を守る 一いちの心と成る 他者許し寛容となる 善に聡く悪に疎い 先祖を敬う

主を畏れ知恵を得る 恐れや失望は主が不在 試練は訓練であり忍耐で救われる

主の山に備え有り 無所有が悩を断つ 愛は人を思いやる心 思い悩みは妄想

言葉の実践 主の道と真理 悲しみは死を招く 疑いや怒りを断つ 復讐は主に委ねる

苦悩には主の軛くびきを負う 主の前に正しい人は報われる 不誠実は滅びる 陽気は良薬

陰気は骨を枯す 銭の欲は悪 惜しみなく与えるは善 言葉は言霊 舌を制して成功せよ

真福八端を知る 主の心と言葉行動と祈りを倣うと自律した人になる 主に感謝せよ

求めれば与えられ探せば見いだし叩けば開かれる 主は神の僕となり 遜る 前後際断 忘己喜他

霊満され熱心に祈りあとは委ねる 疲れたら黙想 言葉と主の知恵と健康と財産

命を捨てる者は与えられ守る者は失う 造られた者に福音を宣教せよ 信仰とは望みを保証し見えないことを確信する

み言葉は羅針盤 見栄や虚栄を断つ 主と霊繋がりみ言葉が有れば望みは叶う

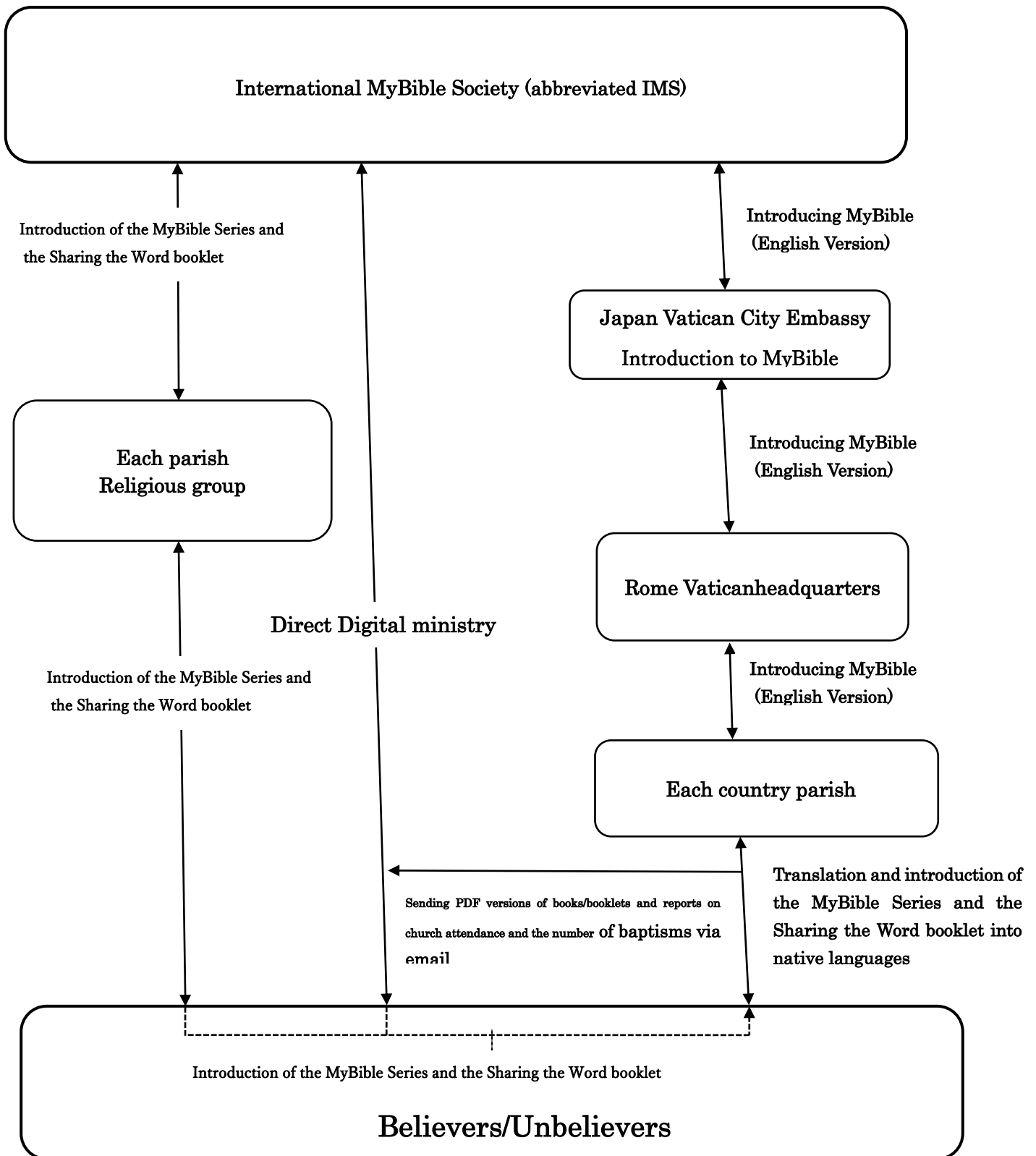
知恵と英明や良い動機での祈りは叶う 主の祈りや薔薇を唱える 信じて祈れば全て叶う

The Liturgy of the Word is a summary of MyBible Series. If you wish to utilize this as a sutra,

please use only the large kanji characters in the GWordbook. The number of characters for the

text using only Kanji characters is 318.

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## A Combined Commemorative Mass



May 6, 2022

Tokyo Cathedral St. Mary's Cathedral Underground Chapel  
International MyBible Society Founding Anniversary Mass



April 15, 2005

Tokyo Cathedral St. Mary's Cathedral Underground Chapel  
MyBible Publication Commemorative Mass

■ The 87th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Some Pharisees (Jewish believers) came to Antioch (a center for Gentile missions) and taught that "unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Genesis 17:10-11). This teaching led to a dispute and debate. Paul and Barnabas, along with some others, went to the church in Jerusalem (the headquarters of the early church) to consult the apostles and elders. The decision from the council was delivered to the church in Antioch by Paul, Barnabas, and other representatives through an official letter.

This letter included:①Gentile believers are not required to be circumcised, but should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, blood, meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality.②The law of circumcision is lifted from Gentile believers, and true salvation is declared to be through faith.To prevent any doubt from the local believers about whether this decision was truly the Lord's teaching, Paul, Barnabas, and representatives of the apostles and elders (like Judas and Silas) were sent in person.

[Circumcision]

Circumcision was practiced only for males, symbolizing God's covenant by marking the body responsible for producing offspring. While it was an "outward circumcision" in the Old Testament, the New Testament emphasizes the "circumcision of the heart" (repentance and conversion) ? see Romans 2:29. This evolved into the practice of baptism, and when Jesus' words were recorded as Scripture, the word "baptism" (Matthew 28:19) was used.

"Circumcision of the heart and ears" (Acts 7:51) refers to a spiritual circumcision, meaning to open one's heart to God and obey His Word. In the Old Testament, "circumcision of the heart" is seen in verses like: "Be circumcised to the Lord... remove the foreskin of your heart" (Jeremiah 4:4), and "circumcise the foreskin of your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16).

● Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22:1-3

The city shown to John by the angel is the new Kingdom of God ? the eternal dwelling place where God and humanity live together. The city "shines with the glory of God," and its walls and twelve gates bear the names of the twelve tribes, symbolizing that salvation began with Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...).

Jesus says, "I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Only those who believe in the Lord may enter the new Kingdom of God.

The twelve foundations of the city walls bear the names of the twelve apostles, representing the completion of salvation based on the apostles' teachings and testimony.

Since God and the Lamb dwell in the city and are worshiped directly, there is no need for a temple. God's glory and the Lamb illuminate the city, so there is no need for the sun or moon.

Lessons from this passage:①Be baptized through repentance and conversion, break from the darkness of death, and walk in a new life.②Read the Bible and become familiar with the Word.③With the help of the Holy Spirit, come to understand Jesus.④Walk in the Lord's footsteps and prepare to enter the new Kingdom of God.

[Shining with the Glory of God]

It is difficult to imagine the glory of God with our senses or words because it is spiritual. In the Bible, God's glory is often described as "light," "fire," "cloud," or "precious stones." Jasper, a gemstone that shines transparently, symbolizes clarity, brilliance, and purity ? spiritual qualities.In the Old Testament: "The glory of the Lord appeared... like a consuming fire" (Exodus 24:17), expressing part of God's glory with fire.Gold is also a symbol of "glory," "purity," and "preciousness." Revelation 21:21 describes gold as "pure as transparent glass," indicating God's presence. This "glass-like gold" expresses a gold that is spiritually pure, incorruptible, and of great value ? a fitting image for God's glory.

● Gospel Reading: John 14:23-29

(This Sunday's reading is about the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to His disciples at the Last Supper.)

"Whoever loves me will keep my word" ? that is, turn one's heart to the Lord. As it is impossible for humans to perfectly keep His word, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as a teacher ? guiding, teaching, and reminding us (1 Corinthians 2:10, Romans 8:26). Through this, God and the Lord dwell within a person, and as we recharge daily with the Word (using tools like the MyBible series to input Scripture), we are reminded of it.

As Jesus ascends to heaven (fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14), the Holy Spirit is sent as the Advocate (the one called alongside us). The peace that the Lord gives is not temporary but eternal. (Peace refers to outward stability; peace of heart refers to inner, spiritual tranquility.) "Going away" refers to His ascension, and "coming back" to His Second Coming. When family or loved ones pass away, believers rejoice because they go to the Father (return to heaven a triumphant homecoming).

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