

## C: Death and Resurrection of God's Work\*

### CHAPTER 6

**Widespread Perversion.\*** 1 When men began to multiply upon the earth, and they began to have daughters, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married as many of them as they wanted.<sup>u</sup> 3 The LORD therefore said, "My spirit will not remain in them forever, for they are flesh and the length of their lives will be one hundred and twenty years."<sup>v</sup>

4 There were giants upon the earth at this time, as well as afterward. They were the children of the sons of God who married the daughters of men. These were the heroes of times past, men of renown.<sup>w</sup>

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of men upon the earth was great, and that every plan that their hearts conceived was nothing but evil.<sup>x</sup> 6 The LORD regretted that he had made man upon the earth and his heart was grieved.<sup>y</sup> 7 The LORD said, "I will obliterate man, whom I created, from the earth. Together with man I will eliminate all the cattle and reptiles and the birds of the air, for I regret having made them."<sup>z</sup> 8 But Noah found favor with the LORD.<sup>z</sup>

**Salvation through the Righteous.\*** 9 This is the story of Noah. Noah was a just and blameless man at that time and he walked with God.<sup>a</sup> 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 But the earth was corrupt in God's sight and filled with violence.<sup>b</sup> 12 God saw that the earth was corrupt, for every person on the earth was perverse in what he did.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>u</sup> Job 1:6; Mt 24:38; Lk 17:26f.—<sup>v</sup> Job 10:9; 34:14; Pss 78:39; 103:14; Isa 40:6; 57:16; Gal 5:16f; 1 Pet 3:20.—<sup>w</sup> Wis 14:6; Bar 3:26.—<sup>x</sup> Ps 14:1-3.—<sup>y</sup> Ex 32:14; 1 Sam 15:11, 35; 2 Sam 24:16; Isa 63:10; Jer 18:7-10; Eph 4:30.—<sup>z</sup> Ru 2:2, 10, 13; Lk 1:30; Acts 7:46.—<sup>a</sup> Wis 10:4; Sir 44:17.—<sup>b</sup> Job 22:15ff; Pss 7:9; 73:6.—<sup>c</sup> Ps 14:1-3.—<sup>d</sup> Job 34:15; Sir 40:9f; 44:17; Jer 44:11, 27; Mt 24:37ff.—<sup>e</sup> Gen 7:4, 21; Ps 29:10; 2 Pet 2:5.—<sup>f</sup> Gen 9:9; Pss 25:10; 74:20; 106:45; Wis 14:6; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20.

of sin and then, rising unharmed from death, became the source of resurrection for humankind.

**6:1-8** The passage is from the Yahwist tradition. The writer seems to be using two fragments of ancient popular traditions (vv. 1-2, 4). The striking element in this chapter is the fact that human beings have gone so far in personal disintegration that they are no longer capable of thinking anything but evil (v. 5), so that any hope of recovery is morally impossible.

The tragic anthropomorphism seen in the divine regret highlights the power of evil, which is capable of destroying the work of the Creator; but the annihilation planned is the decision of the supreme Good, which is always the sole judge of its own plans (see Jer 18:1-12) and cannot allow the definitive victory of evil.

**6:9-7:5** The first part of the following passage (6:9-22) is from the Priestly tradition and links up with

13 God therefore said to Noah, "I have decided to end everything, for they have filled the earth with their violence. Behold, I will destroy the entire creation.<sup>d</sup> 14 Build an ark\* of gopher wood and divide the ark into compartments and caulk it with bitumen inside and out. 15 This is how you shall make it: the ark will be three hundred cubits long, fifty wide, and thirty high. 16 Make a roof on the ark one cubit high.\* Place a door in the side of the ark. Make it with three decks: lower, middle, and higher.

17 "Behold, I will send a flood. The waters shall cover the earth to destroy the life of everything under the skies that has the breath of life in it. Everything on the earth shall perish.<sup>e</sup> 18 But I will establish a covenant with you.

"Go into the ark, you and your sons, your wife, and the wives of your sons.<sup>f</sup> 19 Bring into the ark two of everything that lives, of all flesh. Bring a male and female of each species into the ark to save them. 20 Bring two birds of each species, two animals of each species, and two reptiles of each species with you to save them. 21 As for you, gather every type of food and take it with you. It shall nourish both you and them."<sup>g</sup>

22 Noah did all of this, exactly as God had commanded him.

### CHAPTER 7

1 The LORD said to Noah, "Enter into the ark with your entire family, for I have

the end of chapter 5. First, in three verses (6:11-13), it uses the language of corruption and violence to summarize the entire history of sin and the decree of condemnation, both of which have been described in a more diffuse way in the Yahwist tradition. This is followed by the order to build the ark, which is found only in the Priestly version, and finally the announcement of the flood with the command to enter the ark. This passage from the Priestly tradition is followed by a repetition of the command to enter the ark and of the announcement of the flood from the Yahwist tradition (7:1-5). Note the difference of the two traditions when it comes to the number of animals brought into the ark: the Yahwist account, more popular in character, presupposes that in those very ancient times a distinction was already made between clean and unclean animals, whereas in fact the distinction was of later origin and codified in the Mosaic Law.

The New Testament praises the faith of Noah (Heb 11:7) and speaks of the harm done his contemporaries by their unbelief, because they were unable to accept the impulse to conversion that came from him as he was building the ark (1 Pet 3:20).

**6:14 Ark**, in Hebrew *teba*, is probably connected with the Egyptian, *teb(t)*, basket, sarcophagus, and perhaps with the Akkadian, *tabu*, the professional boat of the gods, or with Akkadian, *elippu tibitu*, a kind of boat. The same word is used in Ex 2:3, 5 for the basket in which Moses was saved.

**6:16 A cubit** was about 50 cm or one and a half feet. The ark was about 156 meters long, 26 meters wide, and 15 meters high (440 x 72 x 44 feet). It was a floating parallelepiped of about 55,000 or 60,000 cubic meters (82,000 or 90,000 cubic feet).

17 But God heard the voice of the child, and the angel of God called upon Hagar from the heavens and said, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not fear because God has heard the voice of the child from where he lies.<sup>d</sup> 18 Get up, take the child, and hold him by the hand because I will make a great nation of him."

19 God opened her eyes, and she was able to see a spring of water. She went over to it and filled the skin and gave the child some water to drink.

20 God was with the child, and he grew and lived in the desert and became an archer. 21 He lived in the desert of Paran, and his mother found him a wife in the land of Egypt.

**First Link with the Promised Land.\*** 22 At that time, Abimelech along with Phicol, the commander of his army, came and said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything that you do. 23 Therefore, swear by God that you will not act deceitfully with me or with my sons or my descendants. As I have been friendly to you, so too, you will be friendly with me and with the land in which you have dwelt as a guest."

24 Abraham answered, "I swear it."

25 But Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that the servants of Abimelech had seized. 26 Abimelech said, "I do not know who did this thing. You never told me about this and I did not hear about it until today."

27 So Abraham took some sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. 28 Abraham set apart seven fat lambs. 29 Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of the seven lambs that you have set aside?"

<sup>d</sup> Gen 16:7.—<sup>e</sup> Gen 4:26; Ex 15:18; Deut 32:40; 33:27; Job 36:26; Pss 10:16; 45:7; 90:2; 93:2; 103:19; 146:10; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:10; Hab 1:12; 3:6; Heb 13:8.—<sup>f</sup> Sir 44:20.—<sup>g</sup> 2 Chr 3:1; 1 Mac 2:52; Heb 11:17; 1 Jn 4:9.

**21:22-34** Two popular traditions are fused to explain the name "Beer-sheba": one explains it as meaning "well of the oath," the other as "well of the seven," that is, the seven lambs that the Patriarch gives the master of the territory as a guarantee of the agreement between them.

**22:1-24** This story is likewise from the Elohist tradition. After successes there is an unexpected new test. Trusting in God's word, Abraham has left everything, reached the land promised to his descendants, and waited patiently for the birth of a son. His sole treasure to this point has been his faith; it is only because of this that God has blessed him. Now he receives the order to sacrifice his very faith and hope, but he does not allow them to waver. The inexplicable thing is not that God should ask him to sacrifice a son, even though this is a harsh blow to his fatherly heart; for the religious outlook of that country allowed this deplorable form of worship (Jdg 11:30-39; 2 Ki 3:27; 16:3; 21:6). The apparent absurdity is that he must sacrifice the very thing for which he heretofore lived, the son for whose sake God had asked him to sacrifice every other good.

30 He answered, "Please take these seven lambs from me, and let them be a sign to you that I dug this well." 31 Because of this the place is called Beer-sheba (the well of the seven), for they both swore an oath there. 32 After the covenant had been concluded at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines. 33 Abraham planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and there he called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal God.<sup>e</sup> 34 Abraham dwelt in the land of the Philistines for many years.

## CHAPTER 22

**Sacrifice of the Son.\*** 1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am!"<sup>f</sup>

2 God said, "Take your son, your only son, the one you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah\* and offer him as a burnt offering on the mountain that I will show you."<sup>g</sup>

3 Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled a donkey, and took two servants and his son Isaac with him. He also took the wood for the burnt offering and set out toward the place about which God had spoken. 4 On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw that place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there. We will worship and then we will return to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and loaded it upon his son Isaac. He himself carried the fire and the knife. They then set out together. 7 Isaac turned to his father Abraham and said, "My father!"

He answered, "Here I am, my son."

He continued, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son!" And the two of them went on together.

God himself has supplied the victim for the sacrifice. The ram given to Abraham was only a temporary victim. Another Father really sacrificed his own Son for the sake of humankind (Rom 8:32), perhaps on the very same mountain (2 Chr 3:1); then he won him back in the resurrection. It is only in virtue of this divine sacrifice, rather than of the faith of Abraham, that the Lord can give the Patriarch his great promises.

The conclusion of the incident prepares the way for a firm condemnation of the Canaanite practice of sacrificing children (see Deut 12:29-31; 18:10-12; Jer 7:31-33; 19:1-13). Above all, however, it exemplifies the result of every true sacrifice: God restores to his faithful, as the fruit of their faith, the freely given gift that they had surrendered in order to show that the Lord came first for them.

**22:2** *Moriah* is also the mountain on which the Temple of Jerusalem will be built (2 Chr 3:1).

## BOOK I—PSALMS 3–41\*

## PSALM 3\*

## Trust in God in Time of Danger

- 1 A psalm of David. When he was fleeing from his son Absalom.<sup>s</sup>
- 2 O LORD, how great is the number of my enemies,  
how many are those who rise up against me.
- 3 How numerous are the ones who say of me,  
“He will not receive salvation from God.”<sup>t</sup> *Selah*\*
- 4 But you, O LORD, are a shield to protect me;  
you are my glory and the one who raises my head high.<sup>\*u</sup>
- 5 Whenever I cry aloud to the LORD,  
he answers me from his holy mountain.<sup>\*v</sup> *Selah*
- 6 I lie down and sleep;<sup>w</sup>  
I awaken again, for the LORD sustains me.<sup>\*</sup>
- 7 Thus, I will not fear the multitudes  
who have surrounded me on every side.<sup>x</sup>
- 8 Rise up, O LORD!  
Rescue me, O my God!  
You will strike all my enemies across the face<sup>\*</sup>  
and break the teeth of the wicked.<sup>y</sup>
- 9 Salvation comes from the LORD.  
May your blessing be upon your people.<sup>z</sup> *Selah*

<sup>s</sup> 2 Sam 15:13ff.—<sup>t</sup> Pss 22:8; 71:11; Isa 36:15; 37:20.—<sup>u</sup> Pss 7:11; 18:3; 62:7-8; Gen 15:1; Deut 33:29; Isa 60:19.—<sup>v</sup> Ps 2:6.—<sup>w</sup> Pss 4:9; 17:15; Lev 26:6; Prov 3:24.—<sup>x</sup> Pss 23:4; 118:11; Job 11:15.—<sup>y</sup> Pss 6:5; 7:2; 58:7; Isa 25:9; Jer 42:11.—<sup>z</sup> Pss 27:1; 28:9; Isa 43:3; Jon 2:9; Rev 7:10.—<sup>a</sup> Ps 13:4; 27:7; 30:11; 118:5.—<sup>b</sup> Ps 62:4; Ex 16:7; 2 Ki 19:26; Jer 13:25.—<sup>c</sup> Ps 12:2; 1 Tim 4:7; 2 Pet 3:11.—<sup>d</sup> Ps 63:7; Dan 2:28; Eph 4:26.—<sup>e</sup> Pss 31:7; 51:21; Isa 26:4; Jn 14:1.—<sup>f</sup> Pss 31:17; 44:4; 67:2; 80:4; Num 6:25; Job 13:24; Dan 9:17.—<sup>g</sup> Isa 9:3; Acts 14:17.—<sup>h</sup> Ps 3:6; Lev 26:6.

still one certitude remains: “You will fill me with joy in your presence” (Ps 16:11). Is not this the dialogue that takes place in the life of believers?

**Ps 3** In time of great danger and anguish, the psalmist finds refuge in God as his shield (protector) and the one who fills him with courage. God answers his prayer and bestows peace and deliverance.

**3:3** *Selah*: a word whose meaning is uncertain; possibly a musical term.

**3:4** God will preserve the psalmist from dishonor and humiliation by means of his grace (see Pss 18:3; 27:5; 62:8; 110:5; Deut 33:29; Sir 11:12f).

**3:5** *Holy Mountain*: see note on Ps 2:6.

**3:6** This passage (see Prov 3:24) is applied by the Fathers of the Church to the dead and risen Christ.

**3:8** God treats the wicked like ferocious beasts whose jaws are shattered (see Pss 22:14f; 35:16; 58:7; Job 29:17; Ezek 22:25). The initial appeal reminds one of Jer 2:27. See notes on Pss 5:10; 35.

**Ps 4** Those who are well established in life delude themselves by seeking happiness in riches and worldly vanities. The psalmist, rich in divine trust and joy, invites

## PSALM 4\*

*Joyful Confidence in God*

- 1 For the director.\* With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.
- 2 When I call upon you, answer me, O God,  
you who uphold my rights.  
When I was in distress, you set me free;  
have pity on me and listen to my prayer.<sup>a</sup>
- 3 How long\* will you people turn my glory into shame,  
cherishing what is worthless and pursuing what is false?<sup>b</sup> *Selah*
- 4 Remember that the LORD wonderfully favors those who are faithful,\*  
and the LORD listens when I call out to him.<sup>c</sup>
- 5\* When you are angry, be careful not to sin;  
reflect in silence  
as you lie upon your beds.<sup>d</sup> *Selah*
- 6 Offer worthy sacrifices  
and place your trust in the LORD.<sup>e</sup>
- 7 Many exclaim, “Who will show us better times!  
Let the light of your face shine on\*  
us, O LORD!”<sup>f</sup>
- 8 You have granted my heart\* greater joy  
than others experience when grain  
and wine abound.<sup>g</sup>
- 9 In peace I lie down and sleep,  
for only with your help, O LORD,  
can I rest secure.<sup>h</sup>

them to discover the price of God's friendship: “the light of [God's] face.” This is an evening prayer (see vv. 5, 9), filled with desire for God; Christians move beyond its earthly perspectives. Prayer brings openness of heart, assurance of God's help, faith, divine approval, joy, and peace.

**4:1** For the director: these words are thought to be a musical or liturgical notation.

**4:3** How long . . . ? : see note on Ps 6:4.

**4:4** Those who are faithful: one of several words (sometimes translated as “saints”) for the People of God, who should be faithful to him (see Pss 12:2; 31:24; 32:6; 34:10). See also notes on Pss 16:3; 34:10.

**4:5-6** One must fear to offend God but rather pray to him in the calm and silence of adoration. *When you are angry be careful not to sin*: these words are cited by Paul in Eph 4:26 with the sense that if anger takes hold of you, let it not lead you to act evilly—for there is such a thing as righteous anger (see Mk 3:5). *Beds*: can refer to the spot where one prostrated oneself to pray (see Ps 95:6; Sir 50:17), which is also suggested by the presence of the term *Selah*, or pause.

**4:7** Face shine on: this image of benevolence and contentment (see Num 6:25; Prov 16:15; Dan 9:17) occurs frequently in the Psalter (see Pss 31:17; 67:2; 119:135; and especially note on Ps 13:2). The reading in the Septuagint and Vulgate is: “The light of your countenance, O LORD, is signed [or: imprinted] on us.” It was interpreted as referring to the soul created in the image of God and regenerated by the baptismal character that makes a Christian a child of light (see Lk 16:8; Jn 12:36; 1 Thes 5:5; Eph 5:8).

**4:8** Heart: the biblical center of the human spirit, which harbors a person's thoughts and emotions and gives rise to action.

- 12 I am an object of scorn  
to all my enemies,  
a loathsome sight to my neighbors,  
and an object of dread to my friends.  
When people catch sight of me outside,  
they quickly turn away.<sup>r</sup>
- 13 I have passed out of their minds  
like someone who has died;  
I have become like a broken vessel.\*
- 14 I have heard the hissing of many:  
“There is terror on every side,”\*  
as they conspire together against me  
and plot to end my life.
- 15 But I place my trust in you, O LORD.  
I say, “You are my God.”<sup>s</sup>
- 16 My life is in your hands;\*  
deliver me from the power of my  
enemies,  
from the clutches of those who pursue me.
- 17 Let your face shine\* upon your servant;  
save me in your kindness.<sup>t</sup>
- 18\* Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,  
for I have cried out to you.  
Let the wicked be put to shame  
and lie silent in the netherworld.
- 19 Let their lying lips be struck dumb,  
lips that speak insolently against the  
righteous  
with pride and contempt.<sup>u</sup>
- 20\* How great is your goodness, O LORD,  
which you have stored up\* for those  
who fear you  
and which you bestow on those who  
take refuge in you,  
in the presence of all the people.

<sup>r</sup> Pss 25:19; 38:12; Job 19:13-19.—<sup>s</sup> Pss 4:6; 140:7; Isa 25:1.—<sup>t</sup> Pss 4:7; 67:2; Num 6:25.—<sup>u</sup> Pss 12:4; 120:2.—<sup>v</sup> Pss 27:5; 109:3; Rev 7:15.—<sup>w</sup> Ps 116:11; Jon 2:4.—<sup>x</sup> Ps 65:4; Prov 28:13; Isa 1:18; Hos 14:2; Rom 4:7-8.—<sup>y</sup> Pss 6:7; 31:11.

**31:13** *Like a broken vessel:* a customary comparison for something that has been rendered useless (see Isa 30:14; Jer 19:11; 22:28).

**31:14** *There is terror on every side:* a cry used when danger lurks (see Jer 6:25; 20:10; 46:5; 49:29).

**31:16** *My life is in your hands:* God is the ultimate master of every moment of everyone's life.

**31:17** *Face shine:* see note on Ps 13:2.

**31:18-19** See notes on Pss 5:11; 35.

**31:20-25** A moment arrives when the believer experiences anew the power of God's presence. This holds good despite the mockery and false accusations of enemies, that is, the war of words that constitutes one of the greatest trials of our human relationships. Certain of God, the believer does not let himself become enmeshed in conflicts.

**31:20** *Stored up:* the psalmist relies on the Lord who has stored up his goodness (his covenant promises) for his faithful ones.

**31:22** *Blessed:* see note on Ps 18:47. *Kindness:* see note on Ps 4:8.

**31:24** *Saints:* see notes on Pss 4:4; 16:3; and 34:10. *The arrogant:* often equal to the wicked, for the arrogant act as if they have no need of God and are a law to themselves (see Pss 10:2-11; 73:6; 94:2-7; Deut 8:14; Isa 2:17; Ezek 28:2, 5; Hos 13:6).

- 21 You hide them in the safety of your presence  
from those who conspire against them;  
you keep them safe in your shelter,  
far away from contentious tongues.<sup>v</sup>
- 22 Blessed\* be the LORD,  
for he has manifested his wondrous  
kindness to me  
when I was under siege.
- 23 I had cried out in terror,<sup>w</sup>  
“I have been cut off from your sight.”  
But you heard my plea  
when I cried out to you for assistance.
- 24 Love the LORD, all his saints.\*  
The LORD protects his loyal servants,  
but the arrogant he repays beyond  
measure.
- 25 Be strong and courageous in your hearts,  
all you who place your hope in the  
LORD.

### PSALM 32\*

#### The Joy of Being Forgiven

1 Of David. A *maskil*.\*

\*Blessed is the one whose offense is forgiven,  
whose sin is erased.\*

2 Blessed is the one to whom the LORD  
charges no guilt  
and in whose spirit there is no guile.

3 As long as I remained silent,\*  
my body wasted away  
as the result of my groaning throughout  
the day.<sup>y</sup>

4 For day and night  
your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength withered steadily  
as though consumed by the summer  
heat.\* *Selah*

**Ps 32** This is the second of the seven Penitential Psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143), a joyous testimony of gratitude for God's gift of forgiveness for those who confess their sins and follow the law of God. Instead of constantly pondering their sins, believers acknowledge their wretchedness before God and accept forgiveness and reconciliation. Their torment ceases, and a new person is born, overwhelmed by grace, confidence, and a sense of obedience.

In praying this psalm, we can focus not only on the happiness resulting from the forgiveness of particular sin but also on the more profound happiness obtained by the complete victory given us by God in Christ over sin under all its forms.

**32:1a** *Maskil:* this term cannot be given a precise translation; perhaps it means “teaching” or “training.”

**32:1b-2** Joyous declaration of the happiness of having one's sins forgiven by God (see Pss 65:5; 85:2; Job 31:33). This text is cited by Paul in Rom 4:7-8. *Blessed:* see note on Ps 1:1.

**32:3** *I remained silent:* did not confess the sin before God. *Body:* literally, “bones.”

**32:4** According to St. Augustine, even before penitents acknowledge their sin, God hears the cry of their heart and pardons it because of their true contrition (see 2 Sam 12:13).

## B: The New Law\*

**The Fulfillment of the Law.** 17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them.<sup>p</sup> 18 Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single letter,<sup>q</sup> not even a tiny portion of a letter, will disappear from the Law until all things have been accomplished.<sup>r</sup> 19 Therefore, whoever breaks even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever observes these commandments and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>r</sup> 20 I tell you, if your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>s</sup>

**Anger.**<sup>t</sup> 21 “You have heard that your ancestors were told: ‘You shall not kill,<sup>t</sup> and anyone who kills will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I say this to you: Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment, and whoever addresses his brother in an insulting way will answer for it before the Sanhedrin, and whoever calls his brother a fool will be liable to the fires of Gehenna.<sup>u</sup> \*

23 “Therefore, when offering your gift at the altar, if you should remember that your brother has something against you,<sup>v</sup> 24 leave your gift there at the altar and first go to be reconciled with your brother. Then return and offer your gift.

25 <sup>w</sup> “Come to terms quickly with your opponent while you are on the way to court with him. If you fail to do so, he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge will put you in the custody of the guard, and

p Rom 3:31.—q Lk 16:17.—r Jas 2:10.—s Rom 10:3; Phil 3:9.—t Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17.—u Eccl 7:9; Eph 4:26; Jas 1:19-20.—v Mk 11:25.—w 25-26: Mt 18:34-35; Lk 12:58-59.—x Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18.—y 29-30: Mt 18:8-9; Mk 9:43-47; Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 8:13.—z Mt 19:3-9; Deut 24:1.—a Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11.—b Mt 23:16-22; Lev 19:12; Num 30:3; Deut 23:21.—c 34-37: Ps 48:2; Sir 23:9; Isa 66:1; 2 Cor 1:17-19; Jas 5:12.

**5:17-48** The Gospel of Matthew wants to stress the point that Jesus has no contempt for “the Law or the Prophets” (= the Old Testament); on the contrary, he takes them very seriously. But throughout his life he felt free to proclaim the true meaning of the Law by placing himself above even Moses. In his view, the Law is good, and there is nothing to discuss. In contrast to the commonly accepted rules, Jesus does not deal with secondary details; the essentials, on the other hand, cause no problem; therefore he does not discuss the Law. Instead, he goes farther and deeper, down into the human heart.

**5:18** *Single letter*: literally, *iota* (Greek) = Hebrew *yod*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. *Tiny portion of a letter*: literally, the *apex* or tip of a letter, the bit that distinguishes similar letters.

**5:21-26** Murderers must appear before the highest Jewish judicial body, the Sanhedrin, and they deserve death and the fire, symbolized by Gehenna, the valley southwest of Jerusalem that was the center for an

you will be thrown into prison. **26** Believe the truth of what I tell you: you will not be given your freedom until you have paid your debt down to the last penny.\*

**Adultery.** 27 \* “You have heard that it was said of old: ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>x</sup> 28 But I say to you that anyone who looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 <sup>y</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is preferable for you to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is preferable for you to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.

**Divorce.** 31 “It has also been said: ‘Whoever divorces his wife shall give her a certificate of dismissal.’<sup>z</sup> 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except if the marriage was unlawful, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.<sup>a</sup>

**Oaths.**<sup>b</sup> 33 “Again, you have heard that our ancestors were told: ‘Do not swear falsely, but fulfill the vows you have made to the Lord.’<sup>b</sup> 34 <sup>c</sup> “But what I tell you is this: Do not swear at all, either by heaven, since it is God’s throne, 35 or by earth, since that is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King. 36 Nor should you swear by your head, for you cannot turn one hair of it white or black. 37 All you need to do is to say ‘Yes’ if you mean ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ if you mean ‘No.’ Anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

idolatrous cult during the monarchy in which children were offered in sacrifice (see 2 Ki 23:10; Jer 7:31). To embrace the kingdom of God is to become a person of reconciliation, to free oneself of all murderous desires. Indeed, even when they suffer offenses but are innocent, the disciples of Jesus must have the courage to take the first step toward establishing peace.

**5:22** *Gehenna*: a little valley southwest of Jerusalem and a popular image of hell because of the refuse that burned there continually.

**5:26** *Penny*: the smallest Roman copper coin.

**5:27-32** At this period, the laws on divorce were tolerant for husbands, intransigent for wives. Jesus rejects this inequality and confronts husbands with their responsibilities by radically condemning divorce. Matthew’s text contains the clause, “except if the marriage was unlawful,” which is lacking in the parallel passages of Luke and Mark, but occurs again in Mt 19:9. The Greek word *porneia*, “unchastity,” is generic and so has given rise to much discussion. The widely accepted opinion among scholars today is that it was a technical term used by the Jewish Christian community to signify a degree of relationship that constituted an impediment to marriage according to the Law (Lev 18:6-18; Acts 15:29).

**5:33-37** What good is multiplying oaths between God and human beings? Is this not a sign that lying and unbelief have perverted human realities? In the kingdom of God, the dialogue between persons will rediscover its truth and its loyalty.



**The Harvest Is Abundant.\*** 35 Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every kind of illness and disease.<sup>r</sup> 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were distressed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>s</sup> 37<sup>t</sup> Then he said to his disciples, **“The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers for his harvest.”**

*B: Instructions to the Apostles:  
The Charter of the Apostolate\**

**CHAPTER 10**

**Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles.\***

1<sup>u</sup> Calling his twelve disciples together, he gave them authority over unclean spirits, with the power to drive them out and to cure every kind of disease and illness.<sup>v</sup>

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot,\* the one who betrayed him.<sup>w</sup>

5<sup>x</sup> These twelve Jesus sent forth after giving them the following instructions: **“Do not travel\* to the territory of the Gentiles, and enter no Samaritan town.<sup>y</sup> 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.<sup>z</sup> 7 And as you go, proclaim: ‘The king-**

<sup>r</sup> Mt 4:23; Lk 8:1.—<sup>s</sup> Mt 14:14; Num 27:17; 1 Ki 22:17; Jer 30:6; Ezek 34:5; Mk 6:34; 8:2; Zec 10:2.—<sup>t</sup> 37-38: Lk 10:2; Jn 4:35-38.—<sup>u</sup> 1-4: Mk 3:14-19; 6:7; Lk 6:13-16; Acts 1:13.—<sup>v</sup> Lk 9:1.—<sup>w</sup> Acts 1:16.—<sup>x</sup> 5-15: Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6.—<sup>y</sup> Lk 9:52-53; Jn 4:9, 40.—<sup>z</sup> Mt 15:24; Jer 50:6.—<sup>a</sup> Mt 3:2; 4:17.—<sup>b</sup> Acts 8:20.—<sup>c</sup> 9-10: Isa 55:1 Mk 6:8-9; Lk 9:3; 10:4; 22:35.—<sup>d</sup> Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:18.—<sup>e</sup> 11-15: Mk 6:10-11; Lk 9:4-5; 10:5-12.—<sup>f</sup> Acts 13:51; 18:6.—<sup>g</sup> Mt 11:24; Gen 13:13; 19:1-29; Jude 7.—<sup>h</sup> Lk 10:3; 1 Cor 14:20.—<sup>i</sup> 17-22: Mk 13:9-13; Lk 21:12-19; Jn 16:1-4.—<sup>j</sup> Acts 5:40.—<sup>k</sup> Jn 15:27.—<sup>l</sup> Ex 4:11-12; Jer 1:6-10; Lk 12:11-12.—<sup>m</sup> Acts 4:8, 31.—<sup>n</sup> 21-22: Mt 24:9, 13; Jn 15:21.

**9:35-38** As in Mt 4:23-25, the evangelist concludes this part of his book with an action of Christ that shows compassion for the distress of the crowds and inculcates confidence in his followers. Jesus insistently works to impart the mercy of God upon all who come to him. He calls upon all who have the privilege of believing in him and benefiting from his salvation to share his concern for the misery of their neighbors. He seeks people who, like him and after him, will apply themselves to this task.

**10:1-42** This section of Matthew is called the Instructions to the Apostles; collected in it are the texts describing the mission of the disciples, applicable to the early Church and for all future time. The disciples begin the great enterprise; through them Christ's authority and power continue among human beings—so long as they act truly in his Spirit and share his lot. Thus is born a new People of God.

dom of heaven is near.’<sup>a</sup> 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. You received without payment; give in the same way.<sup>b</sup> 9<sup>c</sup> Take along no gold or silver or copper in your purses, 10 no sack for your journey, or an extra tunic, or sandals, or a staff. For the laborer deserves his keep.<sup>d</sup>

11<sup>e</sup> “Whatever town or village you enter, look for some honorable person who lives there, and stay with him until you leave. 12 As you enter a house, extend your blessing upon it. 13 If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your message, shake the dust from your feet\* as you leave that house or town.<sup>f</sup> 15 Amen, I say to you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah\* on the day of judgment than for that town.<sup>g</sup>

**No Servant Is above His Master.\*** 16<sup>h</sup> “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as cunning as serpents and yet as innocent as doves.<sup>h</sup> 17<sup>i</sup> Be on your guard, for people will hand you over to courts\* and scourge you in their synagogues,<sup>j</sup> 18 and you will be brought before governors and kings because of me to testify before them and the Gentiles.<sup>k</sup>

19<sup>l</sup> “When they hand you over, do not be concerned about how you are to speak or what you are to say. When the time comes, you will be given what you are to say.<sup>l</sup> 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.<sup>m</sup>

21<sup>n</sup> “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against their parents and

**10:1-15** Israel was made up of twelve tribes; the kingdom of Jesus was to have twelve founders (see Mt 19:28; Rev 21:12-14): the “Twelve” or the “apostles.” The latter is a Greek word (plural) meaning “those who are sent”; Jesus himself chose the term (Lk 6:13).

**10:4** *Iscariot*: i.e., “Man from Kerioth,” a place in the southernmost part of Palestine.

**10:5** *Do not travel*: the Good News about the kingdom was to be proclaimed first to Jews alone. After his Death and Resurrection, Jesus commanded the disciples to take the message to all nations (Mt 28:19; see Mt 21:43). *Samaritans*: a race of mixed blood resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Gentiles were brought into the land by the Assyrians (2 Ki 17:24). In the time of Jesus, Jews and Samari-tans were bitterly opposed to one another (see Jn 4:9).

**10:14** *Shake the dust from your feet*: a symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an unclean Gentile area. Here it represents a solemn warning to those who reject God's message.

**10:15** *Sodom and Gomorrah*: see Gen 19:23-29.

**10:16-25** The disciples are prolongations of Christ, so to speak. Whatever happened to him will also happen to them. But if they persevere they will be saved.

**10:17** *Courts*: the lower courts, connected with local synagogues, that tried less serious cases and scourged those found guilty.