

Buddhist Monk Saved by Jesus Christ

My True Story

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FOREWORD

My life's path led me through sports, parties, and drugs. I spent thirteen years abroad and four years in prison. I have completed more than five thousand hours of various meditation practices. I spent a year in India and Nepal visiting well-known Buddhist sites and attending meditation retreats. I also meditated in the forest, caves, and fasted often. I became a Buddhist monk in Thailand, convinced that I would remain there for my entire life. As a monk, I was very happy and had no interest at all in returning to a secular life.

I had teachers with supernatural powers, and I had incredible spiritual experiences that eventually turned into a nightmare. I truly believed I was on the best possible path, because I lived in bright states of consciousness, spiritual power, deep satisfaction, and peaceful mind. There was no comparison to the worldly life of desires, worries, and stress.

But something happened that I never expected. After three years of monastic life, Jesus Christ saved me from the power of evil spirits and their deceptions. What I thought was the best path turned out to be a massive spiritual deception. I received the gift of salvation through Jesus and a personal relationship with the true God. I came to know the highest truth from God — the most incredible event that instantly changed my life forever.

Many spiritual deceptions were revealed to me. I understood why people believe in knowledge that comes from Satan and evil spirits, and why they share this knowledge with others in an

attempt to “help” them. They are convinced they speak the truth, but these are deceptions that lead to eternal destruction. God set me free from this captivity and showed me the truth, also so that I could share it with others. For only in this truth is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

What is truth, and what are deceptions? What is the right path, and what are the wrong ones? What is real liberation, and what is false liberation? There is a lot of different knowledge and many different paths. Each one claims to be the truth and to lead to freedom. But they cannot all be right. Whom should we believe, and why? How can a person recognize the right path among thousands? It is like a labyrinth full of deceptions; sadly, most people do not know the only path and the only truth that leads to a personal relationship with God and to the knowledge of eternal life.

This book is for everyone who sincerely seeks the truth and is willing to discover something new. I encourage you to lay aside your prejudices and listen with an open heart, because things are not always what they seem at first glance. I was also on a very intense journey of seeking for the truth, but I did not find the truth — the truth found me. For that reason, it can also find you through the words in this book.

I am forever grateful that I came to know God the Father and Jesus Christ, for the gift of salvation and eternal life with the perfectly holy and righteous God, the Creator of all things and all beings.

INTRODUCTION

I remember that as a child, before falling asleep, I often imagined that after death everything simply ends. The thought that a person just disappears forever terrified me.

As a teenager, I was active in different sports, but in the end, I chose basketball. My teammates were also my closest friends: we trained together, went to games, talked endlessly about basketball leagues, and laughed a lot. I felt best when I was with them.

In the second year of technical school, we had our first internship in a factory. On my first day, still half-asleep, I walked in and was shocked by the smell of iron, the noise of machines, and the tired, unhappy faces of the workers. I was assigned to a co-worker who kept a fridge under his desk, where people would start drinking wine as early as six in the morning. I couldn't imagine working in such an environment for a lifetime.

On weekends, my teammates and I started going to discos and parties, discovering nightlife and everything that came with it. The next day we would share stories about what had happened and laugh about it.

After three of our most successful seasons, our team dropped out of the first league, the club collapsed overnight, and with it also my hopes for a basketball career. After seven years of playing, I stopped training and only played occasionally for fun.

At eighteen, I went camping with a group of friends on the coast. That was when we first visited a famous electronic music club. I

knew nothing about that world. Before going in, one of my friends said he would get us some pills that would help with dancing. I thought: If he says so, then it must not be a big deal. What could one pill really do? We each got one. He said it was very strong, so we should take only half and the other half later, since it takes about an hour to kick in.

We took half and went inside. I had never seen such a beautifully designed place. The music was so loud that we had to shout into each other's ears to talk. Many people were jumping to the rhythm on the dance floor. I just observed for a while and walked around. When I didn't feel anything, I took the other half. After a while, on the dance floor, it hit me—a wave of warm, pleasant energy flooded my body. I felt light, my thoughts were joyful and completely open. That was when I learned that the pill was called ecstasy. It was so strong that I danced nonstop until morning. When we met up again, we hugged each other and said how amazing it was. It felt as if a whole new world had opened for me. I was convinced it would always be like that.

From then on, we stopped going to “normal” parties, because compared to this they seemed boring and meaningless. None of us realized we had become dependent on the pleasure drugs provided. Soon I noticed the effect wasn't as strong anymore, and that the friendships weren't as real as they had seemed under the influence. We kept telling ourselves we were there for the music, but one night when ecstasy didn't arrive on time, nobody enjoyed the music—everyone just asked when it would come, sitting around without energy. That was when I knew it wasn't true. Only one of us didn't take drugs; he drank energy drinks instead.

At one party the pill didn't hit me until morning. Watching my friends under the influence while I was still sober felt almost

disturbing. Later, when I was in the same state, I didn't notice it anymore. Together we took alcohol, marijuana, speed, ecstasy, and LSD. I was drawn the most too unusual experiences. I didn't see it as something particularly bad. But when the drugs wore off, I felt terrible and didn't want to be around anyone who wasn't also taking them. Especially not my parents—I knew deep down that what I was doing wasn't right.

One night I took too much at once. At first nothing happened, but then everything exploded. I danced wildly all night trying to burn it out. A powerful conviction overcame me that I had done something terribly wrong, that everyone knew, that they were laughing and gossiping about me. The feeling of guilt was so strong that it often pressed down on my chest. A constant depression and paranoia set in. I didn't know what to say to people anymore; I believed I was worthless, that whatever I said wasn't good enough, that everyone could see it and was mocking me. In other people's behaviour I was always looking for confirmation of this, and so I felt hurt repeatedly. I didn't tell anyone—I believed it would fix itself. I knew of two others who had similar problems.

After two or three years of using drugs and partying, I stopped. Because of that, I lost all my "friends." It took about two years for my condition to improve.

At the end of high school, I read a book describing different universities, but I didn't find anything that interested me. I got a job at the same factory where I had done my internship and received a scholarship. One day, as we sat outside a bar drinking beer, one co-worker said seriously: "Now we'll work forty years until retirement." I didn't say anything, but inside I thought it was impossible. I believed there must be other options, but I had no idea

what they were. At that time, there was no internet where you could just look things up.

Work in the factory and life in Idrija became increasingly monotonous. I felt I urgently needed to leave. I was drafted into the army, which I took as a welcome change—some time to figure out what to do next.

After the army, at twenty-two, I decided to move to Ljubljana. I believed that by changing places I would leave behind all the bad things and find something better. At the same time, I spent four years in network marketing. I was drawn to the idea of financial freedom, which the wealthy claimed solved all problems. I attended seminars, read books on personal growth, and listened to financially successful people. I had big dreams and wrote down all the goals I wanted to achieve.

Over time I realized that only a small percentage succeed. Eventually I saw that relationships in this business were based on money. If you were bringing in new people—which meant money—you were liked. Otherwise, you were worth nothing. On top of that, you lost a lot of money yourself. At seminars, people hugged and planned their rich future together, but when things didn't work out, they often argued and split. Many judged others by money—how much you had determined how much you were worth.

I enrolled at a university in Ljubljana so I could work through the student service, since I couldn't find a regular job. I lived the life of a student without studying. I got used to living independently and felt freer than at home. But I no longer had a life goal or passion, like I once had with basketball. So, I often went to parties

just to feel that something was happening. When I was drunk, I became a different person—full of life and fun.

In the summers I often sat by the Ljubljana River with a beer in my hand, my thoughts drifting far away. Sometimes I wondered about the meaning of life, often I felt something was missing I didn't know what, let alone how to find it. At times I would just sit and stare without thinking. I lived according to the common teachings of society, which we often follow without noticing. I believed that the quality of life was measured by pleasant experiences and by the money that made them possible. So, I always searched for enjoyable moments—most of them connected to money. The more money you had, the more you could afford. My focus was mainly on myself and on seeking pleasures.

Over the years, life in Ljubljana became increasingly dull and repetitive—much like before in Idrija. I became more open to people and less afraid of the future and of change. A strong feeling kept pushing me forward, telling me there had to be something more. Sometimes I talked with tourists, and it always felt special to meet someone from another country. I thought about how big the world was, with so many countries and experiences I hadn't yet had. It felt like I would miss out on something if I spent my whole life in one place, doing the same thing.

I had a roommate, Rozle, who worked as a tour guide abroad. Every time he came back, he brought a big crate of beer, arak, and a hookah. He often hosted parties in the house and invited his fellow guides. I noticed they were different from most people—more open, more excited about life. They talked about their work, where they had been, what they had experienced, and where they were going next. It was the exact opposite of most jobs, where

people just complain about how bad everything is and how there's no way out.

I had only been on short vacations and trips in Europe. I always enjoyed them so much that I wished I could stay longer. From time to time, I searched online for possibilities of living abroad. I found a summer work program for students in the United States, and after a short consideration I decided I had to go. Rozle advised me to buy a one-year plane ticket and travel around Central and South America on the way. As I began researching those countries, I became increasingly excited.

And so, I did. I arranged everything, and the time for new adventures came. I hoped to find something abroad and stay there. I had no desire to ever return. I felt like I had already tried everything but hadn't found what I was looking for. Just like in Idrija, I found nothing for myself in Ljubljana. Once again, I wanted to leave everything behind and move forward.

In 2006, at the age of twenty-six, I left for abroad.

SUMMER WORK IN THE USA AND TRAVELING ACROSS AMERICA

I arrived at the airport in New York and had to find my way to a small town on the coast of New Jersey. On the way, I asked people for directions. One of them said to me loudly and enthusiastically, “Welcome to the USA, this is the best country in the world, you’re going to love it here!” — after I told him it was my first time visiting. I immediately noticed that the people I briefly talked to were very open, relaxed, and genuine, without pretending to be something they’re not. We spoke as if we had known each other for a long time.

Eventually, I reached my destination — a tourist town where people come to have fun and relax. Along the sandy beach was an elevated wooden boardwalk lined with an amusement park, an aquarium, restaurants, a nightclub, and other attractions. I met students, mostly from Croatia, Poland, and Slovakia. Soon we started working ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week. We got to know Americans and settled into our jobs. At first, everything seemed great, but after about a month I realized that even the most beautiful place can feel stressful when you work almost all day and have little time for yourself.

We had parties late into the night on the porch of a big wooden house. Soon, I learned to speak fairly good English and Croatian. Every Saturday I had a day off, and we went to clubs together. Sometimes we went out with Americans who had cars. They were happy to show us around and get to know us better. Once we went

to someone's house, played beer pong, they had a jacuzzi, and we joked that it was all just like in the movies — typical American scenes.

I often went to New York with the Croatians since it was only two hours away by train. Wherever we went, we were amazed by the surroundings and the way of life. Some said they would like to stay longer. We even visited the Croatian neighborhood in New York to check for work opportunities and other possibilities.

At the end of the summer job, we had a party at a club just for us workers — with free drinks all night. The next day, we rented a house for one night and had a big farewell party. Everyone else had about a month left to travel before returning home for university. I, however, still had eight months to travel — my adventure was just about to start.

First, I went to New York. The most fascinating thing for me was exploring the city; I spent almost entire days walking around and seeing everything I could. Sometimes I met people online who let me stay with them for a few days, and otherwise, I stayed in hostels.

I thought it would be an interesting adventure to travel from New York to San Francisco by bus. On the way, I spent one night in Chicago and a week in Las Vegas. I spent my days walking through the city, sightseeing, and meeting people. While walking down the street one day, I heard loud screams from above — at first, I didn't understand what it was. Later, I found out there was an amusement park on top of a skyscraper — I had to go up immediately.

In San Francisco, I stayed with two ladies for a few days. I didn't see much of the Russian one because she was working. The American girl was free, and we explored the city together. In the

evenings, we talked and drank on a flat rooftop, watching the sunset and the beautiful view over the city.

In Los Angeles, I stayed with a very kind Asian woman. Every day after work, she texted me to say she was on her way home and asked where I would like to go. With her car, we visited many parts of the city. She was very friendly and cheerful. Then I went to a hostel in San Diego, where they organized evening outings to bars and karaoke nights. There, I met an Italian who planned to go to Mexico, just like me, and he spoke Spanish. We decided to go together.

The first night in Mexico, we traveled by bus. I was asleep when suddenly there was a strong jolt and a loud crack. Some people screamed, and I quickly looked around. The driver had fallen asleep at the wheel. Luckily, he only sideswiped an oncoming truck. One window was shattered. The driver started driving fast and nervously scanning the surroundings. After a while, we had to change buses.

Soon I continued traveling alone, as it gave me more freedom. I learned basic travel phrases in Spanish. Despite the language barrier, I always managed to communicate without problems.

In the capital, I visited Teotihuacan. While climbing one of the pyramids, I met a couple from Slovenia. In the evening, we got together in the city center, shared experiences, and drank beer. At the hostel, I met many people from all over the world; together we went to celebrate the Day of the Dead. There was music and food at the cemetery — some people sat and remembered their loved ones. An Englishman told me he was a spiritual person and needed some time alone, then walked off among the graves. At that time, I didn't really know what it meant to be "a spiritual person."

Next, I went to Cancun, where there were hotels and private beaches. I briefly explored the city and quickly moved on to Playa del Carmen. As soon as I arrived, I went up to the hostel's rooftop terrace. The view was one of the most beautiful I had ever seen — palm trees on a white sandy beach and crystal-clear sea. I thought to myself how amazing it would be to live there. Everything looked perfect.

After about three weeks of beaches, meeting people, and exploring the area, things began to feel more ordinary. I met an American who had lived for a long time in Cuba and along that part of the Mexican coast. He didn't drink alcohol, spoke Spanish and Italian, and was learning several dances at once. He was always meeting women — one after another. We went together a few times to Cuban live music events and clubs. He invited me to Cuba, where he was renting an apartment. I didn't plan to go there, but since we got along so well, I decided to — it was never boring with him.

Cuba is a very unique country. At the bank, you usually have to wait at least three hours; you can even pay a Cuban to stand in line for you. In a restaurant, I once waited nearly an hour to be served. You actually spend less money if you pay for locals all evening and go around the city with them in a local taxi than if you take a tourist one by yourself. In one club, two women came up behind me and each took me by the arm. Everything there has two prices — for Cubans, who earn very little, everything is extremely cheap; for tourists, much more expensive. A single night in a hotel cost about as much as an average Cuban monthly salary.

I returned to Playa del Carmen and went on a trip through Guatemala with a Frenchman I had met in Mexico City. He had met a Mexican woman and wasn't sure whether to stay with her or

not. Guatemala felt like stepping far back in time — and it was incredibly cheap. Toward evening, we wanted to take a van to another city. The driver looked at us in surprise and explained that there was no transport between evening and morning because it was too dangerous.

The most interesting place was around Lake Atitlán, where you could only move between towns by boat across the large lake. We went to a very beautiful town called San Pedro. Stunning views, nature, the lake, a volcano, and old but charming colorful streets. Children sold bread and freshly squeezed orange juice on the streets. The town had no police and plenty of drugs, yet it was popular among retirees and foreigners starting businesses there. I heard it was also a paradise for hippies.

Originally, I had planned to travel through all of Central America, but I realized I wouldn't have enough time. So, I left Guatemala for Colombia just before New Year's. There was always something happening — I had to take at least one day a week to rest from the constant sightseeing during the day and parties at night.

I met a girl from Taiwan, and together we visited Cartagena, Santa Marta, and my favorite place — Taganga. Before I even rented a room, a worker had already offered me cocaine. During the day we swam and relaxed on the beach, and in the evening we sat around a fire, where a local man played guitar while tourists brought him whiskey and cocaine.

With a half-broken bus, I took a night ride to Venezuela — which turned out to be the most dangerous journey so far. There were only two of us foreigners, and most of the passengers looked suspicious. From time to time, we had to get off at military checkpoints for luggage and passport inspections. We stayed awake all night,

carefully watching everything around us. I felt that this trip was a big mistake, but fortunately, it all ended well.

In Mérida, I took a ride on the highest and longest cable car in the world. Before leaving for Brazil, it was Sunday — all the banks were closed, and I couldn't withdraw money from an ATM. I saw a man holding a little girl and asked him for help. When he saw that withdrawing money wasn't possible, he offered to let me stay at his place and said he'd take me to the bank the next day. He had a wife, a son, and a daughter. They were all very happy to meet me, and the next day we said goodbye at the bus station.

I enjoyed more and more meeting local people and exploring local parts of the city away from the tourist zones. Many tourists come for a few weeks but never experience real local life, because they spend their time in small, artificially created areas meant to attract visitors. Seven months of intense traveling had passed — I experienced more during that time than in my entire life before. I had become addicted to constantly living new experiences. Sometimes I wished my close ones could have been there too, to experience what I did.

On the bus to Brazil, I met Matthew from Ireland. We were the only two foreigners on the bus, traveling to Manaus, and we started hanging out. During the day, we sat in street bars, met locals, and in the evenings went to parties. What amazed me most was how often girls would approach me — some would stop me right on the street or sit down next to me in a bar. They were friendly and open to conversation, something I had never experienced before. It was almost impossible for a young foreigner to go out at night and *not* meet a girl. I had barely learned some Spanish and already had to start learning Portuguese. New languages sound strange at first, but

over time they get easier. Locals are always delighted to hear foreigners speaking their language.

It was Matthew's last night, and as usual, we went to a party. In the middle of the night, we were saying goodbye on the street, and I noticed something was troubling him. Then he told me that on the coast of Venezuela, he had met John, another Irishman, who had offered him a job. John had given him money and sent him to Manaus, where he received instructions to smuggle diamonds to New York. They promised him a good payment, but he knew it was very dangerous. He looked at me as if wanting to hear my opinion. I told him to do whatever he felt was right. At that moment, I thought to myself that I only had one month left before going home — and not much money. The last thing I wanted was to return to my boring old life. I said, "When you get to New York, message me and tell me how it went. If everything turns out well, I'll go too." We agreed and said goodbye.

Then I took a three-day boat trip along the Amazon River and continued to Salvador. Through the internet platform, I met Fatima, who offered to let me stay for a week with her and her mother. Only when we met at the bus station did she tell me she lived in the favelas. At first, I thought the favelas were dangerous for foreigners, but she explained that not all of them were. Later, I met Flavio, who invited me for traditional Brazilian food in the evening. I spent the day with him, his sister — who was a model — and her friend. They were all very kind; we went for a walk through the city and to the beach.

In the meantime, I received a message from Matthew — everything was fine, and he'd soon be back in Manaus. He gave me the contact information of the people he had worked for. I arranged everything

and headed back to Manaus. It was two weeks before my return flight — the one I never took — and one year since I had left Slovenia.

I was instructed to go to a hotel where I used to access the internet because it was pleasant and cool inside. There, I saw a man in a black suit and dark sunglasses who looked like someone straight out of a cartel movie. He handed me a large black travel suitcase — empty, but heavy — along with a plane ticket and travel money. In a calm voice, he told me not to worry, that everything would be fine.

It soon became clear that things were anything *but* fine. Already at the airport in São Paulo, they stopped me and checked my passport. It looked suspicious because I had a return ticket from Brazil to Canada scheduled for two weeks later. At the airport in Toronto, they questioned me again, asking to see a hotel reservation and contact numbers of people I knew in Canada. They kept asking where I was going and what I was planning to do. I was nervous, but I tried to answer calmly and naturally, which eventually worked — they let me through.

It was a sunny morning, and I had to find a taxi to the bus station for a ride to New York. In the evening, we reached the U.S. border — the final checkpoint. The officer told me I couldn't enter again because I hadn't returned to my home country after my previous entry. She asked why I was going to the U.S. on the same day I arrived from Canada. I told her I didn't know about that rule and that I was just visiting friends. Her tone became slightly angry as she repeated her questions. I had nothing more to say, so I simply looked at her — and suddenly, she let me pass.

At the exit stood two police officers. The man put on gloves while the woman just watched; above them, I noticed a security camera. My heart started racing as they began searching the suitcase. Matthew had given me some advice he'd received from John. The officer got distracted by the souvenirs I'd bought at a market in Manaus, but he was still carefully touching along the walls of the suitcase — where the drug was hidden in a double wall. When he finally let me go, I felt enormous relief. The driver smiled and asked if they'd found weed. I told him I had cocaine, and we both laughed.

At last, I was able to relax on the bus, hoping all the stress was behind me. The final task was to exchange the suitcase for money at a nice hotel. I arrived at the reception desk at Times Square and sent a message with my location. After a while, I noticed a woman who stood out — a blonde with pale skin and red lips, wearing a black fur coat, sitting in the middle of the lobby on a large couch.

Evening was approaching when she spoke to me. She introduced herself as Kelly from Miami. She said she'd been having problems with the person she was staying with, so she came to New York to see a friend — but the friend wasn't answering. She told me she didn't have enough money and asked if she could sleep in my room, and how many days I'd be staying at the hotel.

I wondered how she had found me at the most inconvenient time. I knew it wasn't good, but I couldn't say no. I didn't know whether everything she said was true, but at first impression she seemed sincere. When evening came, someone knocked on the door. We both panicked; Kelly hid in the bathroom, and I opened the door and saw a tall man in a suit. He looked a little suspicious to me — I thought it might be him. In a strong voice he told me that someone was waiting for me in the lobby. I closed the door and nervously

told Kelly: “Go out for a short time, I have to take care of something.” She took her coat and left the room.

In that instant I removed everything from the suitcase and went to the reception. As I looked around the room, I heard a loud voice: “Hello, long time no see, how are you?” By appearance he was like a friendly Italian mobster with a pizza in his hand. He laughed and behaved as if we had known each other our whole lives. Smiling, we shook hands; he told me his mother had made the pizza. Then we sat in his car, where he showed me a large wad of dollar bills. We stopped in a shop where he bought me a pack of beers, then he dropped me off in front of the hotel.

I returned to the room; Kelly asked if everything was all right because I had been gone a long time. I told her not to worry, that everything was fine. Finally I could celebrate with beer and pizza, happy and content. Kelly told me her story — she was into singing, and her parents had not treated her well. She said: “They had a gold mine, but they didn’t know it.” Some people had promised to help her career but exploited her. In the morning we went to breakfast, I gave her some money and checked out of the hotel, hoping she would find her friend.

Just that everything turned out well. Again I felt free to go on wherever I wanted. I received a message from Matthew that he would come back to New York in a few days. I couldn’t believe he would do it again so soon.

In the meantime I watched my first live NBA game — a wish I had had since the days when I trained basketball. I met with Jeannine, whom I’d met at the club where I worked in New Jersey. I gave her some things from Manaus that I had bought for the suitcase inspection. With her coworkers we played pool, and in the evening we went for a beer and talked for a long time.

Matthew arrived and I visited him at his hotel. We rejoiced at seeing each other again and at the successful trip. I told him about

all the troubles I had had on the road; I had thought things had gone smoothly for him because he had written that everything was fine. However, he said that it was always like that. We went to a baseball game and in the evening to a party. I spent too much on partying, but elsewhere I was more frugal so I could travel longer.

Matthew said he would like to write a book about all of this and would write it even for free, because these are special adventures — almost like a movie. John had often joked to him that he was James Bond. I hadn't met him yet, but Matthew told me he was a good man, though paranoid and sometimes hard to listen to when he got drunk.

Then we each returned to Manaus separately. For three days I went on a tour into the Amazon jungle with a local guide. At night we paddled a canoe between the trees, where the water was almost halfway up the trunks. The guide had a lamp on his head, and I sat in the back hoping we would find our way out. Suddenly he told me to stay in the canoe. He slowly walked into the water away, and then I heard a noise. When he returned, he was holding a small caiman in his hands — they call it *jacaré* there. We slept in hammocks suspended above the water.

I asked him why he didn't have a compass and how he could find his way, since everything looked the same. He laughed and said he had a compass in his head. Later he told me that they had served two and a half years in the military in the forest.

Then I met John for the first time and spent some time with him. At first he was very serious, his thinking focused only on illegal things. He had a lot of knowledge about how to survive in that way. Among other things, he told me that we were transporting cocaine, not diamonds, as I had thought before. The suitcase was so heavy that I quickly realized it. He also told me never to think about stealing a suitcase of drugs and selling it myself, because

they would find me and kill me. I never thought about it, but listening to him made it clear that I was dealing with dangerous people.

It was tempting — a few days of stress for six months to a year of travel. Money quickly deceives you. Once I took a picture of him while we were having a beer, and he immediately told me to delete it because he didn't want to be in any photo. He always watched the surroundings. Several times he showed me people and said, "Look at him, he's a detective." He said he had enemies who knew what he was doing, even that someone wanted to kill him — but he wasn't afraid. I didn't know whether to take him seriously or not. He had been in this business for fifteen years, and I could see what consequences it had on his life.

Matthew soon returned from his trip. As always, we went to parties, sat in street bars, and met people. When I told him about my experience with John, he laughed. He also didn't want to spend too much time in his company. He confirmed to me that it was clear we were transporting cocaine, not diamonds. They only say that to more easily recruit people for the job.

John had visited them in Colombia and knew them, as he had been in the business for a long time. In reality, everything runs through a network of people — everyone has their task and they do not know each other personally. Everything goes through the internet and mobile phones. If someone gets caught, they cannot betray anyone because they only have a number that changes regularly and an email that cannot be traced.

We decided to go on one more trip and then home for a short time. Matthew got a flight Manaus–Lima–Barcelona, and I got Manaus–Lisbon–Nice–Barcelona. On the last day before

departure, I went, as usual, to the hotel in central Manaus to use the internet. In the lobby there was a large comfortable chair, a cool and quiet atmosphere. As I had noticed several times before, a very beautiful woman with long black hair worked at the hotel in the shop with precious stones and jewelry.

We started talking. I quickly saw that she was natural and friendly. She said that John had mentioned me when he was buying emeralds, and that she had noticed me several times when I came to the internet. I told her I had a late-night flight, but that I would be back soon, because Brazil was the best country I had ever visited. To my surprise, she said we could go out in the evening and that she would then take me to the airport.

I was extremely happy and at the same time wondered why the best things always happened to me on the last day. She came to pick me up by car, I put the suitcase in the trunk, and uneasily thought that it was better that she didn't know what I was involved in. We went for pizza, talked for a long time, and then went to her favorite rock club. In the evening she drove me to the parking lot in front of the airport. We said goodbye with the promise to see each other again soon.

After the long trip I arrived in Barcelona with some difficulties — as usual. I found a hotel and did the exchange. Matthew arrived a few days later. It was the beginning of summer. On the beach we drank a bottle of champagne and told each other what had happened to us. Matthew told me that John had been caught in Argentina and was in prison. The news shocked us.

Matthew said that one of his relatives had advised him to quit, because there's a high risk of many years in prison. He himself also claimed that he wouldn't do it anymore. I didn't completely believe

him. You always tell yourself: now I have the money, that was the last time. But once you spend it, it's easy to decide on another trip. That's how you get used to that lifestyle. It's hard to get out, because in a few days you can earn as much as in a year of regular work.

We spent a few days going to parties, then we said goodbye, and I haven't seen Matthew since. In Barcelona, I visited Frank from Sardinia, whom I had met in Playa del Carmen. He lived with a Mexican and Max from Russia. I stayed a week — at night we drank on the street, as is customary there, then went to a club, during the day to the beach and explored the city.

I really liked Barcelona, so I decided to return. I would have preferred to go back to Brazil immediately, but I had to wait several months because of the residence restriction. When I arrived home, I felt that I had changed a lot. It seemed like the whole world was open, and I was no longer afraid of anything. Staying in Slovenia was impossible.

I thought a lot about Karla, Brazil, and traveling. I liked meeting friends, but I quickly wanted to move on again. I remembered a coworker from Ljubljana who told me that she had spent a few months in Buenos Aires with her daughter. Her daughter then moved there, and she said that after that experience it was hard for her to live in Slovenia because she always remembered life there. Now I could really understand her.

Returning to Barcelona was the right decision. I rented a room for three months. Since the roommates were students and had just gone on vacation, I had the whole apartment to myself. During the day I went to the beach, the pool, the gym, the sauna, and occasionally met someone. I liked going to the market for fruits and vegetables and cooking something. I spent weekends with Frank and occasionally with Max.

The weeks went by, life became monotonous — there were no longer the intense experiences like during travels. I wasn't very interested in work, because I quickly saw it was very hard to find anything. I also didn't master Spanish, because I always spoke English.

After three months in Barcelona, I returned to Brazil. At the airport in Fortaleza, I met a man and two women from Germany. It was already late at night, and we agreed to find a room for the night and split the costs. We got a room and went for dinner. Again, it was nice to feel the Brazilian atmosphere.

They had come on vacation to Jericoacoara, because it is one of the most beautiful places and a real paradise for surfers. I was excited, so I decided to go with them. In the morning, we boarded a special bus for the dune route. On the way we saw only buggies and sand dunes. We arrived at this small but beautiful village. In the evening we gathered on a sand hill where everyone applauded the sunset. Only in Brazil did I see people applaud when a plane lands. Then we watched capoeira until it got dark.

In the evenings, we often went out for dinner and had a drink at the beach stalls. The nights had a romantic atmosphere. Along the sandy roads stood small houses, candles burned on the tables, and the air mixed the scent of the sea with Brazilian music. Several times, Brazilian women taught us to dance, and Brazilian men danced with the tourists.

I rented a bungalow by the sea and met the owner several times when he returned from fishing. He said he had a boat and they went fishing every day. It seemed interesting, so one morning I joined when I managed to wake up early. It was a medium-sized boat, and the sails were sewn from pieces of fabric in different colors. When we sailed into bigger waves, we were tossed around, and the water splashed us from all sides. I immediately thought, why didn't I just stay on the shore. They told me to hold on tight. One person constantly poured water out of the boat, and the other two pulled

the net from the sea. They caught only a few fish, but they were satisfied.

Then I returned to Manaus, where Karla met me at the airport. We were both very happy to see each other again. She lived with her sister, working and studying, and her goal was for their mother and brother from the Salvador area, where they had all lived before, to come join them. On weekends, we often went to some beautiful spot along the Amazon River, where people liked to come and relax. Once we visited a place where we swam with dolphins and fed them fish.

We met Oliver from Germany, who bought various natural products from the Amazon and sold them in Germany. Hubert, also German, owned a guesthouse and was married to a Brazilian, Rita. We often spent evenings socializing at his place. I also visited John's wife. She had already sold many things so she could send him money and hire good lawyers. Prisons in Central and South America are very dangerous for foreigners, and the conditions are very poor, so she worked to have him transferred as soon as possible to a prison in Ireland.

Six months passed, and I had already spent almost all my money. Occasionally, I thought about what else I could do, but I couldn't find a solution. I told Karla what I was doing. It seemed like I had no choice, as I didn't know of any other work there. Sometimes I even said I didn't care if I went to prison, but that would have been a bigger problem for my parents and Karla if it really happened.

This time I was told I would leave from Bolivia. It was clear that many tourists went there specifically because of cocaine, as it was pure and very cheap. In the evening, I went out by taxi, and the

driver had a full bag of coca leaves and offered them to me. He said they were good for chewing because you wouldn't sleep at night.

Two Bolivians came to the hotel, neither speaking English. They brought me a suitcase and money for the trip and the plane ticket. I went to a travel agency and bought a ticket to Madrid. My last stop would again be Barcelona. Shortly before departure, I went to dinner at a good restaurant that had been recommended to me. I sat alone at a large table, with pleasant music playing in the background. During dinner, I had a strong vision that this was my last meal in freedom. I saw a vision that this time it would not work out and that I would go to prison.

I immediately tried to convince myself that these were only fears and doubts, but I had never felt this way on previous trips. I was in a prison cell, where a guard was beating the bars with a baton. In this dream, I woke up on the plane. I knew something wasn't right, but I didn't want to admit it to myself, because I couldn't see a way out. I told myself it was just my imagination and that everything would be fine.

At the airport in Madrid, I arrived at the baggage claim area. From a distance, I saw my suitcase, but for some reason, I didn't go to get it. A few moments later, an airport worker took it and placed it aside through a small window in the wall, while two staff members scolded him. Because of my nervousness, I didn't even realize that my suitcase wasn't supposed to be there, since I had a connecting flight to Barcelona. It was already too obvious that something was wrong.

I decided to leave the suitcase there, go home, and report what had happened. It was night, the large glass doors opened, and I stepped out into the cold air. I wanted to head toward the bus, but at that

very moment, I had a third vision — that I must not go home, that I had to go back, no matter what would happen.

So I returned and waited for the flight to Barcelona. Before boarding, I handed my passport and ticket to the flight attendant, who then passed them to an older man with gray hair and a middle-aged woman in civilian clothes. He showed me his badge — they were detectives. He told me to come with them. We drove to the police station at the airport. I tried to control the excitement and fear within me.

I sat on a chair, and after a brief conversation, the man stabbed a knife into the suitcase and showed me the white tip. Then, right in front of me, they cut open the suitcase, weighed the cocaine — five kilograms — and photographed everything. I spent the night alone in a cell under a bright light. I could hardly sleep. I couldn't believe this was happening to me; I hoped I was only dreaming. I was in a kind of foggy, empty state, unable even to think.

LIFE IN PRISON

From the hot climate of Brazil, I arrived in prison exactly on Christmas without any winter clothes. Very few people spoke English, and with my limited Spanish, I was extremely restricted in communication with both inmates and staff. All rooms had two beds. I shared a room with a younger Spaniard who had a TV. I didn't feel like watching it, and I didn't understand much anyway. I spent my time thinking about all sorts of things. The first two weeks were such a shock to both body and mind that food had no taste, and I wasn't even hungry.

I met Marius from Romania, the kindest of all, and he spoke English too. We immediately became best friends, spent a lot of time together, and helped each other. Luckily, the detective didn't take my money, as usually happens. I deposited it in an account at the office and bought things with the card they gave me.

Marius explained everything I needed to know about life in prison and translated whenever I needed to speak with the staff. He spoke Spanish well, but didn't have money, so I was happily buying him coffee. People sold clothes for cigarettes and phone cards, which served as the prison currency.

One morning, we sat on a bench and shared our stories. He told me: "Prison is like an intermediate station between life on the outside and the grave." We both realized how suddenly life can change. Everyone you socialize with and all the things you loved doing outside vanish in an instant.

I met an Englishman and asked how many years he had been there. He said three years. That seemed like a huge amount; I thought that anyone who spends several years in prison must be affected negatively in some way. I asked him how he felt. He laughed and said he was fine. He knew what wrong assumptions people who come to prison often have.

At first, all the new inmates would ask: How long have you been here? What happened? How many years do you think I'll get? I heard multiple times that for a larger quantity of cocaine, the sentence is at least nine years, and with good behavior, one serves a minimum of six. I didn't want to believe I could stay that long. I hoped there might be a chance to get out earlier.

My lawyer came to visit. He wanted to comfort me a bit and listed all the things I could do inside. He said that prisons in Spain were better than in other European countries, let alone South America. I told him I wasn't interested in what life was like there; I just wanted him to help me get out as soon as possible.

I started going to the gym and getting to know other people. We stayed in our rooms from evening until morning, and in the afternoon for a few hours as a rest after lunch. Otherwise, we were downstairs in a large common area with a TV, and outside, where there was a space about the size of a small soccer field. We could play table tennis, chess, and similar games. Everyone stayed in their uniforms.

Marius was often depressed. He said he would rather end his life than spend so many years in prison, that it wasn't worth living like that. I never thought about such things, nor had I heard anyone else speak like that. I always tried to calm him down a little, but it didn't help much.

About a month passed, and I started to get used to things, when suddenly I learned that I had to transfer to another prison the same day. I felt sad leaving Marius and a few others who were really good people. I was a little anxious, hoping I wouldn't end up in a worse prison. We went in a specially modified bus for prisoners.

We arrived at another prison, mostly for foreigners. It had fourteen separate modules, which looked like apartment blocks with bars on the windows. I was sent to the preventive module. There, we were all who hadn't yet been sentenced. It seemed much calmer than before. I learned that everyone must go to trial within a maximum of two years, usually around one year.

I met Otman from Malaysia. We had similar stories and arrived in prison a few days apart. He told me it was just a life test, which seemed sensible.

I shared a room with an older Spaniard. He laughed to himself a lot and rolled cigarettes at night. He watched TV and barely spoke. He was calm; he didn't care what I did, as long as I didn't disturb him. I occasionally saw him play table tennis, otherwise, he just sat around. Later I learned he had been homeless and had deliberately done something to get into prison, where he at least had a roof over his head and free food.

I started attending Spanish school, which was mandatory for everyone. We had an interesting younger teacher who, besides teaching, talked with us about anything we were interested in. One Dutchman even taught him how to grow marijuana at home.

Occasionally, I went to lift weights in our module and joined some Colombians who had been training for a while. One of them was in charge of the gym and also had a business making vodka. He

bought fruit from the kitchen and sugar from the small store in the module, then paid others to turn it into wine in their cells and distill it into vodka.

I met Richard, Patrick, and two other Dutchmen. Sometimes, on calmer weekends, we would buy a liter of vodka, mix it with juice, and drink it outside in the sun. I learned that drugs and phones were also being sold.

Richard was a laid-back guy who never worried about anything. He joked a lot and was always laughing. The other Dutchmen often complained and weren't as positive, so I preferred spending time with him.

Then there was Dave from the USA, whose parents were from Puerto Rico. He was the only one among us who spoke Spanish. In the mornings, we often played cards together. Dave was always the loudest—he loved to joke around and laugh out loud.

I met some people from Nigeria and Senegal because they spoke English. There was also Ivo from Bulgaria, who played cards for money. He paid others to bring him coffee and wash his clothes.

I became friends with the Brazilians since my girlfriend was from there and I spoke a little Portuguese. Twice a week we went to the gym. I played squash or volleyball with Otman or lifted weights.

Prison life was nothing like in the movies. Occasionally, there were small fights or arguments. I never had any serious problems with anyone. Fights usually happened when someone was looking for trouble or didn't return money. But even then, only a few were willing to fight over it. I once saw a fight break out over weights in the gym. Most often, it happened in the morning when people were

most irritable. I noticed that during breakfast, everyone was lost in their own thoughts, but later in the day, when there were activities and socializing, the atmosphere changed completely.

When there were football matches, some walked around waving flags and shouting like fans. In the evenings during games, every goal was followed by banging on doors and yelling out of windows. Some bet packs of cigarettes and stayed upset for days after the matches, while others celebrated.

I learned that the sentence for up to one kilo of cocaine was between three and nine years, and for more than that, between nine and twelve years. I also heard that a private lawyer could supposedly help more than a public one. Some people said their paid lawyers promised to get them a lighter sentence.

The next time my lawyer came to visit, I asked him, “How much do I need to pay you, and what can you do?” He was one of the very few honest ones. He said, “It doesn’t matter if you pay me thousands of euros or nothing—you’ll get the same sentence: between nine and twelve years.”

I couldn’t accept that. I had heard different stories from some who paid lawyers three to five thousand euros because they were promised help. Later, I realized my lawyer had been right. They all got the same sentence, and after the conviction, they never heard from their lawyers again.

Some people go to prison for three years for just a few grams of cocaine. Many lawyers take thousands of euros from people who don’t know the law, giving them false promises—it doesn’t matter to them. Someone once told me there are judges who snort a line of cocaine at night and then sentence you for cocaine the next day.

There's also a very common joke in prison—that everyone there is innocent. Most prisoners never admit they're guilty; they'd rather blame someone else.

After eleven months, I went to court in Madrid for a month. I met two friendly Bolivians who often carried a small Bible with them. Juan told me a story about a man who fasted while in prison. Shortly before his trial, he did a dry fast for a week. When he appeared in court, his case was dismissed, and he was set free.

He said God had acted through other people as an answer to his fasting and prayer. He also told me about a pastor who had been fasting for more than ten years—never eating between seven in the morning and seven in the evening—and that he experienced miracles from God.

I didn't quite understand it all. He told me that you must have a desire, tell it to God, and then fast for it to be fulfilled. You choose a type of fasting and the length of it yourself.

I decided to do my first seven-day water fast, asking God to help me get out of prison sooner. I lasted four days, but then I felt so physically and mentally weak that I started eating again. I didn't fully believe it could really happen, but I wanted to try. Someone told me, "If you tell God how many days you'll fast and then you don't make it, God will punish you."

The experience of fasting itself was something very special. While everyone else was having breakfast, I would sit outside in the yard under the clear morning sun. I felt unusually content and calm, with a sharper awareness of my surroundings. After a few days, I became weak and had headaches. These opposite states alternated throughout the day.

Almost every day we exercised in the yard to loud Latin American music. We walked in circles and talked, played table tennis, or just sat around. I met many interesting people and heard their stories.

My lawyer told me he could make a deal with the prosecutor. If I admitted that the drugs were mine, they would give me the minimum sentence of nine years; otherwise, it could be nine or more. I accepted his offer and received nine years, which meant six with good behavior.

When I returned, they transferred me to the “respect module,” where only those who had never been disciplined and wanted to stay there were allowed. It felt more like living in a high school dorm than in a prison. Even the smallest problem could get you transferred to another module.

After a year of studying Spanish in school, I could already speak it almost as well as English. We had a library catalog to borrow books from. As I looked through it, I found a few about life after death, which seemed to me the most interesting topic of all.

An Argentine guy was in charge of bringing and collecting the books. He told me I was strange for reading that kind of stuff. I lifted weights almost every day. The activities and socializing really helped me forget about being in prison. Most of my deeper thoughts came before sleep. I didn’t want to accept that I’d be there for so long; I blamed the whole system and the laws.

I had basically come to school to get first-hand information from professionals in the cocaine business from Central and South America. For them, it was just a normal business, since they lived in countries where it was as common as flour and where you could

get a gram of pure cocaine for the price of a beer. In other countries, it's not half as pure because it's mixed and much more expensive.

I gained knowledge and met the right people for the cocaine trade. The ones who actually transport the drugs are those who know nothing about it and have no connections. All the necessary knowledge and contacts can only be found in prison or in a family business passed down from generation to generation. I was angry at the whole system and wanted to make a lot of money from it—to get back at everything I'd lost, as a kind of revenge. I still dreamed of living in Brazil with Karla.

After more than a year of inner rebellion against the fact that I'd have to spend nearly five more years in prison, I finally accepted it deep inside. I told myself I had to focus mentally only on life in prison—on what I could do there—and stop thinking about everything else.

From that point on, my overall state of mind began to improve. One evening, as I lay in bed, I thought about how I needed help—but not from people, because I knew everyone has their own problems. I needed some kind of spiritual force, something beyond people and our life struggles. That thought just came to me out of nowhere. I had never thought of anything like that before.

With my eyes closed, I imagined sending all my energy, in the form of light, into the universe—hoping that some higher power would sense it and guide me in the right direction, so that I would find in prison whatever it was I was meant to find. I believed there was some deeper purpose behind all of this.

BEGINNING OF THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Only a week later, I spoke with a very kind staff member, Maribel. She told me she had a friend who teaches meditation and asked if I would be interested. Interestingly, I already had a desire to learn what meditation is and what Buddha taught.

Once in high school, I got a book about meditation, but it wasn't very interesting, and back then it was hard to find anything on that topic. One afternoon I fell asleep with that book on my chest. When the teacher came into the room, she asked me if I was meditating.

On another occasion, I was in Ljubljana at a lecture about meditation with inner light. There were only a few of us. The lecturer had a teacher from India who had lived alone in the forest for a year meditating. What he said was interesting to me. But at the end he said that they have an initiation for new people. Whoever wanted to attend shouldn't eat meat, drink alcohol, or smoke for at least a month before. It wasn't possible for me to give up alcohol for a month, so I told myself it wasn't the right time yet — maybe some other time.

I remembered that and realized that now was exactly the right time. Besides, it seemed to me that I had received an answer to my sending of energy and search for help.

Maribel called the teacher named Angel. He came and asked me if I had ever meditated and what I knew about it. I told him I hadn't, but that I was interested. Angel was older than me and strongly

built. He was kind, respectful, and seemed like a wise person. He said they had a Buddhist meditation group in the Tibetan tradition. The meetings were once a week for one hour, and once a month a Buddhist monk came to visit.

I came to the first meeting, and just then a monk named Fabio from a Tibetan monastery in Madrid arrived. There were about fifteen of us — some sitting on chairs, others on the floor. Fabio sat in front of us. I had never seen a Buddhist monk in person before. He was quite tall, wore glasses, had short black hair, and looked relaxed, kind, and always smiling.

Next to him sat Angel and Michael from South Africa, who was thin and the tallest of everyone in the prison. Fabio spoke about meditation and life and answered questions. We all listened to him with interest. Then he guided us through a few short meditations.

Since it was my first time there, he asked me afterward how it was. He was a bit surprised when I said, “Nothing special.” I didn’t know what I was supposed to expect or what should happen when you just sit with your eyes closed.

Angel had a collection of books from Tibetan monks that Fabio had sent him. To start, he lent me one book. I quickly read it with great interest, as if I had discovered something special.

I was deeply drawn to the Buddhist knowledge and the uniqueness of these monks. Many things made sense, and whatever I didn’t understand, I asked him about. The greatest revelation was about the causes of our suffering in the mind and the liberation from mental and emotional suffering through Buddhist teachings and meditation.

I realized that for years I had occasionally experienced states of sadness, depression, anger, and hatred... They often appeared without any reason. I could not avoid them and was not fully aware of how much they spoiled life. I had thought this was something normal.

Then I started reading book after book, meditating in my room for an hour a day, and attending all the group meetings. I translated all the important teachings and meditations into Slovenian and meditated on them.

Soon, I was doing two hours of meditation a day: one hour in the morning and one in the evening. I was convinced that I had found what I was searching for. The experiences and discoveries in meditation pulled me forward. The more I meditated and read, the more interested I became.

Several times I wrote a letter to Fabio with questions and the types of meditations I was practicing. He said that spiritual meditation practice is much stronger in prison than outside. Anywhere circumstances are unfavorable or connected with suffering, the practice naturally becomes stronger.

He said that real prison is not physical, but samsara: the cyclic existence of birth and death across different realms. We became very close because he saw that I was genuinely interested in all of this.

Once, he said a bit in a joke in front of the group that I would become a Buddhist monk, just as I had begun shaving my head at that time.

After months of reading and meditation, I felt much better. I read and meditated on the gradual path to enlightenment; impermanence and death, offerings, tong-len, concentration, all realms of existence, the qualities of the Buddha, etc.

I increasingly understood the teachings through observing mental activity and experiences from daily life. I saw that craving for pleasure and aversion to unpleasant experiences were the causes of mental dissatisfaction.

I understood more deeply, through observation in meditation, that all phenomena are impermanent. Nothing permanent or unchanging can be found in the mind, emotions, or sensory experiences. In impermanence, true or lasting satisfaction cannot be found because everything changes.

Real knowledge of the impermanence of all phenomena comes through observation, both in meditation and outside of it. The opposite of knowledge is ignorance, which causes constant repetition of dissatisfaction. Every thought, emotion, feeling, and experience arises and disappears; nothing can be held. Like a vicious circle of endless inner struggle. You are not happy because you don't have what you want. When you get it, joy arises, but it quickly passes, and you search again for something new, a new experience that should bring eternal satisfaction and peace — but it does not.

On the other hand, if you don't get or realize what you want, you experience dissatisfaction, anger, or sadness. The cyclical repetition of desire in the mind never ends on its own and is never fully satisfied. Likewise, the fire of anger and hatred, attachment, and confusion.

While studying these teachings, I reflected on my past. Everything I had experienced on my travels, and now it all served no purpose — it was over, only memories remained, and new longing for new things arose. I realized that it doesn't matter where you are or what you do; you often experience inner suffering, negative thoughts, or memories, negative reactions to memories, or what you experience now through the five senses.

Usually, we try to escape this through pleasures: good food and drink, watching and listening to what we enjoy most, bodily pleasures, etc. But every time pleasure appears, discomfort follows. Negative emotions and suffering never truly end. I found the true insight in Buddha's teachings and the path meant to lead to the end of inner suffering.

Attachment — we want to hold onto or increase everything that brings us pleasant feelings, and avoid or reduce unpleasant feelings. But this is impossible; pleasant feelings arise and fade, unpleasant feelings arise and fade, not according to our wishes, and they lead to disappointment. The consequences of attachment become clear when what you constantly seek — what gives you pleasant feelings — is taken away.

Ignorance is a mind that does not perceive the true nature of all phenomena and is the main cause of suffering. Due to ignorance, the perception of self or ego as something eternal, unchanging, and solid arises, and from this come the other eleven links of dependent origination. I didn't fully understand this intellectually, and even less through experience.

I stopped seeking satisfaction in fleeting experiences; I simply experienced everything as it was, without wanting anything from it. Then came a period when I would wake up in the morning

smiling and content, just like that, without reason. I would come to breakfast laughing. Krist from Bulgaria sat next to me and asked how I could be smiling so early. I told him I had found satisfaction within myself, and it does not depend on external circumstances.

True satisfaction and peace is an unconditional state; it does not depend on conditioned experience. It shines in the absence of desire, attachment, anger, and other emotions. It doesn't need to be visible outwardly. It's not positive thinking, it's not achievement, but cessation — once you understand more deeply how all of this works through observation in meditation, and outside meditation in daily activities.

I saw people who complained constantly about how everything was bad in prison and believed that everything would be beautiful outside. Then I saw others sunbathing while listening to music, exercising, and laughing. I realized that dissatisfaction is only in the mind. One who is dissatisfied in prison will be dissatisfied outside as well, because it's a habit of the mind — how we perceive and react to what we experience.

This habitual way of perceiving yourself and everything around you determines whether you feel satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In the same circumstances, you can be either content or discontent. From that point on, I no longer saw prison as something bad, but simply as life. In prison, through meditation, I felt better than I ever did while traveling across the American continent.

Juan and Ivo took me to a classroom where we were alone. They anointed our foreheads with oil and prayed. They said that some people fall to the ground when a hand is laid on their head during the prayer. At that moment, I didn't feel anything special, so I

didn't know what it was supposed to be; they didn't say much about it or explain its purpose.

Every Sunday there was a Catholic mass, like in a church, and anyone could attend if they wished. I only went a few times to listen, because I was interested in all kinds of knowledge and wanted to learn something, but I didn't hear anything that particularly drew me in. There was also a Christian group for studying the teachings of the Bible, which I never attended. I had never been drawn to churches before. I once went to midnight mass in Ljubljana for about ten minutes; when the priests began singing, I soon left. I remember that as a child, I had seen movies about Jesus and Moses.

I wrote to my parents, asking them to send me a Bible. I wanted to understand what it was about, what Jesus taught in the four Gospels describing his life. Most of it was incomprehensible to me, as if I was reading but didn't really know what I was reading. It seemed difficult to read and extract practical guidance from it, unlike meditation. The only thing I understood was that Jesus healed people — the blind, the mute, the paralyzed, and the lepers — and even brought some people back from the dead.

In Buddha's teachings, the impermanent body is not the main focus, but the mind, because they say that the cause and end of our suffering lies in the mind. Buddha's teachings were mostly simple, logical, and understandable. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that Jesus healed bodies, while Buddha showed the path to ultimate liberation from all suffering — liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death in various realms of existence.

Jesus spoke of heaven as eternal life without suffering. Even though I understood almost nothing from the Bible, I started

connecting it with Buddhism, where the existence of demigods and gods in the heavenly realm is still within samsara. So I thought that nirvana is a higher state than heaven. However, the heavens in the Bible have nothing in common with the heavens in Buddhist teaching. I believed that the knowledge from Buddha was higher than Jesus', and so I decided to follow only Buddha's teachings and meditation.

Even Angel and a few others in meditation said they understood the Bible better because of their meditation practice. I was never opposed to any knowledge; I only wanted to learn and gain new insights. All kinds of knowledge were fine with me; I never found anything that I considered bad. I believed that everyone chooses what they want, just as with everything else. One thing helps one person, another helps someone else.

In the classroom, we had debates with a Christian and a Muslim, and everyone spoke about their own knowledge. Some Christians also attended the meditation group. I never heard anyone say anything negative about Buddhism or any other religion. Twice I shared a room with a Muslim, and every day I listened to his prayers until I almost knew them by heart. Sometimes I joked and started singing part of his prayer, which made him laugh.

After a year and a half, I got a job in the bakery and was transferred to a module where everyone was employed. Interestingly, just as I started working, I ran out of money. The bakery was connected with the kitchen, and we exchanged food and always baked something special for ourselves. Once a week we had a communal meal in the bakery.

I met Juan from China, who worked in the kitchen. He was very calm, quiet, and kind. A few times he came to the meditation group;

I saw that he was skilled in tai chi. When he was about twenty, he suffered from a serious illness that doctors couldn't treat. He found a tai chi master and recovered. From then on, he practiced daily for over 25 years and taught many people.

He saw that I was interested and slowly began teaching me, until we eventually practiced together. However, after a year I stopped and focused only on meditation. Later, Juan became ill; I learned he had hepatitis C, his skin was very yellow, and he became very thin. After some time, he died in the hospital. When I saw him shortly before he was sent to the hospital, he was smiling and told me that death was nothing to worry about, that it didn't matter to him whether he died a little sooner or later.

In the prison, I met many people from different countries. We spent a lot of time together and got to know each other well. With some, I shared a room, which allowed me to get to know them even better. I always found it interesting to meet people from all over the world and hear their life stories.

I noticed that those with shorter sentences lived more stressfully than those with longer ones, because they thought more about when they would be released. I met members of a well-known terrorist group in Spain, who had life sentences and had been in prison for ten to twenty years. Usually, one would think this is the worst thing possible. However, they looked very well-adjusted; all of them practiced sports and studied at various universities.

Later I learned that this terrorist organization, which carried out bombings as revenge for past war crimes against them, was actually working under an agreement with the government. They were to stop these actions and, in return, be allowed to go to their

region of the country, where they were expected to be released soon. Until then, they were not transferred there because of this.

I met some people who had jobs and were also attending university. Some trained seriously in sports, others decided to lose weight and dropped more than twenty kilograms. Many of them used drugs or just passed the time in social company.

Sometimes I fasted for up to three days and a few times attempted dry fasting for up to two days. I received a small Buddha statue made by some members of the meditation group. I performed offerings and bows according to Tibetan tradition to the one hundred and eight Buddhas, which I gradually learned by heart. During this practice, I often felt spiritual power and gained various inner insights, which encouraged me to continue on this path.

I received some radical books about disciples of the Buddha and Tibetan Lamas who had spent decades in caves, completely devoted to meditation and the Buddha's teachings. Their knowledge, supernatural abilities, and unique experiences seemed very special and mysterious to me. Renouncing worldly life and embarking on a spiritual path of meditation leading to eternal liberation from all suffering seemed like a higher purpose. The more I learned about this, the more certain I became that I would one day pursue it. I had a strong desire to come to the end of this path.

I read about complete renunciation, which is only the beginning or preparation for higher meditation practices. I knew that even external renunciation was not easy. To give up everything we normally do and meditate like a monk for a lifetime is challenging. On the other hand, I occasionally experienced very calm and

special spiritual states during meditation. I had never felt anything like this before, and it drew me forward.

Several times, however, I experienced strong mental activity during meditation, which triggered intense emotions and stress; I didn't know how to free myself from this at the time. The path seemed long and difficult. Within the group, we watched various Buddhist films and then discussed them.

After a year and a half, the Tibetan meditation group ended, and almost simultaneously, a new Zazen meditation group began. Four very kind older women from outside the prison led the group. First, we did some relaxation and yoga exercises, followed by Zazen meditation, which is very different from Tibetan practices.

Zazen involves simply sitting with slightly open eyes, without focusing; you let thoughts and feelings come and go naturally, without desiring anything. This produces brief periods without thoughts or feelings—a light and radiant spiritual state, full of peace and contentment. However, the desire for this experience itself prevents it from arising, because it only appears when there are no expectations or attachments to these states.

After meditation, I remained in this spiritual state for some time, but it would fade, and stronger mental activity would return, triggering stronger emotions. This state was stressful and unpleasant compared to the state beyond thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.

I read about the relative and absolute truth. In the dual mind, there is mental activity and all concepts. Everything we can express comes from the dual mind. This is relative truth. In relativity, we are all different: everyone interprets things differently, receives

different information, and believes in different things. Each person has different life philosophies. All agreements and disagreements, what I want or don't want, what is right and what is wrong, why something happens—all of this is part of the dual or relative mind.

In the single mind, or empty mind, there is no mental activity, no concepts. You cannot read, think, or speak about it — it can only be experienced. That is why it is called the ultimate or absolute truth, or oneness. Watching and experiencing a sunset is not the same as listening to someone describe what it is like. Likewise, the state beyond thoughts and senses is not the same as reading or thinking about it.

After three years in prison, a new law was passed for all those convicted for cocaine-related offenses. My sentence was reduced from nine years to six, which meant four years, since I hadn't received any disciplinary penalties in prison. When I found out that I would be released in about a month, I became nervous, because I started thinking about things outside prison. I noticed the same with other people.

During the last week, I even felt afraid of how I would live outside, because I had become so used to life in prison. It sounds strange, but it's true. I remember when they took me to the airport and I watched people walking around and everything happening on the streets. At first, it was as if I was seeing something special. Then I truly appreciated how much it means to be free. After just a few days, I completely got used to it again; outwardly, everything was as before.

Inwardly, however, everything had changed. It felt as if I were another person, because all the things I used to do no longer interested me; only the things I had never known before did. It was

the same when I met with former friends. Spirituality and worldly matters are like water and oil.

With the money I had saved from working, I decided to set out on a spiritual path until I reached the truth. For three years I meditated two hours a day, performed about forty thousand full prostrations to the Buddhas, and read at least forty books on various Buddhist traditions and meditation practices. From Spanish, I translated meditations that I practiced until I knew them by heart — enough to fill a large notebook.

At home, I began researching on the internet, listening to monks from different traditions, watching Buddhist monasteries from various traditions in different countries, and looking for possibilities of where I could go. I found that becoming a monk in the Tibetan or Zen tradition could take several years and was more complicated and much more expensive than in the Theravāda tradition.

After a month, I decided to go to India for Vipassana courses, because everything there was very simple and based on donations, just as it was in the Buddha's time. Along the way, I wanted to visit all the sacred sites connected to the Buddha's life and find places for longer meditation retreats. I was a little concerned about how I would manage to meditate for almost ten hours a day, since until then I had only practiced for two.

My plan was to go to India and Nepal for one year. I thought I would find along the way a suitable place where I could become a monk. I imagined myself somewhere in remote monasteries in the mountains, caves, or places where small groups of monks live — similar to what I had read in books about the Buddha, his disciples, and other teachers.

I was no longer interested in worldly life, since true liberation, as described in Buddhism, cannot be found in it. Now was the time for spirituality; I believed that through it I would come to truth, higher understanding, and liberation or enlightenment. I wanted to experience all of that — I was ready to do anything, as this was now my highest purpose. At times I felt a little worried whether everything would turn out well for me.

MEDITATION IN INDIA AND NEPAL

Upon arriving in India, I was surprised — a huge cultural change, immense crowds, activity in the streets, bright colors, poverty, and dirt. On top of that, it was fascinating to be in a completely different environment. The long journey reminded me of my previous travels, but now I had an entirely different purpose.

With great enthusiasm, after just two weeks I attended a ten-day Vipassana course. Sitting in meditation for around ten hours a day was very difficult. After a few days, I felt strong pain in my legs and hips. Sleeping on Indian beds felt like sleeping on the floor. We were in silence the entire time, in a relaxed natural environment. In the mornings we meditated from four to six, then went for a walk at sunrise. Occasionally, I experienced very peaceful states with sharpened senses. Especially in the last days, I felt light and radiant states like never before.

Men meditated on one side of the hall and women on the other. One part of the center was designated for men, the other for women. A woman from the U.S. and I were the only foreigners; we could only talk on the last day. The Indians were very happy that two foreigners had joined the course, as very few ever come to this center.

After the course ended, on the first day I experienced a radiant state of great inner happiness and peace. It felt so good that I wanted to tell everyone about it. I believed this was truly the best path and wished that others could experience a similar state. Then the state

faded, and I again wondered what to do next. I wanted to go on the next retreat, but I was told there must be at least a three-month gap between courses. Their program is designed so that in everyday life one meditates one hour in the morning and one in the evening. This meditation technique is also applied in daily life and is not meant for long retreats away from ordinary life.

During the course, I also met Ankita from India, who wanted to succeed in his own business. He invited me to his home for a few days, where I met his family. According to their saying, “guests in India are like gods.” From the moment I arrived, I felt like a member of their family.

Then I went to Bodhgaya, the most famous and visited Buddhist site in the world, where the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. I finally arrived at the Mahabodhi Temple. The familiar mantra could be heard loudly in the music. In the beautiful weather, I felt an exceptionally pleasant energy. Monks, nuns, and followers of all Buddhist traditions were coming from everywhere. I saw different meditation practices: sitting, standing, walking around the main temple, performing long prostrations, chanting mantras, offering flowers, incense, money, and monk robes at the main Buddha statue, and reading Buddhist texts. Prayers and loud readings of texts from all Buddhist traditions could be heard. Occasionally, groups with guides arrived, explaining the significance and history of the temple.

This was the best place for me, so I stayed for three months. I met a Tibetan monk from Sikkim who was in charge of a Nepalese temple, which had many rooms for visitors. He had an assistant, and both were very kind; soon we were like brothers. I was the only guest helping with cooking and eating together with the monks. I

also met several other monks and nuns and learned more about different Buddhist traditions. I often visited various temples and meditated during hour-long prayers or pujas of the Tibetan monks. The experiences were extremely pleasant, and it drew people in. Every day, I meditated naturally for six to eight hours, without forcing or overdoing it to meditate as many hours as possible.

Several times, I stayed overnight at the Mahabodhi Temple and meditated, even with a very kind Thai monk. He asked me if we could walk around the temple, and we did 108 circuits, which left blisters the next day. Footwear is not allowed inside the temple. That night I didn't sleep because I didn't have a mosquito net. I had to keep moving and covering myself for meditation. Most visitors stay awake all night to practice meditation. Several times I offered candles, incense, and other offerings because I believed it helped create good karma, advance in spiritual practice, and as a mark of respect to the Buddha, who showed the path to liberation from suffering.

Next, I went to Igatpuri, the main Vipassana center. I volunteered for a month and completed a ten-day course. This time I experienced even more special spiritual states. Occasionally, the mind was very restless — memories, desires to change the past, searching for understanding, and internal dialogues appeared. All of this manifests as stress and problems compared to the bright, light states without thoughts. The teacher said this is karma coming to the surface in the form of pleasant and unpleasant sensations. When you simply observe them without reacting, old karma dissolves, and you don't create new karma through new reactions.

During meditation retreats, there is no internet, music, reading, conversation (except five minutes a day with the teacher), or eye

contact with others. All of this distracts from focusing on the meditation object. In Goenka-style Vipassana, this is the observation of sensations from the top of the head to the soles of the feet. The body is scanned from top to bottom — very slowly at first, then progressively faster. Day by day, concentration increases, and sensations are perceived more subtly. A big surprise was noticing what constantly goes through my mind — so many trivial and unnecessary thoughts that repeat day after day.

Besides the Indians, I met Christian from Canada, Tobias from Germany, and Luis from Brazil. It was wonderful to meet like-minded people. We understood each other very well and had long conversations. The rest of the time I helped in the library and read some of the most interesting books about a well-known group of Thai forest monks. The teacher of this tradition was Ajahn Mun, who died in 1949. His successor, Lungtha Mahabua, died in 2011 and wrote three extensive books. Their almost unbelievable stories and supernatural abilities were similar to the descriptions of the Buddha and his disciples. This fascinated me so much that I immediately wanted to join such a group of forest monks. I read these books in 2012. Today, there are fewer monks who live completely alone or in small groups in forests and caves. I wanted to walk their path myself and experience it firsthand.

I returned to Bodhgaya and went on another Vipassana course. There I met two younger Indian monks, one of whom spoke English. He told me they had a monastery in the forest and that I could come there. After a long journey one of his friends took me to his village, where I met many people, and then to a small building for monks near the forest. Next to it, they were constructing a new building for Vipassana courses. They told me

we need to wait for the teacher and then go together to the forest monastery.

At first, I decided to do a ten-day retreat alone in a small tent in the unfinished building. This was my first independent meditation retreat in silence. I went outside only twice a day: to eat until noon, to use the bathroom, take a shower, wash clothes, and for the evening meditative walk at sunset. There was only one monk there who cooked and cared for the place; we agreed not to speak for ten days. Already after a few days of solitude, I became very kind, gentle, and smiling. All worldly desires, worries, and problems disappeared for most of the retreat. I often experienced very peaceful states; all material things and experiences through the five senses could not compare. Each ten-day retreat was better — less pain, greater focus, longer calm and joyful states, and time passed incredibly quickly.

After my retreat in the tent, we went into the forest, past a small outdoor Hindu temple, and climbed stairs to a small hill. There was a large tree, and around its trunk was a stone enclosure where monks sat. Under the tree was a large cloth for sitting and sleeping at night. There was only one small, old building, infested with so many rats that it was almost impossible to sleep at night. Excitedly, I went with an Indian monk to explore caves — he had previously meditated for a year in a cave. In the first cave, we encountered a sleeping bear. The place was called Tiger Forest, but wild animals had mostly retreated deeper into the forest because of people. Years ago, only a few monks lived there and often encountered tigers and king cobras. The Indian monks called it the forest monastery.

I chose a cave, but the monks didn't let me stay alone overnight, so one monk slept near the entrance, and I was inside. I meditated and

slept while bats flew past me at night. This new experience was much more interesting than staying in the meditation center. I especially enjoyed meditating late at night and early in the morning when everything was quiet. I did not reach such subtle and extended states of concentration as in the center because I talked during the day. Once in the afternoon, I meditated while the monk started doing some work, making noise. Immediately I thought, why now? I wanted silence, but there wasn't any. When I let go of that desire, the noise no longer disturbed me, and I could meditate calmly. I realized that it wasn't really the noise that bothered me, but my desire for it not to exist. When all desires disappear, peace and contentment remain in awareness itself — even amid noise.

The head monk sat under the tree for forty-five days. At night, he slept only a few hours in a seated posture; during the day, he walked for one hour and spent the rest of the time sitting. Under the tree, he taught all who came, told stories, and conversed with visitors. Indian women in the forest cooked excellent food. There were also many monkeys around.

After one month in the forest, I went to Nepal, to Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha. There I visited Panditarama — a meditation center that suited me better. On a retreat, you can stay for up to six months, though not on your first visit. The meditation technique was different, but they also said that this method is the best and most original, tracing back to Buddha. Soon after, my friends Tobias and Kristjan, whom I had met at Dhamma Giri, arrived as well.

I meditated one hour sitting and one hour walking, at least twelve hours per day according to the center's program. Once a day we had short discussions with the monk teacher about meditation. In

sitting meditation, I focused on observing the breath and sensations in the abdominal area; in walking meditation, I focused on the changing sensations on the feet. Here I became more familiar with life in meditation. The practice meant being aware of everything all the time — thoughts, movements of the body, feelings, closing doors, cleaning, turning on water, etc. — without getting lost in thoughts and remaining fully aware. This practice began from waking up until late at night when I fell asleep.

Everything was done extremely slowly, as if life were in slow motion. This gradually developed stronger awareness and concentration. We ate breakfast and lunch, and after noon only drinking was allowed. Often I ate very little, which further sharpened the mind and improved concentration. Sleep was limited to a maximum of four hours per day. Some hours were allocated to rest, cleaning the room, washing, and showering. We each stayed in our own beautiful wooden huts. There, I experienced extended states of concentration — one hour without any thoughts arising, the breath becoming so subtle that I could barely feel my body. After such sitting meditation, I would go to walking meditation; everything glowed, colors were vivid, and the sense of time and space disappeared. Everything seemed perfect, as if in another dimension. Sometimes I felt I understood everything — without thoughts or words.

Then I went to Kathmandu, to a meditation center of the Mahasi tradition. There, I was allowed to meditate alone in the old hall while everyone else was in the new hall. I meditated one hour sitting, then slowly stood and walked for one hour, then sat again. After a few weeks, when my concentration grew stronger, I repeated this for up to six hours at a stretch. Some people left after just a few days because this lifestyle was too challenging for them.

Again, I experienced many special spiritual states. After one hour of sitting meditation, I often felt intense pain in different parts of the body. A few times I decided not to move until the pain disappeared. I observed the sensation like hot energy, which intensified, diminished, or moved through the body. Several times, the body began to tremble on its own, filled with burning energy — it felt like a matter of life and death. Only once did I endure long enough for the pain to disappear. It was late in the evening; I was sleepy and exhausted after a full day of meditation, yet these intense sensations gave me so much energy that I meditated for another two hours in deep concentration. I could sit in the pain because I did not think about it — I simply observed it. The purpose is to understand the nature of what we call pain. This was one of the meditation practices of Thai forest monks.

Sometimes, after a long period of deep concentration, my mind would suddenly start working at full speed. Thoughts arose incredibly quickly and in all sorts of ways. With amazement, I became aware of everything happening in the mind on its own. Once, I even started planning a longer retreat in a cave. Then I caught myself: what am I doing — I am already on retreat, meant to meditate, and here I am daydreaming about the next one! Occasionally, I imagined explaining meditation to others and saw them as if they were also attending retreats.

When a thought or image arises in the mind and you do not cling to it, it disappears. There follows a moment of emptiness, then a new thought arises. But if you cling to it and try to resolve it, it develops into a story that eventually also disappears. It could be a memory from the past, a fantasy, or a plan for the future. One story after another, until I became tired of it all, and the mind simply surrendered into a thought-free state.

After a month, I had to go to the city to extend my visa. I knew this would disrupt my concentration. In the car, I tried to meditate, focusing on the body so as not to get lost in the surroundings. While waiting for the visa, I went for tea and met a monk from Sri Lanka. I observed the waitress, quickly cooking food and serving. It seemed strange to me how people could live like this — I only saw stress. I observed people on streets and noticed how strongly they identified with their bodies, each locked in their own mental world. Beyond thought, however, there was endless peace, satisfaction, and freedom. I thought: it's a pity not everyone can experience this.

When I returned, I told my teacher how strange worldly people seemed to me, because I felt such a strong difference in energy. The teacher said: "They would think you are strange if they saw what you are doing." I really once saw a child watching me slowly walking in meditation through a window. When the mother came, she covered his eyes and turned him away. I had never thought about it before, but it's true — for someone who doesn't know what's happening, you look crazy, sitting all day like a statue and walking very slowly back and forth.

After only a few hours in the city, I lost everything I had developed over a month of meditation and had to start again. The teacher told me that this is normal until the mind becomes calm and satisfied in all circumstances. I stayed another month, then had to return to India. When I left the center and walked through the streets, I felt a strong shield of energy around me that separated me from the outside world. Nothing could penetrate me, and I had to laugh. The feeling slowly faded. After each long retreat, I remained for several days in a calm and joyful state, free from any problems. Then I began again to consider where to go next. I returned to India and took another vipassana course.

After one year in India and Nepal, I spent about half of my time on meditation retreats and the other half visiting famous Buddhist sites. I still wasn't firmly decided on monastic life, and on top of that, I hadn't found a place where I could truly become a monk. I spoke with a friend who lived in England. He told me to come and work there, that he would help me arrange everything, and then I could decide what to do next.

After nine months of working in England, I finally realized that worldly life was truly not for me. I had demanding work and was meditating less and less. I was among people with a completely different way of life, interested in different things. Instead of two hours of peaceful morning meditation, I went to work, where some people were smoking outside and talking in anger and stress. I watched people who didn't want to be there but had to survive — just like me. During this time, my inner state worsened significantly. Even though I had spent a year traveling freely and meditating, concerns about survival, where to go, and what to do when I ran out of money were still lingering in the background.

One day, my friend and I were sitting on the terrace at sunset. That was when I finally decided: I am going to find a monastery, become a Buddhist monk, and never return to this way of life. The moment I made this decision, I became joyful and light; the burdens of worldly life instantly fell away. Everywhere I looked, I only saw stress and problems. I could not see any point in working for money if this way of life meant nothing compared to the life I had in India and Nepal on meditation retreats.

I didn't know much about the life of monks. I thought it wouldn't be easy because I had only read stories of monks who lived in strict

renunciation and practice. I imagined that all monks lived as I did during meditation retreats.

I returned to India, once again to Bodhgaya. I knew I had to find a monastery somewhere in Asia in the Theravada tradition. Everything else seemed too complicated. Some monasteries required staying five years with a teacher before going into solitude, which was not acceptable to me. I wanted to meditate for long periods soon, in a remote natural place.

By that time, I had read about different traditions and meditation practices. Each tradition claims to be original or directly from the Buddha and often criticizes others. There is a lot of disagreement. Tibetan Buddhism has four main traditions, each with about sixteen smaller branches, each with different teachings and practices. This often leads to disagreements over who is “right.”

Tibetan Buddhism is called Mahayana, or the “great vehicle,” because its aim is enlightenment for the benefit of all beings; their goal is to attain the state of a Buddha. Theravada Buddhism is called Hinayana, or the “small vehicle,” because its goal is personal liberation, or the state of an Arahant. This can make Tibetan monks view themselves as superior to Theravadins. On the other hand, Theravada emphasizes that their tradition, based on 42 books of the Tripitaka, is original from the Buddha’s time, so they can claim that Tibetan Buddhism is not authentic.

Even within Theravada in Thailand, there are two main lines: Maha Nikaya and Dhammayuttika Nikaya, from which various practices have developed. Then there is Zen Buddhism. All of this seemed like an endless tangle, so I didn’t delve too deeply. I noticed that all teachers were very narrowly focused on their own method of practice. Since I had tried many different meditation practices, I

knew I wanted to be somewhere in solitude without teachers — which is mainly possible in the Theravada tradition. Moreover, it is also the simplest.

One evening I was sitting in Mahabodhi, where a group of Thai monks was performing evening prayers. At that moment, I had an inner vision, as if I were one of them, and I decided to go to Thailand. It also seemed that Thais were the most kind and respectful toward their monks. But that wasn't the most important thing, since I intended to live as much as possible in solitude, which is also best for meditation.

Soon after, I met a Thai monk who invited me to Thailand and promised to help me find a forest monastery. Then I took a train to Hampi. I had previously found online a very interesting and mysterious place for a meditation retreat. It was very beautiful place, far from the tourist village. We reached it by boat, as it was on the other side of a small stream. Along the river was a rocky and sandy area with a few small houses.

There I met the owner of the place, Horst from Germany, who had some assistants from India. They took care of everything necessary and cooked meals for visitors who came for spiritual retreats. Horst showed me all twelve caves, among which I had to choose one. After a long time, I finally spent another month and a half in a meditation retreat, alone in a cave. I only met other people when I went for food, but we didn't talk.

Many evenings I lit a small fire and meditated late into the night. One evening, I clearly and loudly heard prayers in Thai, as if monks were praying right next to me. Later I met someone who had the same experience and said that the sound came from spiritual beings. I quickly got back into the rhythm of ten hours of

meditation per day. In the natural environment and higher states of consciousness, I felt excellent again.

The changes in the mind were still very pronounced — from states of complete peace and radiance to stressful states of longing for greater focus, better understanding, and progress. I read a book on Dzogchen and practiced all the meditations I knew. When I had enough of it all, I just watched and rested in pure awareness without effort or practice. This turned out to be the strongest state. Thoughts did not arise, so there were no questions or answers; all concepts lost their meaning, and only awareness remained. Body sensations and breathing became very subtle or for a time completely disappeared. The sense of time and space also disappeared.

Then thoughts began to arise again: “I am here and meditating. Which meditation is best? Where does it lead? What should I do now?” With this came questions, answers, and beliefs — the result was doubt and confusion, because I believed in these concepts. I didn’t even understand whether emptiness was the end of the path or if there was something more. Did I need to understand and experience something even deeper in meditation?

Even in this place, I had many special spiritual experiences. The weather was sunny and beautiful, and I meditated on the rocks by the river and on the grass. Sometimes I would sit for an hour without thoughts. Only awareness remained, which was in itself radiant, peaceful, and content — without words or concepts to describe such an experience.

I also saw the other side of how the mind operates: thoughts and images that say, “Do this and that, go there, and then everything will be fine.” If you followed them, it would never be as the mind

promised. I understood this as the deception of thoughts. Sometimes it was so intense that I almost broke the retreat and followed the desires, but then I realized that the mind had tricked me. I recognized the mind's strong tendencies to want to be something and to achieve something.

Sometimes a thought would arise: "Why are you here alone in silence and meditation? You are of no benefit to anyone. You should go among people and help them with meditation." I saw myself teaching others, and everything looked perfect. But when I actually went among people, I immediately wished to return to solitude. I realized how cleverly the mind invents tricks to pull you away from retreat.

After the retreat, I spoke with Horst. He had many books on spirituality. I saw how differently people understand the Buddha's teachings, meditation techniques, and the meaning of it all. Sometimes it seemed to me that the more people think and talk, the more complicated everything becomes with less clarity. There is an enormous amount of knowledge about spirituality — but mostly it is just a lot of words that are quickly forgotten. During sitting meditation, beyond thoughts, these problems don't exist; everything becomes simple, peaceful, and clear.

Later, I went for a few days to a tourist area, where I met a vendor again. He asked me where I had been all that time and was surprised when I said I had been meditating in nature. I gave him my laptop, knowing that I would soon become a monk and would no longer need it. According to Buddhist teaching, it is good, before becoming a monk, to give away everything you have — as a final material offering if you choose the life of monasticism.

SEARCHING FOR A FOREST MONASTERY IN THAILAND

I arrived in Bangkok, and within a few hours I met the Thai monk Kiti, who told me he would show me several forest monasteries. We went to visit his monk friend at a small monastery by the river in Bangkok. I had to buy a pair of white pants and shirts, which are meant for laypeople in the monastery. Laypeople are anyone who stays in the monastery but are not monks or nuns.

He taught me about the rules and duties of laypeople and monks for living in the monastery, which was similar to life in meditation centers. I asked him if he knew any special teachers with supernatural powers, like I had read about in books. I repeatedly told him that I had to find a place in the forest where monks could live and meditate in solitude.

Kiti had been a monk for over twenty years. He loved to travel, was sociable, enjoyed chanting, and liked talking about the Buddha's teachings. He knew many laypeople across Thailand who invited him to stay with them for a few days. He found it a little strange that as a foreigner, I wanted to meditate in solitude. He said that he couldn't do that, that the path to Nirvana is very difficult, and that only a few succeed in this life.

The next day we traveled to his friend, a monk named Ian. He had a beautiful monastery surrounded by forest. He didn't speak English but was very happy that a foreigner interested in meditation had come. I explored the place and often went to meditate in the

forest by the water. It was beautiful, but I didn't see myself living there.

He had an old car, and together with Kiti, we went on a trip and had a lunch. I drove, because monks are not supposed to drive. It was my first time driving two monks, and it was really great being in their company. We never had any problems, and they were always smiling.

In the morning, I had the opportunity to go on the alms round for the first time, where villagers offer food to the monks. I walked behind them the whole way and helped carry the food. Late in the evening, we sat under a large Buddha statue. Ian told me I could stay in one of the wooden huts for monks, slightly secluded in the forest. The wooden huts for monks are called *kuti*. He said there were many spirits around and that if I had any problems with them, I should tell him.

This was the first time I had heard about spirits in real life. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to have problems with them. On one hand, I felt a slight fear, but on the other, I was filled with curiosity. I wondered whether I would experience anything similar to what I had read about in books.

After a week, Kiti traveled elsewhere, and I went to the well-known forest monastery Wat Pa Ban Tad. After a while, Ajahn Martin arrived at the monastery, one of the best Western disciples of Luangta Maha Bua. With him came a younger French monk and a layperson from Austria. Maha Bua had passed away two years before I arrived at his monastery. He had been the last direct disciple of Ajahn Mun and had written books about the lives and practices of these extraordinary forest monks, which I had previously read in the library at Dhamma Giri.

After a few days of practicing *samādhi*—concentration on the breath and contemplation of the body—under Martin’s guidance, we went to his forest monastery. Each of us had a large and well-kept *kuti* in the jungle, positioned so that we couldn’t see each other. A narrow path connected all the dwellings. There were also two young monks from England and France.

I often spoke with them about meditation. I saw one of them sitting in meditation with a smile after every meal. I could see satisfaction, deep peace, and freedom in him. Everything followed a strict schedule. We ate once a day and observed all the rules. All three young monks were tall and very thin.

Every day, we gathered for an hour while Ajahn Martin spoke about the Buddha’s teachings. He described how serious and strict meditation was under his teacher. He said that for one year, he ate only once a week and had highly developed *samādhi*. He could see spirits, and for the first five years, he did not allow monks to go into extended solitary retreats.

He said that developed *samādhi* is so strong that one can see through a rock. Maha Bua was known for very strict practice. He meditated twelve hours every day, from six in the evening until six in the morning, without moving. He would sit until all physical pains disappeared and he no longer felt his body—only the luminous mind remained.

Most of the day we were alone in our own *kuti*. There I practiced concentration on the breath-samadhi. I did not have such deep experiences as in meditation centers, because once a day we would be talking for almost one hour. I began practicing meditation on the decomposition of the body more seriously. This gives deeper inner insights into the nature of the body. You see that you are not this

body. You do not find yourself in any part of it. When you no longer identify with the body, everything connected to it—material life, thoughts and emotions—falls away. The mind remains focused on the breath without thoughts for an extended time.

I read that some monks meditate alone through the night at places where bodies are cremated, to free themselves from fear of death.

After a few weeks, I realized that I did not want to be a monk in such an organized monastery under such teacher's guidance. I was also aware of a similar and very well-known tradition of Ajahn Chah. His Western disciples have forest monasteries in Thailand and other countries as well. I was open to different practices and teachings.

I could hardly wait to spend weeks or months somewhere without seeing or hearing anyone. I always had an inner inclination toward solitary meditation. I did not want to be restricted to a single meditation tradition. I saw that within Theravāda there were many different meditation practices. However, everyone claimed that their method was the best and the original tradition of the Buddha. Something was not right here. I knew I still had my whole life ahead of me—however long it would be—to discover the truth about this.

After three weeks, I moved on to Chiang Mai. There I soon met Kiti, who had returned from traveling. He stayed with an older couple who had two rooms for us and a small shop.

In Thailand, Buddhists are very generous. They donate money for building monasteries, bring food daily, and occasionally offer money, monastic robes, and all the essentials for a simple monastic life. Giving brings happiness. The Buddha taught that anyone who

gives to monks accumulates a lot of good karma, leading to a favorable rebirth. Laypeople support monks materially, and monks teach laypeople meditation and the Buddha's teachings. In this way, they help others progress on the spiritual path and seek a higher purpose—freedom from all suffering.

Together, we went to visit a temple deep in the jungle, where was also a cave with Buddha statues. Only a few monks lived there; most slept in tents. After a few days, I realized that I would not be able to stay there. It became clear that Kiti did not know forest monasteries like the ones I imagined. I was looking for a simple forest monastery with almost no monks, where I could meditate in solitude. Kiti, on the other hand, preferred company and conversation, so I decided to continue on my own.

In Chiang Mai, I looked for accommodation and spoke with a woman who had a small shop. She was very kind and said that she also visited monasteries. I told her that I wanted to become a monk and was looking for a forest monastery with few people. She said she knew someone who went to such a place and immediately called her friend Daruni, who spoke English. We arranged to meet in a few days. I was happy and full of hope that this time I would find the right place.

After a short stop, I traveled to Mesariang, where I met Daruni. In her car were two young Thai monks, and together we went to the market to buy food for the forest monastery. On the way, we stopped at one of her properties by the river, where she had some *kutis*. She explained that she worked in a hospital and lived near the monastery in the town of Mae La Noi, where her teacher, Luang Pour Samaki, had his main monastery, as well as two smaller ones in nearby villages.

The roads led upward on steep and winding paths, surrounded by hills and forests. We turned off the main road onto a narrow path that wound up and down through the forest until we reached a monastery on a hill with a large Buddha statue. Below it lay the small village of Menga, inhabited by the Kariang—a kind of indigenous people. Near the statue was a larger wooden meditation hall, two *kutis* at the edge, and two more inside the forest. Monks rarely lived there. I immediately felt that this place was right for me.

After lunch, everyone left, and Daruni and I agreed that I would stay three days and meditate in one of the *kutis*. She asked, “What about food, since there isn’t any there?” I replied, “It doesn’t matter for a few days; I’ve fasted many times before.” She smiled and said, “It’s very good that you can also go without food.”

Two older women from the village came every day, offering me a plate of food with broad smiles. They looked like members of an indigenous tribe. They had probably heard from Daruni that I was there and didn’t want me to go without food. I really liked the place—it was exactly what I had been looking for.

After three days of meditation, Daruni returned, and we went to the main monastery in Mae La Noi. They had chickens, dogs, and cats, a few *kutis* on a sandy area, and two larger buildings nearby. One was a beautiful meditation hall, and the other contained living quarters—a small apartment for the teacher, a guest room, and many rooms for monks and laypeople.

I met the teacher, Samaki. He was 74 years old and had been a monk for over 40 years. He was smiling and calm, different from the others. Like Luang Pour Ian, he was happy that a foreigner had

come to his monastery. Around him were at least five monks, but only one spoke English.

I told him that I preferred a forest monastery, that I wanted to become a monk for life, and meditate there for a long period. Samaki replied that I could not ordain there because many papers needed to be arranged for foreigners, which was only possible in certain monasteries. While speaking in Thai and smoking a cigar, Daruni translated for me. At that moment, I became anxious, feeling that I had finally found the right place, but it seemed I wouldn't be able to stay.

Samaki told me to go to the river and cool off. Then he added that he saw sexual desire in me and gestured around my abdominal area. He asked if I knew that monks are not allowed to have anything to do with women. Everyone laughed. I replied that I knew. Daruni told me that Samaki had supernatural powers and could see certain things in a person. I again assured him that I knew the main rules for monks, that worldly life no longer interested me, and that I wanted to become a monk for life and meditate in solitude.

After a short pause, he said he had a student with a monastery far away where I could ordain, and then return to him. After a month and a half of searching for forest monasteries, I no longer wanted to continue traveling. Samaki wanted a monk to accompany me, but I preferred to travel alone, so I decided to continue on my own.

On the way, I met a Westerner. He said that all his money and documents had been stolen on the train, yet he had a scooter—which seemed strange. He asked me for 500 baht. I gladly gave him the money and told him that I would become a monk and no longer needed money.

Then he offered to sell me a Buddha head for 1,000 baht. I realized his story wasn't true. I told him I didn't need it. He was surprised and said he knew someone who became a Hindu monk and also didn't need money. I could see that he didn't really understand. Most people think that such a life must be difficult because you give up many things. So I briefly explained meditation, inner contentment, freedom experienced on the spiritual path, and the higher goal of Buddhist teaching—complete liberation from suffering.

I also had to call my parents to tell them I was going to become a monk. It probably seemed strange to them, but they had no objections.

After a long journey, I finally arrived in the town of Roi Et. A monk, along with a driver of a comfortable air-conditioned van, was there to greet me. He introduced himself as Ajahn San and was very excited that I was going to ordain in their monastery. "Ajahn" means teacher—a title a monk receives officially after at least five years in the monastic life. Until then, the title "lumpee" is used. Monks can also be addressed by their name. San spoke English very well, was friendly and knowledgeable, and was about my age.

In their monastery, located in a village at the edge of the forest, I met the teacher Udom Sab, a student of Samaki. He was just over 60, of smaller stature, with a radiant face emanating kindness. He also spoke English well, having worked in England in his youth. In Thailand, he was known as a singer and had a family, but thirty years ago he renounced everything and became a monk.

That same day, San shaved my head and prepared everything for the ordination ceremony, which would take place the next morning.

I was excited and at the same time could hardly believe it would happen so quickly.

In the evening, laypeople, monks, and nuns sat together in the wooden meditation hall and listened to teacher Udom Saba. He told everyone that I had been with Samaki and had come to ordain before returning. When I said that I would be a monk for life, they especially respected this decision.

Inside, I knew I had concluded my worldly life. This was May 2014—more than five years after I had first encountered meditation in prison. If back then, when I was only interested in travel, parties, and women, someone had told me I would become a monk, I would most likely have just laughed.

MONASTIC LIFE

Early in the morning, we went to the neighboring village for the ordination ceremony. Following the head monk, I repeated the entire speech in Thai, was dressed in monastic robes, and given a food alms bowl. From the monks and nuns, I received some money in an envelope as an offering. The head monk said I was the first foreigner to ordain there; everyone else comes to get married. We all laughed. A long-awaited expectation was fulfilled—at 33, I had finally become a Buddhist monk. Nun Noi told me that during the ceremony, she felt a strong presence of spiritual beings, and her skin went goosebumps. I had a vision that I had been a monk many times in past lives. We were all very happy.

The first days were incredibly good. All worries about the future, money, and everything else fell away, which made me feel freer than ever before. In Thailand, monks are invited to people's homes when someone builds a new house, becomes a monk, passes away, or simply to create good karma and receive blessings. For the first time, I went with all the monks to a house visit. We sat in order on prepared mats, and a huge amount of food was placed in front of us. Everyone else sat on the floor across from us. Everything was done quietly, with smiles, and a few questions for the teacher.

During the prayers, I meditated, because I didn't know the long Thai chants. I was in a deeper meditation than most of the time on all previous meditation retreats. During the prayers, I felt a strong and pleasant energy of emptiness, peace, and contentment. I repeatedly received inner insights from various knowledge. I remembered past worries that I would lose something by renunciation because I would no longer be able to have what I

wanted and do what I wanted. But now, I realized that, along with that, I had lost all the worries and problems I had precisely because of that. I missed nothing; I desired nothing. Nothing in worldly life had given me what renunciation did. I recalled the Buddha's teaching that the greatest satisfaction is found in renunciation.

In the monastery, I saw that some monks had money, computers, cell phones, and one even had a car, which is considered not allowed. Some studied because the university was much cheaper for monks; after studying, they left monastic life and sought suitable work. All I had was a little money, and I didn't even want that. Ajahn San told me to keep the money for traveling and for food along the way.

I had thought that all monks lived in strict renunciation and were devoted to meditation and the teachings, but I saw that this was far from true. Some monks asked me if I had a girlfriend; they wanted to talk about all kinds of things. Some wished to get married. One left monastic life and returned a few months later because the mind suggested it would be better outside—but then it turned out not to be true.

In this monastery, a lot of construction was taking place, so monks worked every day. At that time, I saw all these things as distractions on the path to liberation because I believed that the main thing for a monk was strict renunciation and a lot of meditation. In the evening, we had one hour of prayer, one hour of meditation, and one to two hours of listening to the teacher's teachings and stories in Thai.

One evening I sat in meditation; the feeling of meditating in monk's robes was something special. I believed I had truly found the best thing for me—it was something perfect, far better than

anything I had done before. Before I began meditating, I had never experienced such special spiritual states, so I missed nothing.

At one ceremony, from midnight to three in the morning, we repeated a short prayer to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and then meditated until morning. The monks sat on the stage, while the nuns and laypeople sat on the floor in front of us. Some laypeople had already fallen asleep toward the end. I felt pain from sitting cross-legged for so long, but it helped me remain in an empty state the entire time. There was a strong spiritual energy; everyone's faces were radiant.

Ajahn San wanted me to stay longer in the monastery and keep him company. He said I could help some people with English. Udom Sab accepted me as part of his family. All monks and nuns are ideally like a family: caring for one another with respect, without harsh words or actions, yet free from attachment to one another. However, nothing is ever completely ideal. Udom Sab told me to let him know if I needed anything and that I could do whatever I found suitable in the monastery.

Mostly, we helped with building a new ordination hall. Some made Buddha statues, one watered the plants. Everyone found something to do. From six to ten in the evening, we had prayer, meditation, and the teacher's talk. Afterwards, some watched television, others meditated in their rooms or went to sleep. It would be a little strange to me to meditate all day while everyone else was doing something, so I helped with work.

After a month, I returned to teacher Samaki, as arranged. When he saw me, he laughed and repeated: "A foreigner has been ordained!" This was followed by the rainy retreat, which lasts three months—the only period when you must remain inside the monastery. I told

him I wanted to go to Menga, as we had agreed, to meditate there. However, he did not want me to go alone for the first rainy retreat because I had just become a monk. I told him I had already meditated in the forest and caves, so there was no need to worry. I saw that he wanted me to learn from him and stay there with the other monks. He was a little disappointed when I told him I didn't need a teacher or a large monastery with many people, and that I wanted to be more in solitude.

I thought to myself: when I wasn't a monk, I meditated all day at retreats, and now I saw that monks meditate only a few hours a day, talk a lot, and perform various tasks throughout the day. This didn't interest me; I had never imagined monastic life like this, and I hadn't come to Thailand for that.

For the first time, I saw that Samaki had supernatural powers. When I meditated next to him, I felt a great spiritual energy, which allowed me to rest in a luminous and focused mind without thoughts for a long time. Once, I noticed that he knew exactly what mental image had appeared in my mind. The feeling that someone can read your mind is both fascinating and a little frightening.

After a few days, he allowed me to go to Menga, but sent two monks with me. We slept in a larger wooden kuti, which also had a meditation space and, if desired, a place to sleep. In the evening, I meditated late into the night, and in the morning I got up early for two hours of meditation before going to collect food at dawn. Shortly before leaving, we swept the leaves. Then we dressed—which is really just a large piece of cloth that you wrap in a special way so it looks like clothing, covering you from the neck to the wrists and slightly above the ankles.

The oldest monk in terms of years in the monastic life struck the bell three times with a wooden stick, making it resound throughout the village. The dogs howled loudly, were excited, ran around, licked our feet, and tried to get under the long robe. We walked barefoot in a line, one behind the other, with the dogs following us. Along the road, we stopped wherever people were waiting with food. As usual, they placed the food in our alms bowls. In unison, we recited a short prayer with a blessing. Small children pointed at me and shouted “kola, kola,” which means foreigner in their language.

Many houses had chickens, pigs, and dogs. Our dogs ran after the chickens and fought with other dogs. When we returned, we ate peacefully, left a little food for a later meal, and gave the rest to the dogs. This was the only obligation, and until the next morning, we were free.

In the forest, in wooden kutis, in sun and rain, day and night, in silence and the sounds of nature, with no obligations or problems with people or the outside world, I lived solely for meditation. I could not imagine anything better.

Monk Tom missed teacher Samaki; I thought it wasn't good to be so attached to a teacher. Later, I saw that he liked being around him because of Samaki's supernatural powers—he felt good being near him learning to let go of thoughts. We got along very well. Tom had been ordained only a few days after me. He had previously been a teacher at school, like his sister and brother. Out of habit, he occasionally taught me Thai, and I taught him English.

Tom soon returned to Samaki. I remained alone with Panja, who liked to meditate, read Buddha's teachings, and occasionally fast. I inspected the kutis and chose the last one in the valley, in the

middle of the forest. I began with water fasting for up to five days, staying in my kuti. I meditated in sitting and walking meditation. During the fasting days, there was no need to go for food, so I didn't see anyone. Then I ate for a few days and fasted again. Panja also fasted; occasionally we met and shared meditation experiences. Later, he also returned to Samaki just before the start of the rainy retreat.

I was alone for a few days, until Monk Virat arrived and stayed for the rainy retreat. This was already his seventh year; everyone in the village knew him well and was happy about his arrival. He spoke less English than I spoke Thai—only a few words. From the school teacher in the village, I got an English-Thai dictionary. I was learning quickly because it was necessary for occasional communication. Even without a common language, we understood each other quite well.

Virat prayed for an hour every evening; he knew the prayers by heart. Ajahn San helped me write the main prayers in the English alphabet. They were still in Thai, but at least I could pronounce them. So, in the evenings, when it got dark, we prayed by candlelight in the quiet night and then meditated.

Once a week was Buddha Day; then people from the village came to offer food. They listened to teachings and meditated as taught by Virat. We sat on an elevated wooden platform, with Buddha statues and offerings around us. Villagers sat below in front of us; a few times younger students from the school came as well.

During the three months, I fasted frequently and spent most of the time alone in meditation. It was a period when I chanted mantras and practiced various meditation techniques. Through this experience, I began to gain inner insights into different types of

meditation. For Virat, it was harder to fast and easier to meditate with very little sleep; for me, it was the opposite. At the end of the retreat, we fasted and meditated through the entire night.

After the rainy retreat, I spent a few weeks walking from one village to another, staying in each monastery for couple of days. In the hilly, forested area, there were many small villages, each at least five kilometers apart. This way, I met many kind monks and discovered numerous small forest monasteries.

In one village, only an elderly monk lived, who could not walk to collect food due to leg problems—others brought it to him. One morning, I went alone on the alms round, and somewhere along the way someone told me: “From here on, this is the Christian part of the village; don’t go there because they won’t give you anything.” It felt strange, as I had never experienced anything like that before. Near the Buddhist monastery, there was a church, which from the outside looked like an ordinary house. They were holding a gathering, and there were many people around, but no one spoke to me.

When I arrived in another village and asked where the monastery was, people behaved rather unfriendly. I saw a woman with a child in front of a house; when I looked at her to ask a question, she went inside with the child and closed the door. This happened to me for the first time—it felt odd. Before that, people had always been smiling and friendly. Later I learned that I had entered the Christian part of the village, which explained the difference in their behavior.

I then returned to Menga and soon went to visit Samaki for one of the ceremonies. There were many people, introductions, and conversations—the monastery was full. Samaki told me I could spend one night at his place. On the table, he had a computer, and

on the floor were Buddha statues and pictures of teachers, with offerings placed before them. Everything else was empty space—the monks meditated, ate, and slept on the floor. It was as I had heard from others: every day from six in the evening to six in the morning, he meditated. Some monks wanted to always be close to him. Samaki knew many people, and everyone held him in high regard.

Whenever I returned to his monastery, he wanted to buy me something good to eat, as they say—“food for foreigners.” Even though I didn’t care much about what I ate, a few times we went to a neighboring place at the invitation of his relatives, usually Samaki, Panja, and Tom. A middle-aged Thai woman, married to a Belgian, ran a small restaurant in the house. They always prepared a lot of good food and offered some money. Several times, we went on a day trip in an old off-road vehicle someone had given to Samaki. On the way, we stopped for lunch at his friend place.

I felt very comfortable in his company. Only then did I better understand that he appreciated my coming from so far away and renouncing everything. That is why he wanted to take care of everything for me and ensure I was in good company. He thought something could happen to me if I walked around alone. At that time, I reflected: I did not become a monk to make friends and socialize daily, but to meditate in solitude for extended periods, as much as possible. I believed that only in this way could I progress on the spiritual path, as my main goal was to realize the truth of liberation. Coming from the rainy retreat, it was nice to see others and talk with them. But after three to five days, I had enough of socializing and conversations; I wanted to go on a new retreat in

solitude. For some time, I had been inquiring about forest places where I could go for a longer retreat.

MEDITATION AND LIFE IN THE FOREST

Tom told me that he knew a very good place in the forest, where there were also two caves. Monks rarely went there, so I immediately decided to go. Samaki smiled and said, “Good, you go ahead.” So I went with Tom and a younger boy from the monastery.

On the way, we stopped at Tom’s family home. Then we walked along a stream and climbed steeply up a hill into the forest, six kilometers from the village. The place was beautiful—I had never seen anything like it. In the rocks, there were huge imprints of feet and hands. There stood a covered wooden hall with Buddha statues and huge candles. Nearby were large rainwater collectors and hanging bags of rice for cooking, even though according to the rules, monks are not supposed to cook food.

We looked at both caves. The first was very dark; the second was more suitable for living. We cleaned it and set up a hammock on a wooden platform, which served for meditation and sleeping. Everywhere were a lot of bat droppings. Tom and the boy returned to the monastery before sunset.

At first, I lived in the larger covered hall. I felt good, especially meditating at night by the candles and Buddha statues. I meditated while sitting in a hammock against the mosquitoes, which was suspended over an umbrella tied to the ceiling. Then I walked back and forth, maintaining concentration.

In the mornings, I cooked my food, and during the day I meditated in the cave. Weeks passed in which I was completely alone in the middle of the forest. Deep and prolonged states of calm increasingly appeared.

One evening, I would drink coffee and decide to sit for meditation. I focused all my energy on not following any thought. It was a fierce battle in the mind. After an hour, the thoughts no longer appeared. I stayed all night in a luminous spiritual state, without thinking. At that moment, I realized that it was possible to do everything without thoughts. For a moment I was worried—what if thinking never returns? The next morning, it was the same.

Just as I was heading to the cave, I heard voices. A guide had come with a tourist. I wanted to avoid them, knowing that even a short conversation would disrupt my state. They looked at me in astonishment, as if wondering what a foreign monk was doing alone in the forest. Indeed, even a brief conversation was enough for my thoughts to return.

Soon, a monk arrived for ten days, and sometimes someone came just for a short visit. I decided to stay in the cave for a month. It was the cold season.

In the cave, I began seeing faces of monks on the rocks and in the sand in front of me. Some were Thai, others resembled Chinese or Korean. The longer I remained in empty state of mind, the bigger their smiles, and the whole space radiated light. I swept the floor and then, while sitting, again saw the same faces.

At night, I lit a fire. Bats flew in and out while I watched the flames in a state of emptiness. One night, I went up to the hall. After meditating, I lay down a bit and observed the candles and Buddhas.

In sleep, I felt myself floating in the air. I saw nothing, yet knew I was outside the body. I became frightened and tried to wake up, but could not until I returned.

An older woman appeared before me, and a young girl a little aside. It was the first time I had seen spirits, so clearly that it felt like I was looking at a person. They were both in long white robes with long black hair. The woman was kind and asked what is my name in English. It felt as if they had lifted me out of my body. I remembered the nun's story about how a spirit would visit her at night, take her by the hand, and guide her around while her body lay in the kuti.

When they disappeared, I fell asleep again. This time, I felt something once more. My spiritual body turned to one side while my physical body lay on the other. I saw a younger woman take my hand and tell me not to forget her. Then she vanished. The next day, I thought about it. It felt like something good, and I hoped it would happen again—but it did not. Only once did I wake up at night in the cave, sensing spirits throughout my body, though I did not see them.

For a month, I ate only once a day—a small portion of rice with noodles. I meditated about twelve hours a day, mostly sitting, only about an hour walking. After the morning meal, I would lie on a rock in the sun and rest in emptiness. I became very thin, walked slowly, almost without energy, but I was not hungry. Mentally, I was nearly always in very calm and luminous states. While lying in the sun, I did not feel my body—there was only light. I believed I was making good progress in meditation.

Occasionally, Tom or someone else would visit and bring me some food. Sometimes I felt boredom, was physically weak, and the

desire to continue in solitude waned. For a few days, I went to monasteries in nearby villages, then returned. I met some monks. One had a proper library, but only books in Thai. I asked him to send me something in English even though I was not interested much in reading.

After three months, I decided not to continue in the forest. I returned to Samaki. Physically, I did not feel well, had lost my motivation, and was disappointed. Upon my arrival, Samaki smiled as always and said everything was fine. They told me that he had meditated for ten years in caves and forests until he was invited to the city, where a monastery was built for him. Only there did he open spiritually. I saw that he felt neither cold nor heat and slept almost nothing. When I meditated beside him, I felt his strong spiritual energy. I often saw that he was in deep spiritual states, nearly always in emptiness. It was similar with the nun, who had long been preparing his meals.

Tom and I talked about spirits. I told him that during one retreat I had felt a blockage in my chest. I knew it was caused by spirits, but the next day, after a full day of meditation, it disappeared. Tom said that spirits can cause difficulties but can also help on the spiritual path. It is good to send them loving kindness and share our merits with them.

The first year of monastic life passed. I was grateful and satisfied with everything that had happened. I believed I would come to the realization of liberation and the truth if I continued on this path.

With Samaki, Tom, and the layman Manut, we set out for the Udom Sab monastery, because I needed to extend my visa. We left in the morning, and in the afternoon Manut was tired from the

journey, so we stopped at a friend of Samaki. That evening, Samaki drove through the night until morning while the rest of us slept.

Upon arrival, all the monks and nuns came to greet him and pay their respects. He smoked a few cigars, spoke with them, and then they left. That was when I realized that Samaki was never tired. His mind was always in impartiality, without thought or emotion. In the spiritual state that I could reach for only a few hours, he had lived for decades.

I had not yet fully recovered. I was without energy, helped a little in the monastery, spoke with monks, and meditated much less. I no longer knew how to move forward.

Then I received a package in the mail. The monk I had asked for books sent me recorded talks and two booklets in English by teacher Posri Suriya Khemarato from the Rombodhidharma monastery. I had never heard of him before. His knowledge was completely different from the usual Thai tradition.

As I read and listened, all the burdens from striving in concentration practice fell away. I had often been in an empty state without thought, but desires for progress would always return, causing tension. I began to laugh at understanding the teachings of this teacher.

I immediately decided to go to him. His teaching was truly different, yet it made deep sense. Just listening brought freedom to the mind, here and now, without strenuous meditation. I found his monastery and could no longer wait. I went to him—convinced that I would finally come to know the truth there.

MEETING A VERY SPECIAL TEACHER

I set out for the town of Nonghin. Shortly before arriving, a Thai monk boarded the bus. He told me his name is Sithipon and that he lived in Rombodhidharma. We took a three-wheeled taxi, called tuk-tuk in Thai. We drove along a wide asphalt road, which was unusual for a forest monastery. We stopped in front of a large house next to an open space filled with many Buddha statues. Ahead, I could see a lake, a parking area, and many houses around it; it didn't look like a typical monastery. It looked more like a village or a small, beautifully arranged settlement.

He told me that we will first go to greet the teacher and then I would see where I could stay. The large house at the entrance belonged to the main teacher. We entered a bright room with large windows. The teacher sat on a throne with Buddha statues behind him. On the floor beside him, visitors dressed in white sat on both sides. On the far right were two younger Thai monks. We knelt before him and bowed three times, as is customary.

Right away, I noticed that the teacher seemed very unusual in both appearance and voice. He asked about me, and one of the guests briefly translated what I said. Then the teacher and I looked each other in the eyes. I could see that he was pleased and nodded, satisfied with what he saw in spirit. Before leaving, we bowed again, and as I touched the floor with my forehead during the second bow, I felt a very strong energy of emptiness in my mind. I looked at him with a smile and realized that it was he who had done that.

I was accommodated in a very large and beautiful wooden house where six tents were set up inside a big room. In the evening, I sat for a short meditation in the open hall. Later, I went for a walk along the road; there was a very peaceful and good energy throughout the place. Already on the first day, I saw that this place and this teacher were more special than any I had encountered before.

I met Ben from Singapore, a monk of the Zen tradition, which I had never seen before in Thailand. In the evening, he took me past some very beautiful houses to a terrace in front of the international house, where mostly Westerners gathered. There I met monk Jim from Russia, nun Maya and her friend Ana from England. Thai nuns Sasi and Ning spoke very good English and were responsible for translating the teacher's teachings into English.

They were talking and laughing. Sasi briefly explained the different way of teaching and living in this monastery compared to the Theravada tradition. A nun could teach monks; they could eat in the evening, and there was no meditation — which seemed strange to me. I saw the uniqueness of this teacher, yet all of this was in contrast to the traditional practice of renunciation and meditation.

The next day, Ajahn Visit brought me a message from the teacher, saying that I didn't have to go on alms rounds into the town, because food was prepared for everyone in the monastery, and that I should listen to his teachings. Considering there were nearly a thousand people in this place and the teacher had remembered me, it gave me extra motivation to stay. Ajahn Visit was in charge of the house where I lived; he recorded the teacher's talks, transferred them to CDs, and sent them around. He told me that this teacher

was the best he knew and that I should listen to him and put aside all other teachings for a while.

I went for a walk to explore the whole area. I had never seen such a large monastery with so many people, houses, cars, and even horses within a huge enclosed area. I met a monk who was walking and eating; anywhere else, that would have been a serious problem. Monks are not allowed to eat or drink while standing. When he saw me, he looked up at the sky, stretched out his arms, and said that he was free. I didn't understand; it seemed very strange to me. I told him that I was looking for a kuti for myself. He was kind and walked with me around the place, showing me the surroundings.

I found one at the edge of a meadow near the forest; there were five of them in two rows—typical small kutis for monks. I moved in and got to know the monks in the area. I went to the other side of the monastery near the forest's edge, where almost all the monks from Western countries lived. I met Jos, a monk from the Netherlands. He seemed very relaxed, sitting in a deck chair in front of his kuti, smoking and looking at nature. He was very thin, over two meters tall, and about my age. He had been a monk for ten years in the tradition of Ajahn Chah.

Jos had been here for a year and told me a little about the teaching in this place. He had no emotions or reactions, which is uncommon among monks; he spoke kindly and calmly, in a state of equanimity. In worldly life, it's quite the opposite—people have strong thoughts, emotions, and reactions. If someone met such a person, they would say something was wrong with him, that he was a complete phlegmatic who cared about nothing.

Near him lived monk David from Italy and Jack from France. They had a pleasant environment of gardens and forest. For the first time

in a year, I saw monks and nuns from Western countries in this place. There was also an older nun of the Tibetan tradition from the USA, who spoke very highly of the teacher.

Every morning, we went to a large open hall covered with a thatched roof. In front of the area with Buddha statues was a slightly raised platform on which the teacher sat. On his left and right sides sat the monks, and opposite of them were nuns and laypeople. First, we had a short main chant, then repeated after the monk a forgiveness statement, and sat in silence until the teacher arrived. Usually, he gave teachings with occasional pauses in silence, and sometimes we sat in silence the whole time.

A special energy was present. We sat with open eyes and in a relaxed posture. A few times, the teacher looked at me, and at that moment I felt a strong energy of emptiness in my mind and once a spiritual opening in my chest. I had experienced something similar before in Menga.

After the sitting, we would take food and eat with the teacher in the open hall or anywhere else. Then we could spend the rest of the day as we wished. I met monk Lai, who had a nice kuti near mine. He always offered something to eat or drink—whatever he had. Monk Bond often came to visit him; he and I got along best—he was like a brother to me. He liked to joke, was always relaxed, and laughed a lot.

A few times, we went together to build new wooden huts for the monks. We rested in hammocks, which hung in almost every kuti. Wherever I went, people offered what they had and welcomed me with a smile. In the evenings, I went for a walk along the main road where others were also walking up and down. The sound of insects

filled the air in a completely peaceful and freely pleasant atmosphere.

Every day I read the forgiveness statement for cleansing karma—past inappropriate thoughts, words, and actions. Reading the forgiveness statement was a special practice of this teacher; it wasn't found anywhere else that I would now.

This is just one part of the text:

Expectations of improving mindfulness, concentration, inner insight, wisdom, supernatural powers, patience, even the desire for nirvana cause us to train the mind and body in various ways. These expectations are desires, illusions, and attachments that block the natural flow of events. It is precisely this interference that creates complications and prevents the mind and body from functioning freely and naturally on their own.

In this way, we are constantly focused on the mind and body. But concentration does not allow all phenomena in the mind and body to arise and disappear in their natural flow. The expectations and desires to achieve something in practice create new karma.

It doesn't matter what kind of expectations we have—worldly or spiritual. Whenever we want to gain benefit from something, we create a mental construction—a desire to possess something that cannot be held, since everything arises and passes away. Focusing on these expectations or believing in these illusions—that we will have something forever—turns the wheel of birth and death. These illusions of craving and hope for eternal benefit from something are the cause of new karma.

When our expectations are not fulfilled, we often blame others. Therefore, let us forgive all beings who have hurt us in any way, and let us forgive one another for all and every karma. We wish to stop seeking benefits for ourselves and begin to do good deeds for others. We would like to act in harmony with the true natural laws, which by their nature are non-attached, radiant, and forever unobstructed. Nirvana, just as it is, has no beginning and no end.

Let us be aware that we have body and mind only temporarily so that we can infinitely and unconditionally bless other beings and show them the way to let go of attachment, which is the cause of suffering. We wish to end and remove all expectations and attachments to anything—worldly or spiritual—to mind and body, the five senses, thoughts and emotions, way of life—all attachments, everything. We wish to renounce and end all desires and obsessions with pleasant states, happiness, and good results from our good deeds. To give or do something good with mind, word, or body, and then expect something in return, creates new difficulties. Therefore, we simply give without expectations.

Let us renounce expectations of having many followers. Let us give up attachment to knowing, having, or being more than others, for this gives rise to competition, possessiveness, arguments, and envy. The result of these attachments is suffering and rebirth into lower realms of existence, even into hell. Because of such attachments, we become narrow-minded and unable to bless all beings.

We would also like to renounce attachment to great teachers—to honor them with great emptiness and non-attachment. We wish to follow them with boundless and unconditional blessings for all beings. We wish to let go and end the hopes, desires, and plans that

bind us to all of this. Let everything dissolve into the natural flow of events—into non-attachment, into great emptiness, just as it is—free by its nature, always boundless and unconditional, neither attached nor detached, without beginning or end, forever and ever.

While reading this, the mind surrendered into emptiness, as all desires came to an end. I felt openness, ease, and a state of limitless freedom. The tensions in mind and body gradually diminished, since there were no longer strong expectations to achieve something through practice, to reach somewhere, to cling to knowledge, or to find answers to questions that never end.

Whenever tensions appeared in mind and body, we exhaled with the word “*soooh*” and slowly opened our hands apart. In this way, we released all tensions, sensations, and emotions from mind and body—without additional effort of meditation practice, but simply through relaxation. The mind opened in an instant and shone in emptiness. Instead of revolving in thoughts and emotions, we awakened out of them into pure awareness of the present moment. At the same time, it was the blessing with the power of emptiness, directly showing other beings how to free the mind. We did this at any time during the day.

Through the natural process, emotions and mental activity decreased, becoming increasingly subtle. I spent more and more time in emptiness—through relaxation and disinterest in mental activity, whether during daily activities or rest. It is precisely this disinterest or ignoring that removes the fuel from mental processes.

Meditation based on concentration is, in truth, another desire—the desire for better concentration in order to achieve something in the future. That is confinement within mind and body, instead of

awakening from mind and body. The end of practice, the end of desire and effort—that is awakening in the present moment.

This was the teaching of our teacher. Some monks could not accept it and returned to the Theravāda tradition of meditation, unable to let go of the desire for attaining meditative states. They believed in traditional methods and could not embrace a different approach. But those who followed this teaching even for a few months realized that it was far superior to all the classical Theravāda meditations.

There are always monks who try to use the Tripiṭaka to prove what is right and what is not. But the teacher simply showed how to open oneself spiritually and shared the power of emptiness. Some experienced this directly and stayed; others left. I accepted this new way of life according to his teachings, for I had realized something extraordinary—his power and his wisdom. More and more, I understood that what he taught was greater than anything I had read or practiced before.

During morning sitting with the teacher and others, I sat in relaxation. Normally, one's gaze means directing the energy of attention with slight effort outward through the eyes toward what is before us. I noticed that when I relaxed, this effort ceased, and the energy of attention that was previously flowing outward returned to its source. Then awareness opened. In complete rest, I perceived everything around me—there was only a circle of awareness energy.

One sunny morning, shortly after breakfast, I was sitting in the emptiness of radiant awareness. In this pleasant state, I felt as if a strong energy had touched me. I looked at the teacher and saw that he had sent me the power of emptiness to see whether I could

perceive it. From that day on, he began teaching me directly every morning—transmitting the power of emptiness from mind to mind. That energy was so strong it brought about a deeper state of emptiness than ever before; thoughts lost their power for a longer time. Whenever a thought appeared later, the teacher would notice it and send me that power again. This energy was at least three times stronger than Samakī's.

Over time, through experience, I realized that the expectation and desire for the empty state, as well as the desire to understand something in thought, prevent the empty state. I had partly experienced this already in prison during Zazen meditation, but then the mental activity would quickly return. Whenever in meditation we try to practice, understand, or achieve something, the mind and the desire for progress are always activated. That means orientation toward the future—and never the true ending of the mind here and now. Reading and thinking about how to understand it is yet another obstacle, as it remains within the field of mental activity.

One morning, I was in such a strong energy of emptiness that during breakfast adrenaline made me tremble. Later, these states became calmer, clearer, and awareness expanded. A few times I saw someone's body tremble when they received the power of emptiness. The greater the power and the longer I stayed in that state, the deeper the experience became. Often, for an hour or two after morning sitting, I could not speak—I simply sat, looked at nature, and rested in deep peace and relaxation. I marveled at these special spiritual experiences.

One day, in emptiness, I realized that this was greater than all the states I had experienced in meditation during all previous retreats.

I understood that even if I were to meditate alone in a cave my whole life following the old methods of strict renunciation, solitude, and practice, I would never be able to know and experience this. At that moment, the teacher looked at me and nodded. I realized that he knew exactly what was happening in my mind.

The monk Lay gave me his *kuti* at the edge of the forest, as he had moved elsewhere. There I had two hammocks and a space where anyone could come to visit. I learned more and more about the teacher and his supernatural powers. Sometimes he would go for a few days to a small monastery in another forest, and occasionally for ten days to other countries with a group of selected monks. Others could also go if they could pay for the journey. The purpose of these trips was the blessing of all beings and the transmission of the power of emptiness to that place. This especially helped spiritual beings, who can perceive emptiness more easily than humans. The ceremony included the forgiveness statement and the pouring of water onto the ground with the call “*sooh*” to share the merits.

The teacher could see into the spiritual realm and saw how these practices helped different beings in the various realms of existence. They said that after his journeys, many spiritual beings—even enlightened ones—would return to the monastery with him, following his light of emptiness. He often took the monk David with him. I heard that in one of his previous lives, the teacher had been the fifth king of Thailand, while David had been a Russian king who helped him at that time. That was why they were still connected. There were many such stories.

Some people liked to visit the teacher often, talk with him, and listen to his teachings; others simply sat near him because of the strong energy of emptiness. Because of his supernatural powers, many visitors came—bringing offerings of food and money—and some even moved there. Around him were monks he had chosen according to their shared past karma, who always stayed by his side.

My relationship with him was very special. He taught me directly, without words—from mind to mind—and we became ever more connected. I saw that he knew all people's thoughts—their spiritual and emotional states, their obstacles, their past, and much more that I could not comprehend. It seemed to me that he had access to all this knowledge through his supernatural abilities, which he had gained over decades of living in emptiness. He had been a monk for at least twenty-five years.

Sometimes all of us foreigners visited him together with the nuns Sasi and Ning, who translated his teachings. I sat in emptiness—it was beyond all words. He taught that by being uninterested in thoughts, emotions, what we see or hear—pleasant or unpleasant, positive or negative—the mind ends naturally, without the effort of practice. He emphasized blessing all beings boundlessly and impartially instead of striving to reach higher states of concentration and wisdom. In this way, selfishness transforms into altruism.

Because of the daily reading of the forgiveness statement, one day I decided to call my parents. I asked them if they would forgive me for everything I had ever done to them through mind, speech, or action. They were surprised, for I had never done anything like that before. Then we forgave each other—but I told no one about it. The

next morning, during the sitting, the teacher looked at me and nodded. That happened only couple of times, but I immediately knew that he had perceived what I had done and that he was pleased.

Another time, I was sitting as usual, but thoughts and feelings of loneliness appeared. I began to imagine that the teacher did not accept me into his close circle like some others, and I wanted to leave. I knew he was fully aware of what was happening in my mind. At the end of the sitting, our eyes met. I felt strong tension in my mind and at the same time saw how my awareness expanded several meters around me—but I did not avert my gaze. He was telling me that he did not want me to leave.

However, he never approached others—you always had to go to him if you had questions, difficulties, or wishes. At that moment, I realized that through that look, he was testing my spiritual maturity. When one receives the energy of emptiness, the states can be so powerful that many unusual things happen in the mind and body before the spiritual opening occurs. This cannot be controlled.

I voluntarily began helping at the garbage site, where we sorted and burned waste, cut branches, and mixed leftover food with leaves and soil, which became fertilizer for the vegetable and fruit fields. I enjoyed working a few hours a day in the company of people I got along with well. I connected more easily with the Thai people, as they were more relaxed, simple, and cheerful than most Westerners, who were often serious and complicated. Some Thais told me that I must have been Thai in a past life, since I was more like them than like a Westerner.

I liked spending a lot of time alone. Probably the long meditation retreats had accustomed me to feeling better in solitude and peace

than in company and conversation. After just an hour of chatting, I often felt mentally tired and saw no point in long discussions. So I preferred to rest in a hammock, go for walks, and spend time in emptiness. Sometimes I took a whole month off from work, just resting in my kuti, occasionally talking with nearby monks, going for evening walks, sitting by the lake, or fasting. More than once, I skipped the morning sitting with the teacher and breakfast.

During these periods, I spent more and more time in emptiness and relaxation. Sometimes everything felt perfect—I thought I could live that way forever: resting in emptiness beyond thoughts and emotions, worries and desires. I was in radiant, powerful awareness, full of peace. I believed this was the end of the spiritual path: emptiness without questions or answers, without gain or loss. No path, no one on the path. No suffering, no liberation. No samsara, no nirvana. No concepts, no duality. No mental creation. Only radiant emptiness, which in itself is deep inner peace and contentment.

According to the Buddha's teachings, this is the cessation of suffering: with the cessation of perception, there is no more mental activity, no mentally created self, no feelings or emotions (craving or aversion), no reactions. Thus, the creation of karma and the cycle of rebirths are cut off.

After a month, the energy of awareness became so strong that I couldn't endure it anymore, so I returned to work at the garbage site. One morning, I got dressed and walked along the path between the trees and kutis toward the hall. From the moment I woke up, I had no thoughts at all. On the way, I felt something unusual at the top of my head, and when I sat in the hall, I experienced the opening of the crown chakra. I felt the top of my head open and

energy begin to move. When the teacher arrived, he sat down, looked at me, and nodded. I could see that he knew what was happening—that it was something good.

Although Buddhism does not speak about chakras and has no practice for opening them, it happened on its own because of the empty mind. From that time on, the power of emptiness was much stronger than mental activity. I could easily spend most of the day in emptiness. Although we say “spent time in emptiness,” in truth there are no concepts there—no self, not even emptiness itself. This state is peace, contentment, and freedom. Because there are no thoughts, there are no problems; nothing disturbs, nothing needs to be resolved or understood. When the energy of emptiness was especially strong—such as during the morning sittings with the teacher—I was in luminous awareness without any sense of the body or breath—beyond mind and body.

LIFE WITH SPIRITS

A cold season was approaching, so I set up a tent inside my kuti, which had been given to me by a kind older lady. It had been about half a year since my arrival at this monastery.

One evening, as I lay in the tent, I saw for the first time two child spirits who were laughing and floating around me. I was surprised and smiled at them. From that time on, I began receiving visits almost every night. They had probably been coming even earlier, but I simply hadn't seen or felt them before. After the initial excitement of seeing spirits, less pleasant visits began to occur.

Once, while asleep, I felt myself being moved around the tent—when I woke up, I saw that a spirit was holding my spiritual body and moving it around. Another time, I began shaking, and when I opened my eyes, there was an angry spirit jumping on me while another one nearby was laughing.

In my sleep, I saw a light that someone was sending toward me—it struck me like an electric shock. I sent my own light back and kept receiving stronger and stronger jolts until the impact was so powerful that I woke up and saw an old witch in front of me, with a crooked nose, a black hat, and a staff, slowly walking away in the sky.

Many times I woke up during sleep because spirits were grabbing me strongly; if I fell asleep again right away, it would happen again. I also saw spirits during the evening recitations of the forgiveness statement and while giving blessings with the power of emptiness. A few times I woke up and saw spirits staring at me

closely in surprise. These are just a few examples; for nearly a year and a half, I had multiple encounters with spirits almost every day.

David told me that he had experienced something similar—a spirit had jumped on him, and he turned around, loudly said “sooh,” and drove it away; then we both laughed. The teacher explained that spirits see the light of those who are spiritually open and come seeking merit and blessings. If they don’t receive blessings through the power of emptiness, they begin waking you up at night. I was told to share merit by pouring water before sleep, and then they would leave me alone. It helped for a short while, but soon things returned to how they were before.

Having an open “third eye” and seeing the spiritual world in Buddhism is considered a kind of supernatural power. Many monks talked about who could see what and what was happening around them. In this place, it was nothing unusual.

Once, I dreamed of two naked women. In the dream, I realized they didn’t look like ordinary women. When I woke up, I knew that spirits had caused these dreams. Later, I dreamed that I was embracing a woman in the grass. When I woke up from the dream, I saw a spirit rubbing my thighs, trying to arouse me, while another one above my head was creating the dream. I understood that they wanted to harm me—to plant seeds of sexual desire in my consciousness at night so that I would remember and long for it during the day.

I believed the spirits wanted to harm me on my spiritual path, where sexual desire is an obstacle. One night, while asleep, I felt as if I were having sexual intercourse. When I opened my eyes, I saw a beautiful woman with long hair on top of me. It felt even more real than being with a human woman. The next day, I couldn’t

believe what had happened. I felt humiliated and guilty because of this.

After that, I noticed that whenever I thought about the incident, I could feel a spiritual presence on my sexual organ. During the day, I moved to another kuti near the field on the edge of the forest. It was a peaceful and pleasant place, yet this presence followed me wherever I went. Because of it, I no longer wanted to be around people. I felt guilt and shame.

I stopped going to the hall in the morning to see the teacher or collect food. I was sure that he knew exactly what was happening, but I didn't want to face him. From a radiant spiritual state, I had fallen into a condition of bodily desire. That was the worst of all.

On the internet, I found a woman who had the same problem. She said these were sexually perverse spirits that enter the body and feed on sexual energy. Only some Christians talk about this, explaining what it is and how to be freed from it. For a week, I listened to prayers for deliverance through Jesus Christ several times a day and repeated the words myself. But nothing improved.

At that time, I saw Buddha, Jesus, Krishna, and others as good teachers from whom one could receive something beneficial. After nearly a month, I happened to see my teacher. When I briefly looked at him, I could see that he knew what was going on. I immediately turned away with my head down.

That same night, he came to me in a dream. When I saw him, I offered him a banana. He then pressed two fingers into my forearm. My body began to vibrate as if connected to an electric current. Then I felt the spirit jump out of my chest.

The next morning, the spirit was gone. I felt much better. I returned to the hall in the morning to join the teacher and others. I could see that the teacher knew everything and never judged anyone, no matter what happened. After about a week, I gradually returned to the same strength of emptiness as before.

I visited a Thai woman named Kungan, who spoke English well and was in charge of managing work at the garbage site. She told me that one nun had locked herself in her room and hadn't eaten or drunk anything for several weeks. They later found her naked and dead on her bed. It seemed to me that sexually perverse spirits had done that. I told Kungan about what had happened to me. She said it must have been something like that. She also said that she herself had been touched inappropriately by spirits a few times. She had lived in the monastery for many years and had heard and experienced many things.

She told me that some monks who lived near the teacher's house would leave their bodies at night to protect the teacher from evil spirits who wanted to harm him while he slept. I learned of a Russian monk who lived next to David; he went out of his body almost every night but didn't speak about it. David told me his story of once leaving his body, saying, "Now I know that I cannot die."

Once, in a dream, I sensed the teacher telling me to wake up. It was around two in the morning, and dogs were barking everywhere. I heard two monks reciting the forgiveness statement. I felt a strong presence of spirits in the area, so I began reciting the forgiveness statement as well, blessing with the power of emptiness using "sooh," and pouring water. All of this was done to share our merits with the spirits and to teach them, through words and the power of

emptiness, how to let go of suffering in their minds. As the teacher said, this helps them to move on to a better realm of existence in their next life.

I decided to help with work in the fields, which were on the other side of the monastery. Next to the field, I found a small, beautiful place in the forest with four kutis. As I explored the surroundings, I felt a strong presence of spirits in certain spots. A few times my body started trembling as they touched me and passed through me. During the day, I sometimes just felt them on my body, but at night I could also see them. I didn't hear them, but sometimes I could see what they were saying by watching their lips move. The teacher said we shouldn't listen to them or respond, but only bless them.

Even though there were more spirits in that area, I found a small empty kuti and moved there. Nearby lived a monk named Pijawat — he was very kind, had a nice wooden hut, and a car. He told me there were no spirits here. The same said a layman who lived very close to him in a long steel hut with a green tin roof, surrounded by a green net. He said he slept very well and didn't notice anything unusual. I told him that sometimes I missed the times when I could sleep that well too. However, just because you don't see or feel spirits doesn't mean they're not there.

The teacher said our work was to bless all beings — human and spiritual — boundlessly and impartially. Whoever is spiritually open has a greater power of blessing. He said that how the spirits behave toward us depends on our past actions, both in this life and in previous ones. If we had harmed them, they would try to repay us; if we had done good to them, they would be kind in return. In either case, we should ignore whatever happens and only bless them. Therefore, I remained indifferent to everything that occurred.

I didn't think about it or see it as something bad. Such experiences had become part of my everyday life.

At this place, I had even more frequent encounters with spirits, both day and night. Many times, I felt such strong tension around my third eye that I couldn't fall asleep — as if there were a hole through my forehead that I could feel spiritually. Usually, I covered my forehead with my hand, which helped me relax and sleep more easily. When I lay down at night with my eyes closed, I often saw visions of forests from above; it was so real, as if I were watching them during the day.

I had read something about astral travel and lucid dreams, but I wasn't interested — it all involved too much knowledge and practice, which created expectations, stress, and prevented abiding in emptiness — a state without desires or effort to achieve anything. When you remain for a long time each day in an empty, peaceful, and radiant mind, you feel a decline whenever strong thinking or emotions arise. That's why thoughts, teachings, and practices no longer interested me.

I began to recognize more precisely the thoughts and emotions that came from spirits, although I perceived them as if they were my own. If I hadn't been so sensitive to their presence, I would have believed they were my own thoughts and feelings. This happened most often when I rested in the hammock in emptiness — suddenly, my state of mind and body would shift into stress because of thoughts and emotions that came from the spirits. With an exhalation of “sooh” and radiating the power of emptiness, all thoughts and emotions would immediately leave me, and the mind would return to radiant emptiness. Then they would leave me alone for a while, until it repeated again — throughout the day and even

at night when they woke me. We all did this in the monastery and believed the teacher when he said that by blessing the spirits, we were doing something good.

Sometimes I suddenly felt a strong urge to eat, even though I wasn't hungry. My body seemed to be guided by a single impulse of a foreign will—to quickly prepare some food and eat it—and then I was completely calm again, as before. I saw that spirits enjoy the taste of food and therefore enter the body. Through their will, thoughts, and feelings they influence a person so that their own desires are fulfilled, and then they leave. Those who cannot perceive spirits have no idea how much these beings affect them in daily life. They believe everything comes from themselves—that they alone are like this—and they blame themselves for bad habits or addictions that harm them.

I worked in a large field of vegetables and fruit. The work was fairly hard but free, since it was all voluntary. Everyone worked whenever and however much they wanted. We rested and ate together, often joking and laughing. In the middle of the field stood a wooden house with a kitchen.

I met two elder nuns, Pong and Nok. They had been working in the field for many years, and we soon became good friends. Later I learned that both could see spiritual beings, and I heard some of their stories. Near the field lived a monk named Virat. We got along well, and several times in the evening I went to see him, and we would light a fire together. We spoke little, and when I had enough of words, I would simply gaze into the fire with an empty mind in perfect peace. We sat in silence for a long time, and then I would return to my kuti to sleep.

Beside the field, a monk named Prasad had built a beautiful kuti. He had a ten-year-old son, a samanera—a novice monk. His father lived as a monk in a monastery far away, while his mother came to live with us. Sometimes I slept in the hut where we ate and rested during work.

One night, a spirit woke me up. He had the body of a deer and a large human head with long blond hair tied in a braid and mustache curled upward. He talked a lot and was angry. I couldn't sleep because I felt its energy in my head. As usual, I recited the forgiveness statement with *sooh* and the pouring of water, but he refused to leave. After several hours I finally said aloud, "Leave me alone." Only then did it go, and I could fall asleep.

Although spirits often gave me bad dreams and woke me at night, I didn't make a problem out of it. I lived with indifference and an impartial mind, in an empty state, because I believed that emptiness is the end of the spiritual path. It means the end of mental fabrication, the end of self, desires, attachments, reactions, and new karma.

When people asked the Buddha what he gained through enlightenment, he said he gained nothing—but lost everything. In the Zen tradition, too, they speak of the Great Death. Life also exists in thoughts—who we are, what we have, what we believe in, all the memories of the past and the wishes for the future. It is hard to let go of these things, because it feels like a kind of death, the disappearance of everything. That is why it is so difficult to remain beyond thought, in the empty state, for a long time.

We believe strongly in our thoughts and cling to them. We are convinced they are real and solid. But enlightenment is an empty state of mind—awareness of each moment—where thoughts are

weak, rare, and cause no emotional reaction. In emptiness there is no me or you, no others, no life, no death, no liberation, no Nirvana, no suffering, and no concepts.

The book *Maha Prajna Paramita – The Heart Sutra*, the Buddha's highest wisdom, also speaks about emptiness. Whoever wishes to know true spirituality must go beyond the mind, emotions, and body. Here one cannot rely on any concept that can be understood through thought.

This experience cannot be lived through ideas or imagination. The path is a continuous state of emptiness for long enough that it happens by itself—without effort, without practice aimed at a goal. Reading and exercises become obstacles. When I compared the teachings of my teacher with others, I saw through experience that his were the most direct. Moreover, he possessed such a powerful emptiness of mind that he could transmit it to another—from mind to mind. Without him, it would have been very difficult for me to open spiritually—perhaps only after decades, if at all.

I no longer saw any meaning in thoughts. The empty state of mind was so strong that concepts lost all their power. But for people in worldly life, it is precisely concepts that give things meaning. So I knew I could never leave monastic life. Even though I still dealt with spirits every day, I lived in the strength of emptiness, peace, and contentment. It was something I had never experienced before. Even during previous meditation retreats and monastic life before meeting this teacher, I had never lived in such power. It happened only after at least half a year with him, when I opened spiritually.

Whenever I was around visitors of the monastery, I could feel their stress coming from their thoughts and emotions. If I joined their conversations, I absorbed their stressful energy. I knew there was

nothing left to understand, since those were only concepts. It was no longer about achieving anything. I sometimes shared this knowledge with others because I believed it was the highest and could help—but whoever has not experienced it cannot understand it through words. So after some conversations, I would tell myself that I would no longer explain it to anyone.

I also stopped listening to the teacher's talks. He mostly repeated the same teachings—that people can let go of mental activity. Some would listen to him for whole days and talk about it a lot. But I preferred to help with work and spend the rest of my time alone. In the evenings I often lit a fire and spent the night in emptiness. This felt closer to me than talking or listening to teachings.

I knew I could never return to worldly life. For a long time, I had not desired anything from the world—nothing interested me anymore. Sometimes I said there was no person in the world who could draw me out of monastic life.

Once, the teacher was driving past the field where we were working, accompanied by a few monks. I was just spreading grass around the banana trees. Suddenly, my mind fell deeply into emptiness, into a strong and radiant state. I paused for a few seconds. I realized that the teacher was sending me his power of emptiness from the car.

During morning sitting in the hall, I again saw when the teacher sent me the power of emptiness. It was like light. If I received it, I entered an even stronger emptiness. If I was already in such a strong emptiness, the light would simply bounce off me.

Almost two years into my stay at this monastery, I visited another monastery and went on a short trip along the coast, finally

persuaded by the monk Mos. The second time, I went with Bond to a monastery by the lake. When we returned, it was a very hot and dry season, and there were fewer people around because they had gone elsewhere.

I felt that I had to return to the monastery by the lake. I no longer wished to stay here. I did not say goodbye or explain that I was leaving. This was how we lived—free, so that anyone could go and return whenever they wished. The teacher was not at the monastery; he was traveling. I knew he would know everything, even if we never saw each other again.

SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

I returned to a very peaceful monastery by the lake, where life was not bound by all the traditional Theravada rules. The head monk was very kind and lived according to the teachings of my teacher and some Zen masters. We had dogs, cats, and even a small monkey.

After a few weeks, one evening I was watching videos on the internet. A title appeared on the screen: “My Testimony: Saved by Jesus,” which caught my attention. I had never seen anything like that before. I began listening to the story of a young woman who had lived in a Hindu ashram. She practiced yoga and meditation and lived a spiritual life of renunciation. Her crown chakra had opened. After this pleasant experience, she noticed that she no longer had control over her body—spiritual beings were entering her through the open chakra at any time. She said that a spirit with low vibrations came into her body, which was very bad. Somewhere she heard about Jesus and His Word. In search of a way out of those deeply unpleasant spiritual experiences, she turned to Jesus. Then Jesus set her free from those evil spirits. She said that meditation, yoga, and everything that leads to higher states of consciousness, the opening of chakras, and higher vibrations are demonic teachings and practices.

I could not accept that, because I believed in the Buddha’s wisdom and his path to liberation. I thought something must be wrong with her understanding. How could one ordinary woman know more than all the most respected Buddhist monks throughout history—

those with countless followers, who devoted their entire lives to monastic discipline and spent decades in solitude and meditation? I simply could not accept it; it was the complete opposite of everything I had believed, practiced, and experienced until then. I did not have the knowledge to show me it was true. On the other hand, I believed what she said about chakras and spirits, because I had experienced those things myself. I was deeply moved by her firm conviction that Jesus had set her free and that He was the only way to the knowledge of truth. I felt an inner faith arise in me—that there must be something real about it and that I had to find out for myself if it was true.

I didn't want to reject it outright. After everything I had gone through to discover the truth of liberation, and despite all my spiritual experiences, if I was completely honest with myself, I had not yet found the truth. I decided to do the same.

I immediately went to my kuti, sat down on the floor, and without any plan or thought, I spontaneously said: "I renounce all the teachers I have had until now, and all the knowledge I have received from them." Then I looked upward, as if Jesus was there, and continued: "Jesus, I want to know the truth. If You are truly alive and hear me, show me the truth."

The moment I spoke those words, a strong spiritual presence appeared before me in light. I could not see what it was, but it was something I had never felt before. Then I had an inner spiritual experience that instantly changed my life forever. At that time, I did not know what it was, but in the following days I learned from God's Word that I had received the Holy Spirit.

In that experience there was far more than I had ever imagined possible. Everything I had experienced in eight years of meditation

was utterly worthless in comparison. This spiritual experience was more real and convincing than anything that had ever happened to me before. I immediately realized with absolute clarity that Buddhism is under the authority and power of Satan and evil spirits. That all the knowledge and these spiritual powers come from the kingdom of darkness, whose ruler is Satan and his servants fallen angels and evil spirits.

In this experience, I encountered God—with knowledge and emotions that are perfect in every way; nothing else is perfect. Even though I had previously had numerous spiritual experiences that seemed complete to me, they were nothing compared to this. I experienced the presence of God, perfect in holiness, love, and wisdom. In an instant, everything within me changed. I received new life—a personal relationship with God through His Spirit. I came to know God as my Father.

God created all people, but He becomes our Father, and we become His adopted children only when we receive salvation, when we are sealed with His Spirit. This was the most beautiful and most important event that had ever happened to me in my life. From this perspective, my search for truth and liberation had ended. This experience and knowledge in God's Spirit was given to me freely by God, without any effort on my part.

Everything I had imagined about God in the past was wrong. God made me realize that He is more real and more important than all of creation, and now I am connected with Him forever. I knew I had received eternal life with God; nothing can separate me from it, and after this life here, I will go to heaven. I realized that I had been separated from God all my life, which felt like the worst thing of all.

It became clear to me that if I had not received salvation—which is only through Jesus Christ—I would have remained a Buddhist monk my entire life, destined for hell and eternal destruction. I saw myself as deeply sinful, or stained, in comparison to God's perfect power of holiness and love. This divine power is so holy and perfect that it melts and transforms the human soul. For this reason, I continuously gave thanks, knowing that I did not deserve it.

Yet God loves me, having granted me deliverance from sin and evil, and transferred me into His kingdom, into His family. The way to God, to salvation, and to eternal life with Him is only through Jesus Christ. All other paths, of which there are many, lead to eternal destruction.

The Bible is the Word of the living, supreme God—the one true God who created everything. All other teachings, of which there are countless, are lies and deceptions from Satan, the fallen angels, and demonic or evil spirits who rule over the lost or unsaved with their false knowledge and spiritual powers. Every path has its own teachings; first, we receive knowledge, and then we follow the path that the knowledge describes.

Later, I saw that exactly what I had realized in this experience is written in the Scriptures. If it were not in the Bible, then the knowledge I received would not have been from God.

Jhn. 14:6 Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. **Act. 4:12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. **Mat. 7:13-14** Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Jesus is

the gate; whoever enters through Him will be saved.
2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Rom. 8:15 You have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father!” **Col. 1:12-13** Giving thanks to the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Gal. 4:6-7 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, who calls out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Buddhism is only one of the deceptions or paths of destruction that come from the rulers of the kingdom of darkness; we can also call them demonic or evil spiritual beings. They have different ranks, and only some rule over all the knowledge of a certain path. Each of these rulers has its own name, characteristics, powers, and knowledge through which it deceives and destroys people.

I came to understand that all the knowledge from Buddha comes from these evil spiritual beings; they have power over all who believe in and follow that knowledge. Jesus freed me from their authority and their deceptions. Otherwise, I could never have known this. People who are not saved do not have the Spirit of God and do not know the Word of God, and therefore cannot truly know or believe—just as I did not know before.

I realized how humiliating it was to God that I had bowed to statues of Buddha and to people. God gave me life in the world that He created; without Him, I would not exist. Yet in ignorance, I had worshiped Buddha, who created nothing. In this realization, I felt

deep regret and asked God to forgive me. I knew that I must never again bow to any statue or person. Only the Father in heaven and Jesus are worthy of all praise, honor, glory, and power forever. It became clear to me that I could no longer be a Buddhist monk.

Immediately after this short experience, I was extremely content. As I sat in a mosquito-net tent, preparing to sleep, spirits in the form of people appeared around me, as they usually did. Instead of performing my old false practice of blessing, I knew that they were my enemies. They only harm and deceive people with their false knowledge and spiritual powers, aiming to prevent people from coming to the knowledge of the truth—salvation through Jesus—and to cause their eternal destruction.

I rebuked them in the name of Jesus and told them never to return. They began swirling around me, screaming, and then disappeared. I saw the expressions of their screams on their faces.

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

In the morning, I woke up in joy. Remembering everything that had happened the night before, I began to laugh and thank God. What had happened remained; I had received a personal relationship with God that I had never had before. I felt completely different than before.

Some, who do not want to believe that God, Jesus, heaven, and hell are real, interpret in a way that a person giving their testimony about it only had a flash. That it cannot be known if it is true, and then everything is as it was before.

I was so grateful that this had happened, more than ever before for anything. I got dressed, but I no longer felt comfortable in my monk's robe. With the head monk, I went into town to gather food. I watched the people who gave us food and knelt before us with joined hands to receive a blessing. I felt sorry for them. I thought to myself, what a pity that they do not know the true God.

They believe they are on the right path to liberation and knowledge of the truth, yet they live in deceptions from evil spirits, just as I did before salvation. In my mind, I blessed all people in the name of Jesus and prayed to God that they too could receive salvation and come to know the truth. I returned and ate breakfast.

I began to walk back and forth along the lake in the beautiful sunny morning. In the Spirit, I felt the strong activity of God. There were many things I did not understand and wanted to get answers. I pondered how it is possible that Buddhist teachers are so kind,

calm, and helpful to others, yet still live under the powers and deceptions of evil spirits?

Immediately, I felt in my head like a strong earthquake, and as if thunder had sounded, a voice in my head said: “I did not send Buddha to speak about God, but Jesus.” I understood that this was about where the knowledge comes from, not just how people behave according to general human standards.

God created all of creation; therefore, His Word is the highest or absolute truth, and whatever opposes it is deception. Whether people agree with it or not does not change this. By our standard, some people are good, others are not. However, we judge only by what we see with our very limited knowledge. The less we know the truth from God, the more we believe in deceptions.

By the standard or truth of God, we are all sinful; no one is good—only God is good. Only God is all-knowing, all-powerful, perfectly holy, and without sin. God knows the impulses in the heart, the thoughts, words, and actions of every person.

Mat. 19:16 “Good Teacher (Jesus), what good must I do to have eternal life?” He said to him: “Why do you call me good? Only God is good, and no one else.”

Jas. 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”

1 Kgs. 28:9 “For the LORD searches all hearts and understands every purpose of the mind.”

1 Chr. 8:39 “Only You know the hearts of all the children of men.”

1 Sam. 16:7 “The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Buddha was only a human. He created nothing, cannot free anyone from sin, cannot give anyone eternal life, and cannot create a place for eternal life. Only the Father God, who is in heaven, can do this. Buddha did not even give life to himself, just as all other people did not. God gave us life. The foundation of Buddha’s knowledge opposes the Word of God.

The Holy Scripture is the Word of God, which God gave through the Holy Spirit to the prophets and apostles whom He appointed. Jesus Christ spoke only the Word of His and our God. What is truth and what is not is judged by the Word of God. If we do not know the Word of God, then we cannot know anything.

1 Cor. 2:9-15 “What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has not entered into the human heart, the things God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed these things to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. Who among people knows what is in a person, except the person’s own spirit that is in him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that God has freely given us. These things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual truths with spiritual words. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person, however, judges all things, yet he himself is not judged by anyone.”

Satan and evil spirits are masters of lies and deception. People are spiritually blind because they believe in their false knowledge. Evil spirits transfer their knowledge through thoughts and images to certain people, and they then spread it verbally and in writing to large groups of people. Evil spirits give people knowledge, practices, and rituals so that it enters the lives of those who practice it, and this increases demonic activity and their influence in society.

In this way, traditions of deception from the kingdom of the devil are passed down from generation to generation. Anyone who believes and follows these teachings receives spiritual powers and experiences from evil spirits, which are then passed on to others. In this way, people are connected with evil spirits who operate through them.

We have countless books, teachers, and knowledge that come from evil spirits. People pay large amounts of money to learn and practice what is actually from Satan's kingdom. They do not realize this because they do not know the truth from God. They do not understand what they are getting into when they join meditation, yoga, or similar groups. They do not understand what is happening or what the consequences will be when a family member brings statues or pictures into the home and performs various practices and rituals.

This is also why most people are not interested in reading the Bible, speaking about God, Jesus, and salvation – which is the only hope for every person.

Just as I was so are others convinced that every kind of knowledge is good, that all teachers are good, and that everything is just to help others. In this way, Satan and his evil spirits hide behind false knowledge so that people do not know who their enemy is.

Therefore, people often blame God for things caused by evil spirits and other people, while they do not understand the truth from God. Only the Holy Scripture fully reveals all truth and deception.

We must have the Spirit of God and a good understanding of His Word in order to reach true knowledge and judge what is truth and what is deception. This is the true meaning: “The truth sets a person free.” Today this phrase is used everywhere. People share any knowledge and say that the truth sets a person free, which is not true. Only one truth sets a person free, and that is the truth God gave for us.

People have a completely wrong understanding of how evil spirits operate. They think they can only harm, and that everything that seems beautiful or feels pleasant cannot come from them. They are convinced that their teachers and themselves are not following deceptions of evil spirits. They believe they cannot be deceived and that they are helping others, but in reality, they believe in the deceptions of evil spiritual beings and spread them to people around them. This was also true for me.

The goal of demonic spirits is to use deception—especially through pleasant spiritual experiences, improved well-being, or healing—to keep people away from the truth and salvation, from knowing eternal life with God and the inheritance in heaven. This can be received only through faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior. What will help a person's health and well-being today at the judgment before God and in the lake of fire?

Even lost people will talk and teach about God, love, morality, and all kinds of things. They will praise others, saying how good and full of light they are, how they help others find peace, health, love, freedom, and a better life. But in reality, they are unknowingly

deceived to believe and spread lies, which increases the activity of evil spirits and leads to their destruction and the destruction of others.

2 Cor. 4:3–6 “But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are lost, whose minds the god of this world (Satan) has blinded, so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

If you do not understand the knowledge from God, then you have been following one form of deception or another your whole life. Therefore, the most important thing of all is to receive the free gift of salvation for eternal life and to know this personally. God will speak to you and work in you through His living Word in the Holy Bible, which is life and spirit.

Then a Thai woman came to our monastery by the lake. She liked bringing food to monks who meditated in the forest and in caves. She asked me if I would like to go with them. I said no, because there were many spirits in the forest and especially in the caves. I had already had enough of that, but she thought I was afraid of them and laughed.

Monk Shalong also invited me, so I changed my mind and joined them. When we arrived in the forest, I immediately felt the strong presence of spirits. Then I saw a monk who had been staying there for several weeks. Now I perceived everything differently; I saw how strongly he was under the influence of evil spirits. He moved very slowly, spoke weakly and slowly, just as I had when I

meditated in the cave. However, he was unaware of what was really happening to him. He was experiencing deep inner peace and had special spiritual experiences, so he believed it was very good.

I went down a stairway into a deep cave and saw an older Westerner who was learning from the monk. I saw that he was completely paralyzed by spirits in an inner pleasant state that held him there. The spirits had such great power over them that I said nothing, knowing they were too far into it to understand through words. I asked him, “How do you feel?” He answered, “Very good.” I saw that there was no help for them. I prayed for them the whole time and left. I was deeply saddened when I saw how strongly the evil spirits worked on people, keeping them in bondage without them realizing it, and that there was no other help for them except prayer.

Ten days after my salvation, I bought clothes and left monkhood. Those ten days were something very special.

Two very angry demonic spirits also visited me twice at home; I saw them clearly, just like people. Evil spirits hate humans — they want to destroy us in every possible way — and they especially hate those who are saved, because we are no longer under their power, we know their deceptions, and we can reveal them to others. We work against them and praise the true God the Father in heaven and Jesus. Satan and evil spirits want people to worship and follow them through their knowledge. In doing so, people think they are on the right path and they are helping others.

JESUS OR BUDDHA / TRUTH AGAINST DECEPTION

I will compare the core teachings of **Buddha** with the **Word of God** in the **Bible**. Why the Bible? Because the **God of the Bible** is the **Creator of all things** and the source of **absolute truth**. This same God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to speak His words and to do His works. Jesus rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God in heaven, among the hosts of angels.

Buddha, on the other hand, did not know the one true God. Before becoming known as Buddha, he was Prince Siddhartha—a Pagan in a land where the people worshiped many false gods. His teachings did not come from the God of the Bible.

I will show that the knowledge Buddha taught stands in opposition to the Word of God and to Jesus Christ, because it came from Satan and evil spirits who deceive mankind through false spirituality.

1. Creation of the world

- Buddha's teaching: Everything that exists in the universe arises and disappears according to natural laws, eternally, without beginning or end. There is no God or any being who created everything.
- God's word: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. By His word, He created light, the firmament separating the

heavens and the earth, the seas and rivers, plants, stars, the sun and the moon. Then He created all creatures in the waters and on the earth, creating them so that they could reproduce, each according to its kind. Finally, God created man – male and female.

2. The nature of life after death

- Buddha's teaching: Buddha describes six main realms of existence: hell, preta (hungry ghosts), animals, humans, demigods, and gods. Beings are continuously reincarnated through these realms according to their karma. This is samsara – the cycle of birth and death, which nature is suffering.

- God's word: There is no reincarnation. Man has one life, then judgment follows. Just as God gave us this life, so He will give us eternal body and eternal life at the appointed time. The saved will go into eternal life, the unsaved into eternal destruction.

Heb. 9:27 It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.

Rom. 2:16 On the day when God will judge the secrets of men according to my gospel, through Jesus Christ.

2 Tim. 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom.

3. The Cause and Solution of Suffering

- Buddha's teaching: Buddha teaches the Four Noble Truths: (1) suffering exists, (2) the cause of suffering, (3) the cessation of suffering, (4) the path to the cessation of suffering. The causes of suffering arise in the mind, and the path to stopping it is the Eightfold Path, which severs the connection of dependent

origination. People can free themselves from all suffering through learning Buddha's teachings and practicing meditation. Liberation is nirvana, which is described as an eternal state without suffering.

- God's word: Through one man — Adam — sin entered the world, and because of sin, death came upon all people, for all have sinned. Through the disobedience of one, we all became sinners. Through Adam we received sin and death. We cannot free ourselves from sin, suffering, and death through any practice, ritual, or custom. Our good works cannot save us, not even "Christian" religious deeds.

The payment for sin is death and eternal destruction. God, besides being a just judge, is full of love and mercy. He sent His only begotten Son into the world, not to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.

Jesus was the only human who never sinned. God condemned the entire sin of humanity in the body of Jesus on the cross. **ONLY SINLESS BLOOD OF JESUS COULD BE THE PAYMENT FOR ALL OUR SINS.** To be "reconciled with God through the blood of Christ" means that God, through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, restored the broken relationship with humanity. Because of humanity's sin, there was fundamental enmity between humans and God, but Christ's shed blood provides the means to end this enmity, creates peace, and restores fellowship. This reconciliation brings believers into a holy and spotless state before God and offers a new relationship of peace and closeness.

Whoever believes: **"JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED FOR OUR SINS, AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY."** Receives, by God's grace, the free gift of salvation. God's grace is undeserved, His favor offered to humanity, a gift that no

one can earn through good deeds. To be “saved by grace” means that salvation — reconciliation with God and eternal life — is not the result of human effort, but a free gift from God, received through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation does not come from what we do, but through faith in what Jesus did for us. This is the gospel of our salvation by grace through faith, without our works.

It does not matter who you are or what you have done in the past. Whoever believes, wherever they are, God justifies them from all sins and seals them with the Holy Spirit. Thus, we are no longer sinners before God, but righteous in Christ. Just as we became sinners through the disobedience of Adam, we become righteous through the obedience of the last Adam — Jesus Christ. For Jesus, who knew no sin, God made Him sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ..

As through Adam’s sin judgment came to all people, so through righteous act of Jesus, justification comes to all people, which gives life. In Adam we are dead, but in Christ God gives us life. Therefore, for all people there is only one Savior and only one way to salvation. That is through faith in Jesus. God’s righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Thus we are justified and righteous before God. We are saved from his wrath, judgement and eternal damnation. We will have eternal life in heaven. God will give us glorified, eternal bodies. No one else can create an eternal place where we will live, and no one else can give us eternal life. This is why no one else deserves all worship and glory forever, except the highest God, Creator of all, and His Son Jesus Christ — our Savior, the only

mediator between man and God. God has saved us, justified us, and given us life in Christ.

Beware of Christian religious deceptions — that is, adding anything else to this for salvation. God did not create Christians, but all people, and Jesus did not sacrifice Himself for Christians alone, but for all people. God sent only Jesus as the Savior of the whole world. Therefore, all other religions worshiping other people or other gods — who are in reality fallen angels and evil spirits — cannot save anyone.

4. The Truth About Enlightenment

- Buddha's knowledge: Buddhism describes how Prince Siddhartha became the Buddha, which means awakened from illusion into truth. On the night of enlightenment, he was first tested by Mara, described as an inner demon, an internal struggle of desire, fear, doubt, attachment, and illusion, which prevents one from reaching enlightenment. When all these trials attacked his mind and he went beyond them through non-reaction in emptiness, he first saw all his previous births. Then he saw all beings as they reincarnate from one life to another and their causes. Then he saw the Four Noble Truths, the 12 links of dependent origination, and the cessation of suffering through the Eightfold Path. All this knowledge was said to have been received by the Buddha from emptiness.

- God's word: **Col. 1:16-17** God, through Jesus Christ, created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities: all things were created through Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. **Phil. 2:9-11** God exalted Jesus above all

and gave Him a name above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In the knowledge from God, who created all things, there is no reincarnation, no enlightenment, no nirvana. Prince Siddhartha was a pagan from India; at that time, Israelites were God's people, the only nation that knew the true God. Everything about this is written in the Old Testament.

All other nations were pagans who did not know the Most High God at that time, but worshiped false gods. These are rulers from the kingdom of darkness who pretend to humans to be real gods, the chief among them being Satan or the Devil. Buddha had no knowledge of God; when he meditated, he received all knowledge and visions from evil spiritual beings from the kingdom of darkness, so that through him they deceived the masses. Knowledge cannot be obtained from emptiness. The Holy Scriptures are the word of the true God; everything else are false gods and their deceptions, opposing the knowledge from God.

Eph. 2:2 Before salvation we were dead because of our sins, in which we once lived according to the ways of this world, following the ruler of the domain of the air (Satan), the spirit that is now working in the children of disobedience.

5. Secret Societies and Spiritual Deceptions

Secret societies, such as Freemasons, Knights Templar, Rosicrucians, the Illuminati, the 13 families, the Jesuit order, bloodlines of giants (sons of fallen angels and human women), have brought the greatest evil to humanity. These groups control

financial systems, religious organizations, school systems, and work together with Satan and demonic spirits to rule the world.

Mt. 4:8-11 The Devil took Jesus with him to a very high mountain. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said to Him, “All this I will give you, if you fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Buddhism, New Age spirituality, non-duality (Advaita Vedanta), yoga, reiki, astrology, fortune-telling, horoscopes, Hinduism, Islam, Taoism, the Catholic Church and all Christian denominations that teach human traditions, channeling, worship of angels or “deities,” crystals, witchcraft, shamanism, ayahuasca rituals, DMT and other drugs, mysticism, atheism, and various philosophies are all means through which the Devil and evil spirits deceive people. The purpose is that people worship them and serve them out of ignorance.

I advise you to get rid of all books, statues, pictures, jewelry, and stop all practices and rituals connected with these, because they come from Satan and evil spirits. Such practices allow evil spirits to have power over you spiritually and distance you from God and His truth. The only way is to read or listen the Bible. Relying on yourself or anything other than God leads to eternal destruction.

For the first five years, I read and listened the Holy Scriptures, evangelical teachers from different countries, and was part of some evangelical groups. I spoke with believers, Catholic and Orthodox priests, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Mormons. I noticed differences in understanding of the Bible among various denominations. Just

as with Buddhism, we all have different understanding and we all believe we are right, which cannot be true. Therefore, we must sincerely study, read, and listen to various teachers, not just blindly follow someone. Despite reading, praying, and in-depth study, I realized that I had a lot of incorrect understanding. Likewise, all previous teachers I listened to had incorrect understanding of key things.

I came to the realization that even within the Christian faith there is a lot of confusion, deception, and lies that different denominations believe. The Devil works the same within believers as with unbelievers — from the beginning of the church and from the origin of sin, He sows lies and deceptions.

Few manage to find teachers who truly understand the Holy Scriptures. Even fewer recognize this, change their understanding, and learn correctly. The masses of Christians follow deceptions and are convinced they are on the right path. I realized that the more people wrongly teach from the Holy Scriptures, the more people believe them.

The truth about salvation is the most important. But this is only the first step out of a hundred. At first, I thought salvation was the end of seeking truth, and in a way that is true. But at the same time, it is only the beginning of learning God's word and living with God.

On this path, there are many lies, deceptions, and traps — just as there were before salvation. New believers often immediately fall into misunderstanding the Holy Scriptures, since we mostly learn from older believers, who themselves also learned incorrectly from their teachers. Yet all are firmly convinced that they are right.

This is how corrupt Christian faiths arose, similar to how false religions arose outside of Christianity. The Devil has created countless deceptions through people — even regarding how we understand the Bible.

2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and instructing in righteousness, so that a person may be complete and prepared for every good work. This book contains many warnings, corrections, and teachings. A believer cannot serve Jesus or help others if they themselves are not built on the true foundation, the true gospel, and true knowledge.

God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, we must sincerely study, advance in knowledge, and be willing to change our understanding based on evidence from the Holy Scriptures. Many believers, especially in leadership positions, protect tradition and are unwilling to admit mistakes because it would threaten their position, reputation, or financial benefits. Believers who have been taught incorrectly mostly also find it hard to admit that what they believe is wrong and find it hard to change their knowledge.

For these things, all believers will be judged before the throne of Christ for eternal rewards or the loss of eternal rewards. **1 Cor. 3:13** Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION – How to Be Saved Now?

1. Are You Saved / Saved From What?

All Have Sinned — The Fall of Humanity

Every person is a sinner, guilty before God, unable to save themselves.

There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks God. All have turned aside; they have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, no, not one. **(Romans 3:10–12:20)**

Explanation: No one can claim moral superiority. All humans have rebelled against God. All our good works cannot make us sinless or righteous before God.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... **(Romans 5:12)**

Explanation: The fall of Adam brought sin and death into the human race. We are all sinners, and the consequence of sin is death. No one is exempt; no one can hide from this reality.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with

mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
(1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

Explanation: Sin is specific and all-encompassing. God’s justice is absolute; no one practicing unrighteousness will enter His kingdom. Excuses like “others are worse” or “I’m basically a good person” are meaningless.

The Consequences of Sin — Death and Judgment for the Unsaved

Sin brings death and final judgment. No human effort can prevent it. Those who reject salvation face destruction.

The wages of sin is death. **(Romans 6:23)**

Explanation: All sin earns death. It is the inevitable consequence of rebellion against God.

The lake of fire is the second death. **(Revelation 20:14)**

Explanation: This is not eternal torment, but final destruction. There is no escape or second chance.

The soul that sins — it shall die. **(Ezekiel 18:4)**

Explanation: Sin separates from life itself. The penalty is total, complete cessation.

They shall be punished with everlasting destruction.
(2 Thessalonians 1:9)

Explanation: All who reject God's salvation face irreversible destruction.

They shall be as though they had not been. (**Obadiah 1:16**)

Explanation: Everything a person has — life, relationships, hopes, identity — will cease forever.

Eternal destruction is the end for those who reject salvation offered by God. Families, possessions, and lives vanish completely. The wrath of God and judgment are real. **The Gospel of Salvation is the only escape from this fate.**

2. How to Be Saved — The Gospel of Salvation

Salvation is not achieved by our works, efforts or religion. **It is based entirely on what Christ has already done.** We are saved by believing the Gospel of Salvation— the message of Christ's death and resurrection for our sins.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes... (**Romans 1:16**)

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you **received**, and in which you **stand**; **By which also you are saved**, if you hold fast what I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered to you that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (**1 Corinthians 15:1–4**)

Explanation: This is the foundation of salvation. Christ took our sins upon himself and died, and was buried, and rose again the third

day. This is proof that we will rise from the dead to eternal life. That is why Paul says in **(1 Corinthians 15:14-19)** if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our faith is in vain, we are still in our sins, and those who have died in Christ are perishing. His work for our salvation is finished. We must add nothing to it.

He was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **(Romans 4:25–5:1)**

Explanation: Jesus was delivered to death because of our sins. Christ rose from the dead means we are justified. The result of believing in our gospel of salvation is peace with God — not fear, uncertainty, or condemnation.

Being **justified freely** by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood... that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. **(Romans 3:24–26)**

Explanation: God did not overlook sin — He judged it fully in Christ's Body — crucifixion and death. Therefore God remains perfectly just. Yet He also justifies the one who believes. It is by grace — undeserved — and it is received **only by faith**.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. **(Colossians 1:14)**

Explanation: God redeemed us at a high price, the blood of Jesus was the payment for our sins.

Salvation comes by believing the Gospel — the finished work of Christ in **His death for our sins** and **resurrection**. This is where justification is found. Not in our works. Not in religious rituals. Not in promises or efforts. Christ did it all. **We receive it by faith, trusting in Him alone.**

3. The Process – from Sinner to Assurance of Eternal Life

That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first **trusted in Christ**. In whom **you also trusted**, after that you **heard the word of truth**, the **gospel of your salvation**: in whom also after that you **believed**, you were **sealed** with that **holy Spirit of promise**, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. **(Ephesians 1:12–14)**

Explanation: First we hear the gospel, then we believe, God seals us with the Holy Spirit forever.

First, a person hears the Gospel of Salvation— the message of Christ’s finished work:

Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. **(1 Cororinthians 15:1–4)**

Then, the person believes it — not just agreeing with it intellectually, but trusting it.

Belief means resting completely on what Christ has done, without adding anything of our own.

The very moment a person believes, God seals them with the Holy Spirit. **This happens once, instantly and permanently.** The Holy Spirit is not a feeling, experience, or ritual. He is God's seal of ownership. **A seal means secured, claimed, and protected by God.**

The Holy Spirit is called the earnest — the down payment — the guaranteed proof that God will finish what He began.

Until the redemption of the purchased possession means:

We already belong to God now, but our bodies will be redeemed and made new in the future. The seal of the Spirit guarantees this will happen.

The order is simple and complete:

- You heard the Gospel of Salvation
- You believed the Gospel of Salvation
- God sealed you forever.

This was not caused by any ritual. Not by a special prayer. Not by a church or a preacher. It is the direct work of God the moment a person trusts Christ.

And it is “to the praise of his glory” — because **all salvation is God's work, not ours.**

4. What People Think Saves Them — The False Gospels of Salvation

Many people believe in Jesus — yet are still lost. Why?

Some believe in God and Jesus, but they think they have done nothing for them and must earn their salvation. Or they believe that Christ died for their sins—but they think that is not enough and they must also contribute to their own salvation through their own works, obedience, behavior, or religious duties. **This is not the gospel of salvation, but a counterfeit.**

Common False Beliefs Today:

- Being a “good person”
- Saying a “sinner’s prayer”
- Water baptism / Baptisms in the Bible and our Baptism
- Church attendance or membership
- Giving money or charity
- Trying to “live better” or “stop sinning”
- Keeping commandments best I can
- These are all human attempts to earn righteousness, not true salvation.

But our gospel of salvation is perfectly clear:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. **(Ephesians 2:8–9)**

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (**Romans 3:27,28**)

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (**Rom. 3:20**)

If salvation have anything to do with our works, then it is no more grace:

But if by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if of works, then grace is no more of works: otherwise work is no more work. (**Romans 11:6**)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us... (**Titus 3:5**)

5. False Christian Traditions That Add Works

Some religious traditions mix faith and works:

Evangelical error: Sinner's prayer + baptism + proving faith through behavior = salvation

Catholic error: Sacraments, confession, mass, infant baptism, Pope's authority = not even that grants salvation

Orthodox / Traditional error: Church membership, fasting, rituals = salvation

But Paul, who received the Gospel of Salvation from Christ, warns for our church, the body of Christ;

I marvel that you are so soon removed... to another gospel...some people would **pervert the gospel of Christ**. If anyone preaches another gospel that you have received — let him be accursed. (**Galatians 1:6–8**)

If we could be saved by our own works or our own efforts, then Christ died in vain: If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. (**Galatians 2:21**)

6. Summary of the Whole Teaching

The Gospel of Salvation calls every person to:

- Hear the message of Christ's death and resurrection
- Believe that this finished work saves completely
- Trust Christ alone — not works, not religion, not ourselves

Eternal Consequences:

- **Reject the Gospel of Salvation** → judgment, destruction, lake of fire (second death)
- **Believe in the Gospel** → justified, reconciled to God, sealed with the Holy Spirit, guaranteed eternal life in heaven

If we want to come to the knowledge of the truth and be established in it, we need to learn how to rightly divide the Word of God — The Master Key. (**2 Timothy 2:15**)

BAPTISM FOR THE CHURCH

»THE BODY OF CHRIST«

Many Baptisms in the Bible — Not All Are the Same

We usually believe that in the Bible there is only water baptism. Whenever we hear the word “**baptism**,” we think of **water**. However, the Holy Scriptures mention many different baptisms, and many of them are “**dry**,” including the only baptism necessary to become part of Christ’s body. **We need to understand what is the one baptism into Christ?**

There are fourteen different baptisms mentioned throughout the Bible, and understanding which one applies to us today is essential. If you want to see how each baptism differs — from Moses and John to Paul’s one baptism — read more in the article [Baptisms in the Bible](#), which clearly explains every baptism and shows why **only one remains for the Church - Body of Christ - today.**

Ephesians 4:5 — “One Lord, one faith, **one baptism.**”

This is our only baptism into Christ by the Spirit, which Paul taught for our dispensation of the grace of God, for our church Body of Christ, and our gospel that Jesus Christ gave to Paul:

1 Corinthians 12:13 — “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Romans 6:3 — “Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?”

Galatians 3:27 — “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Colossians 2:12 — “Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through **faith of the operation of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”

These verses show that **believers** today are **identified** with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection — a spiritual truth revealed directly to the apostle Paul by the risen Lord. This identification happens **by faith alone**, not through any physical act. This is what one baptism into Christ is.

Many evangelical churches don’t discern which instructions are for us and which are not, and attach these passages to water baptism, saying that going under the water represents dying with Christ and coming out of water rising with Christ. But this is not what Paul taught. There is no water in this baptism — it is entirely spiritual, performed by God the moment we believe.

Catholic tradition added infant baptism, which is also foreign to our gospel of grace. Both follow baptism instructions from the “Great Commission”, which belonged to **Israel’s prophetic program** that God has now paused. The **Body of Christ** today follows **Paul’s revelation** — **one Lord, one faith, one baptism into Christ**.

The Error of Water Baptism for Today

Christian denominations believe in the wrong baptism, which was for Israel under the covenant in the four Gospels or on Pentecost day in Acts 2, where the New Covenant for Israel began. Through water baptism you can become a member of various Christian communities, but you cannot become part of the Church, the body of Christ, which is the only true church today.

Colossians 2:12 — Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

There is only one baptism that baptizes you into Christ's body. **God performs it when He baptizes you into Christ's body by one Spirit.** Nothing physical can baptize you into Christ's body, because it is a spiritual body. Jesus is the head, and all saved believers are parts of one body — the body of Christ. We are a **One New Man in Christ**, this is not a physical church, but spiritual, all saved people in the world are in **one body – the Church**.

The True Meaning of Baptism in Scripture

Many evangelical pastors say that baptism is not included in salvation, but should serve as a public acknowledgment that we are believers. This is a human invention. Water baptism in the Bible has always been intended for the cleansing — forgiveness of sins.

Ezekiel 36:25 — “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your impurities, and I will cleanse you from all your idols.”

Mark 1:4 — “John baptized in the wilderness and preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

Matthew 28:19-20 — “ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Acts 2:38 — “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

These verses were given to the fallen Church, a **nation of Israel**; this is **NOT for our church of the body of Christ**. We are NOT TO baptise people in the water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or in the name of Jesus Christ. In the dispensation of the grace of God given to Paul (**Ephesians 3:2-13**). **God baptises people by one Spirit into one body only through faith.** (**Ephesians 1:12-14**)

Our Baptism in the Present Age of Grace

For our Church, there is no water baptism. **Justification from sin, the seal of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of salvation are received exclusively through faith in our Gospel of Salvation.** Christ’s blood has paid for all our sins. Our public confession of faith is testimony and proclamation of the gospel, not water baptism.

1 Corinthians 1:17 — “**Christ did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel** — not with the wisdom of words, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.”

Jesus sent the twelve apostles to baptize and teach all nations what he had commanded. However, Israel again rejected Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. **God caused their fall and turned to the Gentiles through the apostle of the Gentiles** — Paul — with the new gospel of grace, which was kept secret since the world began.

Colossians 2:8 — “Beware that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than according to Christ.”

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Churches that do not know how to [rightly divide the word of truth](#) have everything confused; they do not know what our baptism is and do not follow Christ — even though they will tell you that they follow Christ. **Therefore, you must study God’s word rightly divided; this is the main key to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Whoever does not know how to rightly divide the preaching of **Christ according to the mystery vs. Christ in the flesh** — which was the earthly ministry of Jesus for Israel as a minister of circumcision — is preaching the wrong gospel and does not act according to God’s will or plan for present age and our church.

OLD AND NEW MAN

From Death in Adam to Life in Christ

Every person born into this world is born in Adam — spiritually dead, separated from God, and without the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:1–3 says, “You were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.”

This is the state of every unbeliever — spiritually dead, following the wisdom and desires of this world, which is ruled by Satan, the god of this age (**2 Corinthians 4:4**).

But when a sinner hears the **Gospel of Salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)** — that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day — and believes it from the heart, something miraculous happens.

God saves that person by His grace through faith (**Ephesians 2:8–9**), sealing him with the Holy Spirit of promise (**Ephesians 1:13–14**).

By one Spirit, the believer is baptized into the body of Christ — not into water, but into Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free — and have all been made to drink of one Spirit.”

This spiritual baptism places the believer into a completely new identity — in Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Head, and every saved believer becomes a member of His body (**Ephesians 1:22–23; Romans 12:5**).

This is not a visible or religious act — it is a **divine operation of God**, done the very moment one **believes**.

The New Man: Created in Righteousness and True Holiness

Old and new man: when we are saved, God does not repair or improve the old man; **He creates something entirely new.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 declares, “If any man be in Christ, **he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

This new creature is the inner spiritual man, created by God in righteousness and true holiness (**Ephesians 4:24**).

The new man is not the flesh; it is the Spirit-born nature that lives by faith, desires to please God, and is alive unto righteousness.

At the same time, the old man — our carnal nature inherited from Adam — remains present in our physical body.

Romans 6:6 says, “Knowing this, that our **old man is crucified with Christ**, that the **body of sin might be destroyed**, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

God counts our old man as dead — crucified with Christ — so that sin no longer has dominion over us.

This truth must be believed by faith, even though our flesh still tempts us and struggles against the Spirit (**Galatians 5:17**).

Many believers who do not understand these **spiritual truths** try to live sinless by the law and flesh, relying on themselves rather than the new man God created in Christ. As Paul warns, those who received the Spirit but continue in the flesh have fallen from grace (**Galatians 3:3, 5:16–17**). True **victory over sin** comes from walking in the **renewed mind** and new mindset of the new man, established by God according to the gospel of grace (**Ephesians 4:22–24, Colossians 3:10**).

Crucified and Raised with Christ

The new man lives because of **Christ’s resurrection life within us**.

Romans 6:4 tells us, “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

We did not crucify or raise ourselves; God did it when we believed.

Colossians 2:12 confirms this spiritual operation: “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the **faith of the operation of God**, who hath raised Him from the dead.”

The believer's identification with Christ's death and resurrection is the foundation of the new man's life.

We are no longer “in Adam,” under condemnation, but **“in Christ,” justified freely by His grace (Romans 8:1).**

This new identity is spiritual, unseen, and eternal — created by God, not by human effort or religious works.

Walking in the Spirit, Not in the Flesh

The Conflict Within the Believer

Even after salvation, every believer experiences a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

Paul wrote, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would” (**Galatians 5:17**).

The **inner/new man**, created new in Christ, desires to live a holy and righteous life; but the **old man**, still present in our mortal body, resists this and seeks to fulfill sinful desires.

If a believer tries to live righteously by keeping the law or through self-effort, he soon finds frustration and guilt.

When he fails, he condemns himself and assumes that God also condemns him.

But Scripture declares: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who **walk** not after the flesh, but **after the Spirit**” (**Romans 8:1**).

Our peace with God is secure, not because we never sin, but because Christ has already paid the full price for every sin (**Romans 5:1; Colossians 2:13–14**).

Walking in the Spirit is not a spiritual state, it is not an exercise, it is not our actions, and it is not our feelings or emotions, but spiritual truth, it is the **word from God** that we **must understand** so that it can work in us. When we understand **who we are in Christ**, the Holy Spirit produces in us the work of faith. If we do not know this, we fall into error – back under the yoke of the law and human science. Paul warns: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage ” (**Gal. 5:1**). **This slavery is false systems** that want to trap you back into works, self-correction and struggle in your own strength. But the truth of the gospel teaches us; “**in Christ we are already free, righteous, holy and perfect, that is, in the new man.**”

Grace Is Not a License to Sin

Paul clearly anticipated the objection that grace encourages sin:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (**Romans 6:1–2**).

God’s grace does not free us to sin, but **frees us from sin’s dominion**.

The old man was crucified with Christ (**Romans 6:6**); therefore, we no longer live under the power of sin or the fear of the law.

Grace changes the heart.

When we truly understand what God has done for us in Christ — forgiving us, indwelling us by His Spirit, and creating us anew — our motivation to live godly no longer comes from fear of punishment, but from **gratitude, love, and spiritual transformation.**

Titus 2:11–12 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

Grace itself teaches us holiness — not through threats, but through the power of new life within.

The Spirit leads us to walk in righteousness because this aligns with who we are in Christ.

Renewed in the Spirit of the Mind

The key to daily victory is not striving to reform the flesh but **renewing the mind** with the truth of **who we are in Christ.**

Ephesians 4:22–24 tells us: “Put off concerning the former conversation the **old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**; and **put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

This renewal happens through the Word — by learning and believing sound doctrine from Paul’s gospel.

As we grow in knowledge of grace, our thoughts, desires, and actions begin to align with the Spirit.

We walk in the new mindset of the inner man, knowing that our life is hidden with Christ in God (**Colossians 3:3**).

Walking by the Spirit is not a mystical feeling but a life guided by the **Word of God rightly divided**, depending on the Spirit's strength and truth.

Walking Worthy of Our Calling

Because we are already accepted in the Beloved (**Ephesians 1:6**), we now walk worthy of the calling we have received (**Ephesians 4:1**).

We no longer live to earn God's approval — we already have it in Christ. Instead, we live out of that approval, showing forth the new life God has placed within us.

Even though our flesh remains weak and imperfect, the Spirit produces fruit that reflects Christ's character:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (**Galatians 5:22–23**).

Our goal is not sinless perfection but spiritual maturity — **learning to walk according to the knowledge of who we already are in Christ**.

We are being transformed, not by rules and fear, but by the renewing of our minds and the work of the Spirit. (**Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18**)

WALKING AFTER THE SPIRIT

Rom. 8:1–2 says: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” This is the foundation: in Christ we are free. Sin no longer has dominion over us, for “we are not under the law but under grace” (**Rom. 6:14**).

Walking in the Spirit does not mean “Spirit, lead me, speak and act through me,” but true spiritual knowledge — being established in the right knowledge that God has given for us. Spiritual thinking puts to death the fleshly mind.

Our new identity in Christ and our new position in Him are not the result of our works but a gift of grace. At salvation we received blessings in Christ that no one can earn by their own deeds. Regardless of changes in life or how we feel — if we are in Christ, our identity, position, and blessings never change. This understanding allows us to walk after the Spirit as new people. Paul reminds us: “If you then have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (**Col. 3:1–3**).

In Christ we have become “a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new” (**2 Cor. 5:17**). We are clothed in “the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness” (**Eph. 4:24**). God made us His righteousness in Him (**2 Cor. 5:21**), and in Christ we are complete (**Col. 2:10**). Through Him we have access to the Father, for we are

no longer strangers but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (**Eph. 2:17–19**).

We are God's children, for we have received the Spirit of adoption: "And if we are children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (**Rom. 8:15–17**). Paul says: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father! Therefore you are no longer a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (**Gal. 4:6**). This means we are safe in our relationship with the Father, no longer slaves but beloved sons and daughters.

Christ has become for us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (**1 Cor. 1:30**). Therefore, we are more than conquerors in Him, and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (**Rom. 8:35–39**). When Paul was beaten in prison or stoned, he was still more than a conqueror in Christ and was not separated from God's love in Christ. No matter how we are doing in life or how we feel — not in the flesh, but in Christ we are always more than conquerors and never separated from God's love in Christ.

Some people seek feelings and do things every day just to feel something — that is carnality, not spiritual knowledge. God does not speak to us through our feelings but through His Word. Many do not live by faith but by feelings and experiences, and do not have true faith, because it can only come from true understanding. They focus on themselves and their "spiritual exercises" to have good feelings, pleasant mental states, and extraordinary experiences. This is not freedom in Christ, not the knowledge of the perfect man in Christ, but bondage to the things of this world. Thus believers quickly begin to rely on their supposed visions and

teach them to others. Whoever does not understand the rightly dividing of the Word of God has no chance of coming to the knowledge of the truth.

God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive together with Christ, raised us up, and seated us in the heavenly places, that in the ages to come He might show “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (**Eph. 2:4–7**).

Therefore we can say: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (**Eph. 1:3**).

The letter also reminds us of responsibility: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (**1 Cor. 6:19–20**).

But in Christ we have assurance: “that their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (**Col. 2:2–3**).

Therefore we do not walk in our own righteousness, “which is from the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (**Phil. 3:9**). Walking in the Spirit does not begin with our efforts, but with the knowledge of what God has already given us in Christ. Walking in the Spirit is not feelings and experiences but true knowledge. When we accept that we are complete in Him, that Christ is our life, our mindset turns from the earthly to the heavenly, from the carnal to

the spiritual. And then it is true: “To be spiritually minded is life and peace” (**Rom. 8:6**).

1. Freedom we have in Christ

The believer must know the freedom given to him in Christ. We are a new creation, justified by faith, and God’s Spirit dwells in us.

Paul clearly says: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (**Rom. 6:1–2**)

Grace is greater than sin (**Rom. 5:20**). It is true that in Christ we have eternal life even though we still sin. But the essence is that the old man, together with sin, was crucified (**Gal. 2:20**) — therefore we can no longer live as before.

2. The old and the new man

Every attempt to make the old man morally perfect leads only to self-condemnation or denial of sin.

But the gospel says: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (**2 Cor. 5:17**)

“Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” (**Col. 3:9–10**)

The new man is created “according to God, in righteousness and true holiness” (**Eph. 4:24**).

3. The trap of the law and condemnation

A believer who tries to live sinlessly by his own strength quickly falls into the trap of the law. The law cannot justify anyone but brings knowledge of sin (**Rom. 3:20**). Whoever lives under the law always finds himself in condemnation because he cannot fulfill it perfectly.

Paul declares: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” (**Rom. 8:1–2**)

God does not condemn the believer because in Christ everything is already forgiven (**Col. 2:13**). The believer condemns himself when he measures himself by the law. But Christ has “redeemed us from the curse of the law” (**Gal. 3:13**) and set us free to live in grace.

4. Walking in the Spirit

“Brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (**Rom. 8:12–14**)

Walking in the Spirit is not an emotional experience or the pursuit of mystical encounters. It is a mindset based on the truth of the gospel of grace, which was entrusted to Paul for the church — the body of Christ (**Eph. 3:2–6**).

True spirituality means living from what God has already done in Christ for us: we are His workmanship, created for good works which He prepared beforehand (**Eph. 2:10**).

5. Complete in Christ

In Christ we are already complete (**Col. 2:10**), holy and justified.

Paul says: “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (**Col. 1:28**)

The perfection he speaks of is not moral flawlessness of the old man, but growth and maturity in spiritual knowledge of who we are in Christ.

Life Under Grace – The Conflict Between Flesh and Spirit

Paul teaches clearly that believers are no longer under the Law but under grace. This means that God no longer deals with us based on our works, but on the finished work of Christ on the cross. However, this does not mean that we can now live however we want. Grace is not permission to sin, but the power not to remain under the dominion of sin.

Rom. 6:1–2 says: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?”*

Here Paul explains that the believer in Christ is no longer a slave to sin. Sin still exists, but it no longer rules over him. This means that we now have a choice—something we did not have before. Before Christ, we were bound under sin with no escape. Now, in Christ, we have the ability to walk in the Spirit.

However, in the next chapter, **Rom. 7:14–25**, Paul openly admits that sin still remains in the flesh. Although the believer is renewed in the inner being and desires to walk in righteousness, there is still an inner struggle. The Spirit desires one thing, while the flesh desires another. Paul writes: *“For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see another law in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”* (**Rom. 7:22–23**)

This means that sin remains in the body until we die. Therefore, the believer cannot rely on his own strength, will, or effort to live a holy life. The more he tries in his own strength, the more he experiences defeat.

The solution to this struggle is given in **Romans 8**: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.”* (**Rom. 8:2**)

The law of sin and death operates in our flesh, but it is overcome by a higher law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. When the believer understands that he was crucified with Christ, that the old self is dead, and that power now comes from the Spirit and not from the flesh, then true freedom begins.

Walking in the Spirit does not mean living a life completely free from sin, but that sin no longer reigns. The Spirit teaches us to walk in the truth and convicts us when we stray. This is the difference between the one under the Law and the one under grace. The Law demands, but does not give power. Grace offers both forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life.

Therefore, Paul says: *“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”* (**Rom. 8:8–9**)

We do not find the solution in ourselves. The solution is to walk in the awareness of who we are in Christ—new, justified, cleansed, and empowered by the Spirit.

Thus, grace does not become a pretext for sin, but the power of God for a holy life. Sin remains present in the flesh, but it does not reign. The flesh opposes the Spirit, but the Spirit is stronger. This is true victory through grace—not the absence of sin, but freedom from its dominion.

7. Warning: the danger of returning under the law and human commandments

Paul repeatedly warns believers not to return to the bondage of the law, rituals, and human regulations, which were only a shadow of things to come. “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” (**Col. 2:16–17**)

But the danger was not only in holidays and rituals. Paul also warns against false piety that appears as humility, worship of angels, or commandments like “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.” All these, he says, are based on human teachings and have no power against the flesh (**Col. 2:20–23**).

Paul similarly warns the Galatians: “How are you turning again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, months, seasons, and years.” (**Gal. 4:9–10**)

When a believer returns under the law, he loses the freedom and grace into which Christ has placed us (**Gal. 5:1**).

Timothy is also warned that in later times there will be those who introduce prohibitions and human teachings, even in the name of godliness:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, forbidding marriage and commanding abstinence from foods which God created.” (**1 Tim. 4:1–3**)

Titus is instructed that believers should not concern themselves with “Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn away from the truth” (**Titus 1:14**).

The core danger is that the believer turns away from the simplicity that is in Christ. Paul says: *“But I fear, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* (**2 Cor. 11:3**) Anything that is not centered on Christ quickly leads us into bondage, where we again find ourselves under condemnation.

Paul clearly states that if a believer begins to rely on anything other than Christ — the law, rituals, or his own works — then the cross loses its power in his life:

“Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you are circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.” (**Gal. 5:2**)

“And I testify again to every man who is circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, you who seek to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace.” (**Gal. 5:4**)

This means the cross becomes void (**1 Cor. 1:17**) because the person relies on something other than Christ's finished work.

The Christian no longer lives in shadow but in reality — in Christ, who is our Head, our life, and our perfection. All forms of laws, rituals, and human commandments may seem wise and godly, but in reality they bring nothing but bondage and condemnation.

True freedom is in the gospel of grace, where the believer walks in the Spirit and is rooted in Christ.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”
(**Gal. 5:1**)

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

God instructs us to **study His Word** and **rightly divide it**, so that we may present ourselves as approved workers who need not be ashamed (**2 Tim. 2:15**).

Anyone who does not know how to rightly divide God's Word—that is, to discern which instructions and revelations are given to us and which are not—will not come to true understanding in this life. Such a person will not be an approved worker for God but will be ashamed because they have misunderstood, believed wrongly, and taught others incorrectly.

Most believers are taught false doctrines. Instead of rightly dividing the Word of truth, they combine and generalize it. Few are taught the right division, because it is often not immediately clear from Scripture—**we read it with the mistaken belief that everything speaks directly to us**.

Among those who hear the truth, many reject this knowledge because it differs from what they have been taught until now. The greatest deception that many believers fall into is the idea that the entire Bible speaks directly to us; that the teachings of the Old Testament are meant for the Church; that Jesus, in His ministry to the house of Israel and Judah, speaks to us; that all the apostles teach us; and that God works today exactly as He did in the past.

But this is not true. We must read and learn from all of Scripture, yet by no means does everything speak to us.

Anyone who reads the Bible without understanding what God is speaking to us and what He is not will have the truth obscured. Confusion and misunderstanding will arise, preventing them from being built up in true knowledge. Out of this ignorance, they will easily be deceived—and will also mislead other believers.

Our works of faith will be judged before Christ's judgment seat, where we will receive rewards or positions in the heavenly kingdom. Today, however—unfortunately—not only many believers, but at least 95% of teachers do not know how to rightly divide the Word of truth, which is a real disaster for the Church. Satan has blinded and deceived many brothers and sisters in Christ.

When we read the Bible, we must know:

**WHO WE ARE, WHO WE ARE NOT, WHO IS
SPEAKING, TO WHOM IS SPEAKING, AND FOR WHICH
TIME IS SPEAKING.**

Exodus 24:6–8 “And Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people, and they said, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said; we will be obedient.’ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘Behold, the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.’”

God separated Israel from all other nations through the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with the Ten Commandments through the blood of the covenant. **All other**

nations were Gentiles—without a covenant with the Most High God.

God told Abraham: “Those who bless you, I will bless, and those who curse you, I will curse” (**Gen. 12:3**).

This was the **position of the Gentiles** in the Old Testament: they could receive God’s blessing **only through Israel**. Either they had to bless Israel, or they had to convert and become proselytes—that is to be circumcised and keep all the commandments like the Jews. Because the Jews could not perfectly fulfill the Law, God promised that He would make a new covenant with them.

The 613 commandments were given to the **twelve tribes of Israel**, not to the Gentiles.

Therefore, if you read the Old Testament as if God is speaking directly to you, and think that God works today in the same way He did then—you are living in great error. **There are enormous differences between Israel in the Old Testament and the Church, the body of Christ.**

Rom. 2:14–16 “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things things required by the the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, **according to my gospel.**”

This is the **gospel of grace** that the risen Jesus revealed to Paul **for us**.

Gentiles have never had a covenant with God, and we never will. God never promised a covenant to the Gentiles. Yet many believers think they have a covenant with God.

From the time of Paul until the Rapture (if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me for you ward, **Eph. 3:2**)—that is, in the time of the Church, the body of Christ—even Israel does not have the new covenant. Israel as a whole has fallen; God has interrupted their program. Only a small remnant of Jews will come to salvation through the gospel of grace. God is primarily dealing with the Gentiles in this age; **only in this age do we Gentiles have direct access to God through faith in Christ**, not through Israel. Only in this age are Jews and Gentiles united in one body in Christ.

Before and after this time, God always distinguishes between Israel and the Gentiles.

Jer. 31:31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.**”

Many mistakenly interpret the words “Abraham, the father of many nations” as including the Gentiles in the covenant. But we Gentiles are included in **salvation through faith** that Abraham had, not through the covenant or by lineage (**Rom. 4:16–17**).

Ezekiel 36:24–27 “I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall walk in My statutes and obey them.”

This was a promise to **Israel—not to the Gentiles**. Many believers think God is speaking to them through these words, but this is not true.

Jesus’ Mission – To Whom He Was Sent

Jhn. 1:11 — Jesus came to His own, that is, the twelve tribes of Israel, God’s people of that time, and not to the Gentiles. By human lineage, He was the son of David, of the tribe of Judah. Therefore, He was also called the King of the Jews. **Jesus came to serve Israel, not the Gentiles—salvation first came to Israel.**

Nevertheless, the vast majority of believers and teachers believe and say: “Jesus’ red letters—the four Gospels—are the most important and speak to me.”

Jesus’ Ministry to Israel

Mat. 2:6 — “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Mat. 15:22–26 — A Canaanite woman—a Gentile—from that region came and cried out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is terribly tormented by demons.”

Yet Jesus did not answer her a word.

Then His disciples came and asked Him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

Jesus answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

She came and knelt before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

He answered, **“It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”**

Here Jesus clearly states that He came to serve Israel alone, not the Gentiles. That is why He initially did not answer her, and the disciples wanted to send her away because they were not to associate with Gentiles.

Difference Between Israel and the Gentiles

Acts 10:28 states that, according to Jewish law, it was forbidden for a Jew to associate or socialize with someone of a foreign race. The Jews, according to their law, were not even allowed to associate with Gentiles.

Today, saved people, Gentiles by flesh think that Jesus speaks to us through the four Gospels. They follow Jesus through four Gospels and claim to be His disciples.

They are ignorant of the revelation of the mystery given to Paul concerning Israel’s fall, the new plan of God’s grace, the beginning

of the new Church—the body of Christ—two programs, and the change in God’s plan.

Disciples of Jesus were those who personally learned from Him—this was before the beginning of our Church, and among them were no Gentiles.

All who today follow Jesus through the four Gospels—or a mixture of teaching for Israel and the Church, the body of Christ—have missed our gospel, the present age, our Church, and God’s present work.

Paul on the Gentiles Before the Gospel of Grace

Eph. 2:12 — “remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Here Paul is speaking to the Gentiles—before God turned to them through the gospel of grace, which Jesus revealed to Paul, they were without hope and without God in the world.

The Meaning of “It Is Not Right to Take the Children’s Bread and Throw It to the Dogs”

The bread represents God’s Word, which was given to Israel in the four Gospels. Jesus said that the Israelites are God’s children, while the Gentiles are like dogs—they were not part of God’s family.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom to Israel. Salvation first came to them, so it is not right for the Gentiles to take what was given to Israel.

Despite this, today many believers claim that Jesus speaks to them through the four Gospels.

The departure from the true teaching for our Church began during Paul’s ministry. After his death, it only intensified, with the constant addition of new false traditions.

The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

Mat. 15:27–28 — She replied, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Some mistakenly conclude from this that Jesus came to the Gentiles as well. This would mean that Jesus denied His previous statement when He said, **“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**

But this is not true—the woman was blessed because of her great faith, just as the Roman centurion was, whose servant was healed.

This does not change Jesus' words that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Neither the woman nor the centurion were baptized in water like Israel, received the gospel of the kingdom, or followed Jesus as the others did.

Paul's Revelations

Rom. 15:8 — “ Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

2 Cor. 5:16 — »Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer.«

Paul is saying that we do not know or follow Christ according to His earthly ministry recorded in the four Gospels, but according to the new revelation given to Paul. This does not mean we should ignore the Gospels, but that they do not speak directly to us—**the Church, the body of Christ, which began with Paul.**

Today, the risen Christ speaks to us through the Apostle Paul—this is the preaching of Christ according to the mystery that was hidden from the ages and generations since the world began (**Rom. 16:25–27; Col. 1:26**).

Yet many Gentile believers want to follow Christ as the **servant of the circumcision**. Such believers have gone astray—they walk according to the flesh and the law and have fallen away from the grace of God that is given to us through the gospel of grace, revealed to Paul for the Church, the body of Christ.

Such believers do not live by grace through faith—that is, after the Spirit—but by the commandments and laws that were given to Israel before the cross. Many also believe that the words of Jesus are more important than those of Paul. However, Jesus did not speak His own words, but the words He received from God; likewise, Paul spoke words that he got from Jesus and God, by the Holy Spirit. We must understand the different times and God’s different ways of working to know who is speaking to whom.

To follow Christ through the four Gospels means opposing Christ’s gospel for our Church, because much knowledge is different, and some of it even contradicts itself.

One Truth, Several Different Gospels for Different Times and Groups of People

Many say, “It is all one and the same gospel, one and the same Church; God speaks to everyone from Matthew to Revelation.”

But rightly dividing the Word of truth is the foundation for knowing where to find God’s instructions and knowledge that apply to us today.

Rom. 9:4 — “Who are the Israelites? The ones to whom belong adoption, glory, covenants, giving of the Law, service of God, and the promises.”

The covenants belong to Israel, and we have a different ministry and promises than those given to Israel. Most believers mistakenly think they have a covenant with God—which is not true.

The Way to Enter the Church, the Body of Christ

We enter the Church, the body of Christ, by grace through faith.

Eph. 1:12–14 describes the process:

- We trust in Christ,
- Hear the Word of truth, the gospel of our salvation (**1 Cor. 15:1–4; Rom. 3; Eph. 2:8–9**),
- When we believe and trust it for our salvation, God seals us with the Holy Spirit of promise, the guarantee of our inheritance.

Rom. 3:25 teaches that we are justified by faith in blood of Jesus as full payment for all our sins, not by a covenant through the blood of Jesus, and not by water baptism for the forgiveness of sins. That was for Israel under the New Covenant.

1 Cor. 12:12 says that we are baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ.

Thus, we become part of the Church by grace through faith, not through a covenant.

Eph. 4:30 reminds us that we are sealed until the day of redemption—until we go to heaven.

The Twelve Apostles and Israel

The twelve apostles were given to the twelve tribes of Israel, not to the Gentiles.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said to them: “You are those who have remained with me in my trials; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, just as my Father has appointed unto me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (**Luke 22:28–30**)

Jesus sent these twelve and commanded them: “**Do not go to the Gentiles**, and do not enter any Samaritan town! Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (**Mat. 10:5–6**).

And also: “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for **salvation is from the Jews**” (**John 4:22**).

New believers often automatically assume that the entire New Testament speaks to us, and think we must have a covenant with God, since everything from Matthew to Revelation is labeled the New Covenant. But this is far from true.

At the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God established the promised **New Covenant with Israel**. The New Covenant, therefore, did not begin at the start of the four Gospels, but at the end:

“Therefore, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions **under the first covenant**. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. A will is valid only after someone’s death, since it has no force while the one who made it lives” (**Heb. 9:15–17**).

Those who had the Old Covenant received the New—that is, Israel. Jesus now received a higher ministry and is, to this extent, the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

The Better Covenant and Promises to Israel

What does “better covenant” and “better promises” mean? God will write His law on the hearts of His people (Israel) and will no longer remember their sins—that is, He will finally and fully forgive them. The Old Covenant, given through Moses, did not fulfill these promises.

On the day of Pentecost, when all in the upper room received the Holy Spirit, the New Covenant Church for Israel began. In Acts 9, following the stoning of Stephen and the scattering of

the believers due to persecution, **God caused the fall of Israel's church with covenant.**

The Beginning of the New Church—The Body of Christ and the Thirteenth Apostle for the Gentiles: Paul of Tarsus

Jesus saved Paul and, through him, began the new Church—the Body of Christ: salvation by grace, through faith, freely given, without a covenant and without the Jewish laws.

A covenant requires obedience to the law even after salvation. Therefore, salvation by grace and faith cannot coexist with a covenant.

This is a different gospel—the gospel of grace—for our Church, the Body of Christ, which possesses all spiritual blessings and a place in the heavenly realms, in contrast to the gospel of the kingdom, which was for the nation of Israel under the covenant, with earthly blessings and the promise of a kingdom on earth. This is God's twofold plan.

Israel = 12 Apostles, Covenant, Law, Gospel of the Kingdom, Promise Earthly Kingdom and Earthly Blessings

Body of Christ = Paul Apostle to the Gentiles, Gospel of Grace, Mystery, Without Law, Heavenly Position and Spiritual Blessings

Israel first rejected and crucified Jesus. Then they were given a second opportunity to believe in Him through the preaching of the twelve apostles in Jerusalem, but again they resisted the Holy Spirit by persecuting the apostles and believers, and by stoning Stephen. Therefore, God interrupted the program of Israel's New Covenant church.

“Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (**Mat. 28:19–20**).

But they never went, because Israel as a whole again rejected Christ. Instead, God saved Paul and sent him primarily to the Gentiles, and also to the Jews.

Jesus did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Paul understood both programs, and he is not among the names written in the foundation walls of the New Jerusalem, where there are twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (**Rev. 21:14**).

Paul will be in heaven with the Church, the Body of Christ. “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we also await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Phi. 3:20**).

1 Cor. 14:37–38 “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you are commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him remain ignorant.”

God began a new program—a different working of God, a different church, a different dispensation, a different apostle, and a different gospel for the Gentiles, without a covenant and without the law. Faith in the blood (**Rom.3:25**). But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested (**Rom. 3:21**)

The book of Acts is a transition period—Israel’s covenant church falling, gradually diminishing, and operating only in a limited way among the Jews in Israel and among Jews scattered abroad, while at the same time the new Church, the Body of Christ, is established through the apostle Paul and grows among the Gentiles.

The Error of Many Churches Today

Believers and Christian traditions are so focused on the four Gospels and the miracles in Acts that this truth is hidden from them. Therefore, they do not know which church we are, what God is doing today, or where in Scripture we find the doctrine for us.

I was the same—I believed and practiced almost everything I heard from evangelical and charismatic teachers. Only when I began learning from believers who rightly divide the word of truth and are established in our gospel of grace did I understand the difference.

Such believers are very few, and few listen to them or learn from them. But in the things of God, the majority has never been right throughout all human history—there have always been small groups remaining in the true faith.

Most believers follow deceptions, miracles, manifestations, frauds with healings, giving money for blessings, false prophets and apostles, promises of earthly blessings, corrupt religious systems, and denominations built on feelings and outward signs.

Misuse of Romans 11 and Replacement Theology

In **Romans 11**, Paul is describing **Gentile proselytes**—Gentiles who had converted to Judaism and were circumcised. Israel’s covenant church had fallen, represented as the **olive tree** and its branches. The proselytes were the wild olive branches, grafted into this tree—Israel.

This does not speak about us, because **we are the Church, the Body of Christ**, and God does not cut off parts of the Body of Christ as He cut off the branches of the olive tree.

But many believers take verses meant for covenant Israel and wrongly apply them to us. This created the false doctrine called Replacement Theology (Covenant Theology): that Israel’s church did not fall, but Gentiles were grafted into Israel’s covenant church.

Therefore, they believe the deception of “one church and one gospel from Matthew to Revelation,” and that our church began in Acts 2.

But we **Gentiles by flesh are included in salvation—not in the covenant**.

The Difference Between Israel's Church and the Body of Christ

Our church is **not** described in **(1 Peter 2:9)** “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...” **(Isa. 2:1–5)**.

Instead, our identity is given in **(Gal. 3:28)** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Our church is **spiritual**—without a physical lineage, without a holy nation, without a royal priesthood.

The Catholic Church is entirely deceived as it follows the program that belonged to Israel—along with many added inventions—and many other churches follow the same mistaken foundation.

They have everything wrong: “The Spirit clearly says that in the last days some will depart from the faith and give attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” **(1 Tim. 4:1–5)**

Romans 11 – Israel, the Gentiles, and God's Plan

Rom. 11:7 — “What then? Israel did not obtain what it sought, but the elect obtained it. The rest were blinded.” (The elect were the believing Israelites.)

Rom. 11:11 — “So I ask, have they stumbled so that they should fall? By no means! But through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy.”

Rom. 11:12 — “If their fall is riches for the world, and their loss riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness be!” (The fullness of Israel will come at the second coming of Christ.)

Rom. 11:25 — “I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery ... Blindness in part has happened to Israel **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**” (The fullness of the Gentiles will happen at the rapture of our church.)

Rom. 11:32 — “For God has concluded them all in unbelief so that He might have mercy upon all.”

God interrupted the program of Israel’s New Covenant church. Some were saved, but the rest were blinded—God caused their spiritual blindness and the fall of Israel so that He turned to the Gentiles.

Through this He began a **new program**:

- A **new church** – the Body of Christ
- A **new dispensation** – the dispensation of the grace of God given to Paul for us
- A **new gospel** – from Christ through Paul, for the Gentiles and for the remnant of Jews who are not blinded

This is the present age, lasting from Paul until the **rapture** of our church. That will be the moment when the **fullness of the Gentiles** comes in.

The Future of Israel and the 7-Year Tribulation

After the rapture of our church, **God will once again turn His attention to Israel** through the 7-year tribulation — also called **Jacob's Trouble**, which means **Israel's time of distress**.

During this period:

- It will be God's **judgment upon Israel**,
- **One third** will be saved at the second coming of Christ,
- **Two thirds** will be cut off and perish (Zec. 13:8–9).

The purpose of the tribulation is to judge and purify fallen Israel and the unbelieving Gentiles who have rejected salvation through Jesus.

This will be the final opportunity for salvation through **the Gospel of the Kingdom** and **the Everlasting Gospel**.

As soon as our church is raptured, the **dispensation of grace** and the **gospel of grace given through Paul** will come to an end.

No one will be saved anymore by grace through faith, nor will anyone be baptized by one Spirit into the Body of Christ.

The Difference Between the Churches

Our church — **the Body of Christ** — has **no part** in the 7-year tribulation and will **not pass through judgment**.

- The last trumpet of the angel (**Rev. 11:15**) is **not** the same as the last trumpet in **1 Cor. 15:52** (the call of the rapture). That trumpet concerns the **Second Coming of Christ**.

- **1 Thes. 4:16** — “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.”

This refers to Christ coming **in the clouds** and the **rapture of the church**.

Apostle **John** speaks according to the **prophetic program for Israel** and the coming tribulation.

While Apostle **Paul** speaks according to **the mystery for the present age** of the **Body of Christ church**.

The Purpose of God’s Binding

God first bound **the Gentiles** in disobedience — until the beginning of our church. Then God bound **Israel** — in the present dispensation of grace — so that He might show **mercy to all** and save all through Christ.

Before God no one can boast:

- All humanity has fallen into sin,
- We are all guilty before God,
- We have received eternal life and inheritance among the saints in heaven **because of God’s mercy and Christ’s sacrifice**,
- Salvation **is not by human effort**, but by grace through faith.

Two Programs of God

We must understand **TWO PROGRAMS!**

1. The Church — the Nation of Israel under the Covenant

Program for Israel: **God spoke by the mouths of all His holy prophets since the world began.** (Acts 13:21)

The Gospel of the Kingdom for Israel under the covenant includes:

- Jesus' ministry to Israel in the **four Gospels**,
- The ministry of the **twelve apostles** in the Book of Acts,
- And the books from **Hebrews through Revelation**.

These describe **the time past and ages to come in accordance with prophecy.**

2. The Spiritual Church, the Body of Christ

Program for our Church: **Mystery hidden in God since the world began.** (Eph. 3:9 ; Rom. 16:25)

The knowledge for our Church is according to **the mystery**, hidden in God from the beginning of the world and revealed to the Apostle Paul – the only apostle who speaks directly to the Gentiles and to our Church. **But now – present time.**

Today, God is building, through Paul's gospel of grace, **the new man in Christ**, created in righteousness and true holiness. This program lasts from Paul until the Rapture.

We are saved **now**, by grace through faith, **without a covenant**. Israel, however, will be saved **at the Second Coming of Christ**.

As Gentiles, we have **direct access to God through Jesus**. We do **not** have earthly blessings or the promise of a kingdom on earth, but **all spiritual blessings and inheritance in the heavenly places**.

The entire gospel of grace is found in Paul's thirteen letters – **from Romans to Philemon** – where the foundation of our Church is laid.

The Importance of Right Understanding

To understand God's two fold plan and to participate in it correctly, we must understand **both programs** and be **stablished** in the **right gospel** that belongs to us.

If a believer does not rightly divide the Word of Truth, he cannot be built in true knowledge, have the right faith, or function according to God's will. This applies also to the community of believers – the Church.

Rom. 16:25 “God is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began.”

Eph. 3:9 “To make all man see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God.”

Col. 1:26 “The mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now is revealed to His saints.”

Eph. 6:19 “...that I may boldly open my mouth to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

1 Cor. 2:7 “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.”

Meanwhile, the gospel for **Israel’s redemption** – as stated in Luke 1:70 and Acts 3:21 – is the one which God spoke “**through the mouths of all His holy prophets since the world began.**”

God establish us **through our gospel**, when we learn what that gospel **is** and what it **is not**. We must agree with it through study, acknowledge these truths, and give thanks for what God reveals. This is the **work of faith**: God reveals truth through His Word and establishes us in it.

This is far more important than spiritual experiences, emotions, or altered mental states – none of these bring us to the knowledge of the truth. **Rom. 1:11** Paul imparting spiritual gifts by preaching the gospel.

Phn. 1:6 »That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.«

As we learn correctly, we are renewed in our minds with true knowledge, and God establishes us in the gospel given to the Body of Christ.

John 5:39 Jesus said to Israel: “You **search the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life, and these **testify of Me.**”

Eph. 3:8 “To me, the least of all saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches of Christ**, and to enlighten all regarding the fellowship of the mystery.”

God spoke to Israel through the prophets in the Old Testament about the coming of their Messiah, Jesus.

But for us—the Church, the Body of Christ—the knowledge of the riches of Christ and our fellowship with Him **cannot be found outside of Paul’s thirteen letters**. This knowledge was previously hidden in God and was revealed to Paul **for us**.

Paul received a **new and different gospel** directly from Jesus, and he did **not** teach it among Israel under the covenant, so that he would **not build on another foundation**. (The “other foundation” is Jesus as a minister to the circumcision in the four Gospels and the ministry of the 12 apostles.)

Paul, who was a Pharisee and knew the Old Testament and the gospel of the kingdom, **gradually received the revelation of the gospel of grace**. According to this revelation, he spoke to the Jews under the covenant and built the new Church, the Body of Christ—mostly among Gentiles—**with the new gospel**.

1 Timothy 1:16 “But I received mercy for this reason, that **in me first** Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering **as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.**”

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be followers of me, as I am of Christ.”

Paul was **the last to be saved**, but he was **the first** in the Body of Christ and **laid the foundation** of our Church. The one who lays the foundation must be the first, and as Paul said, he **did not build on another's man foundation.**

So, whoever follows Christ today **must follow Paul**, just as Paul follows Christ. This means growing in the knowledge of Paul's gospel and sharing it with others. It does **not** mean that believers today operate in the same signs and spiritual gifts that Paul had.

Paul is **the example** for all who believe in Jesus for eternal life.

Objections such as:

“The words of Jesus in the four Gospels are more important than Paul's because Jesus spoke them directly; you are worshiping Paul instead of Jesus” come from those who **do not understand.**

Jesus **gave Paul a new gospel for us**, and when we follow Paul, we are **following Christ in the correct way.** We are **not worshiping Paul**, but **the Father and Jesus Christ.**

2 Cor. 5:20 “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.”

(We are Christ’s ambassadors—meaning His delegates and representatives—serving Jesus and the Church by proclaiming Christ according to the **mystery**, the gospel of grace.)

Col. 1:28 “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.”

1 Cor. 3:10 “According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. But let each one take care how he builds upon it.”

Rom. 15:20 “I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else’s foundation.”

Paul – First by Grace and Foundation of the Body of Christ

All other apostles before Paul followed Jesus, believed in Him, and learned directly from Him. But **Paul was different**.

In **1 Tim. 1:12–16**, we read that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an enemy of Jesus. Yet he received mercy because he acted in ignorance and unbelief.

He was **the first** to be saved by Jesus **by grace, through faith, without his own works**—so that Jesus might first show **His perfect patience** in Paul **as an example** for others.

With Paul, Jesus began something **new**—the **Church, the Body of Christ**—in which Paul was **the first**, as a **pattern** for all who would follow.

He was saved the **last** among apostles, but the **first** to lay the foundation of our Church.

A foundation is always laid **first**, not last. Others then build on this foundation: **the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery**.

The Foundation We Build On

1 Cor. 3:11–15 “For no one can lay another foundation than the one which has already been laid, and that foundation is Jesus Christ.

If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stable—each person’s work will become visible.

The Day will reveal it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what kind of work each one has done.

If the work that someone has built survives, he will receive a reward.

If it burns up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

Many believers think they are preaching the true Christ—the Christ found from Matthew to Revelation. But they do not understand the difference between:

• **Rom. 16:25** — “*the preaching of Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*”

This is the risen Christ, who came from heaven, saved Paul, and gave him the **gospel of grace** for our church.

and

• **Rom. 15:8** — “*Christ a minister of the circumcision*”

This refers to the four Gospels — the **gospel of the kingdom for Israel**, before the cross — a different teaching.

Peter, James, and John were laying the foundation for **Israel under the New Covenant**. Whose promise is the highest mountain of the Lord's house, to which all nations will flow during the thousand-year reign of Jesus (**Isa. 2:2-5**)

But Paul did **not** build on that foundation — he built upon **a new one** that Christ Himself gave to him. Promise for our church is reigning in heavenly places.

Building Incorrectly and the Testing of Works

Believers who are building today on **both** foundations (which is the vast majority of churches) or on **the foundation for Israel with the covenant alone** (such as the Roman Catholic Church), will suffer a **loss** — their work will be burned up — if they are saved at all.

This judgment of reward applies only to **saved people** who are in the Body of Christ and will take place **after the rapture**.

Eph. 5:26–27 “So that He might sanctify her, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, and present her to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, but holy and blameless.”

We will become a **glorious Church** through the judgment seat of Christ, where some will **receive reward**, and others will **suffer a loss**.

The New Dispensation of Grace

Ephesians 3:2 “If indeed you have heard of the dispensation (administration) of the grace of God which was given to me for you ward...”

Here Paul speaks as a prisoner of Jesus Christ **for the Gentiles**. He received from Jesus a **new dispensation** — a new **program of grace** for us.

Colossians 1:25 “I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to fulfill (complete) the word of God.”

Important note: Through Paul’s writings, God **completed** His written Word. Everything we need is in Scripture. God speaks **only** through His written Word. There are many self-proclaimed prophets, apostles, and believers who claim that God speaks to them directly — especially in charismatic evangelical churches. I myself followed these deceptions for about five years. These are deeply deceived people, and the only thing they can do is to deceive others. None of them understand this doctrine. They believe they are prophets like those in the Old Testament, and that

God works today as He did back then. This has produced enormous confusion and spiritual delusion.

Acts 20:24“...that I may finish my race and complete the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

Many believers say: “God has always shown grace. It is all the same grace.” But this is a **different grace**—neither the one that was before, nor the one that will come later. This is a new division of time, a **new plan of God**.

This is the present age—and we must not mix it with the past or the future. The gospel is different, and **God works differently today** than in the time before Paul’s salvation, and differently than He will work after the Rapture.

Two Gospels

Gal. 2:2 “I went up to Jerusalem by revelation and communicated to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.”

Here Paul was speaking with Peter and the other leading apostles. He shared with them mainly those points where there were problems. Some Jews believed that Gentiles also had to be circumcised and keep the Jewish Law. The Jews did not know that God had turned from Israel to the Gentiles, because this mystery was revealed to Paul. He did not share his entire gospel with them,

because it was not given to them — that is why Peter also said Paul’s writings were difficult to understand.

And why Paul says: **“lest I had run in vain.”** (That others would not destroy what he was building)

The same happened in **Galatians 3**, where Jews followed Paul and the Gentile believers, trying to convert them away from the gospel of grace they received from Paul, and back into life under the Law.

The Gospel of the Circumcision and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision

Gal. 2:7–9 “On the contrary, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision had been entrusted to Paul, just as the gospel of the circumcision had been entrusted to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter of the apostleship of the circumcision also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when they recognized the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John, who were considered pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship: that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”

They realized that Paul had a different gospel for the Gentiles. God worked powerfully in **Paul** to bring the gospel to the **Gentiles** — this is the **gospel according to the mystery**. Therefore **Paul and Barnabas** were sent to the **Gentiles**.

God worked powerfully in **Peter** to bring the gospel to **Israel** — this is the **gospel according to prophecy**. **Peter, James, and John** were sent to the **circumcised – Israel**.

The Turning to Gentiles

Acts 13:44–50 “The next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what Paul spoke, reviling him.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first. But since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

For so the Lord has commanded us:

‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,

That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’

When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region.

But the Jews stirred up devout and prominent women and the leading men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.”

As mentioned earlier from (**Rom. 11:7, 8, 11, 25**)

Israel fell, and God turned to the Gentiles **to provoke Israel to jealousy**.

Because of this, God gave them a spirit of slumber — eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear.

Most Jews still do not believe that Jesus is their promised Messiah. They consider the New Testament to be deception, and continue to follow the **Tanakh** (the 24 books of the Old Testament) and the **Torah** (the five books of Moses).

Those Jews who are not blinded and who believe in the sacrifice of Jesus for their salvation are part of the Church just as Gentiles are. In this present age of grace, both Gentiles and Jews have **the same gospel** and **the same salvation**, which is not based on covenant or Law.

Paul Built the Church on His Gospel

1 Cor. 4:1 “Let a man consider us as servants of Christ and **stewards of the mysteries of God.**”

Whoever does not know how to rightly divide the word of truth cannot be a servant of Christ or a steward of God’s mysteries. They are always learning, yet never come to the knowledge of the truth. They are zealous for God, but without the right knowledge.

Rom. 16:17 “Now I urge you, brothers, mark those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.”

Gal. 1:6–7 “I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

Gal. 1:8–9 “But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed!”

If believers do not understand the **two programs** and the difference between them, they will preach a **gospel different** from the one Jesus gave to Paul for the Church, the Body of Christ. Without this understanding, it is impossible to recognize false teaching in churches that mix the Old Covenant, the four Gospels, and the twelve apostles with Paul’s gospel of grace.

To this mixture is often added human wisdom and false testimonies that are not from God. Yet everyone claims they are right — no one will admit they teach false doctrine.

I had to go through all of this myself, and your only way forward is to study the Scriptures according to this pattern and come to this understanding.

Rom. 16:25 “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to **my gospel** and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.”

Why God Kept the Mystery Hidden Until Paul

1 Cor. 2:7–8 “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

The rulers of this age are Satan and his angels, who rule the domain of the air and work spiritual evil. Satan wanted to eliminate Jesus — he entered Judas to betray Him to those who sought His death. Israel as a nation rejected Christ, and the Gentiles remained lost.

But God, according to **His secret plan**, gave Paul a new gospel of grace. Through this gospel, even the Gentiles can receive **salvation freely by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ — faith in His blood** as the full payment for all sin. Believers are justified and made righteous before God.

If Satan and his fallen angels had understood this plan, they would **not** have crucified Christ. This is why the mystery was hidden since the beginning of the world. Jesus never revealed it in the four Gospels.

Because the crucifixion was part of God's hidden plan, both **Gentiles and Jews now have the opportunity for eternal life** by faith.

The Church, the Body of Christ, and the Heavenly Realm

The Church, the Body of Christ, will replace Satan and his rebellious angels in the heavenly places. When Satan and his servants are defeated and cast down to the earth, the Church will **occupy the positions of authority in the heavens**.

This, together with the previous chapter, explains why this knowledge is so rare and why it is the most attacked and hidden truth. If Satan and his servants cannot steal your salvation, they will

try to mislead you into false knowledge, false belief, and false teaching. The result is a loss of eternal rewards in the heavens, when the fire will test the work of faith in every believer. **Fight the good fight of faith.**

Eph. 1:19–23 “...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things of the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

The Lord Jesus Christ Restores the Heavenly Realm to the Father

1. The Creation of the Body of Christ

Christ is creating the Church, His Body, which will replace the fallen rebellious angels. The Church is chosen for positions of authority in the heavens which Satan and his followers lost.

2. The Catching Away of the Body of Christ Before the Seven-Year Tribulation

The Body of Christ will be taken into heaven before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation, meaning believers will be safely removed from the world of persecution.

3. The Cleansing of the Church at the Judgment Seat of Christ

Jesus will sanctify and cleanse His Church, so that it will be without spot, wrinkle, or any defect — prepared for service in the heavenly places.

4. **The Casting Down of Satan and His Angels**

After the Church is taken, Satan and his angels will be cast out of the heavens to the earth, beginning the time of God's judgment upon them.

5. **The Filling of the Vacant Positions with the Body of Christ**

Christ will fill the emptied positions in the heavenly realm with the Church, the Body of Christ. The heavens will be purified and prepared for God's final kingdom.

Christ restores the heavenly realm to the Father with the Church, the Body of Christ, in the midst of the seven-year tribulation, after the fall of Satan and his angels. Once this occurs, the **heavens are purified** and ready for God's sovereign rule.

The Lord Jesus Christ Reconciles the Earth Back to the Father

Rev. 11:15 “And the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and loud voices were heard in heaven, saying: ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.’”

In the middle of the seven-year tribulation, a **great proclamation** will be made that Jesus has taken authority over all earthly kingdoms.

- At His second coming, **Jesus will defeat** all the **enemies of God**,
- The **Antichrist** and the **False Prophet** will be thrown into the **lake of fire**,
- Jesus will establish the Millennial Kingdom, which will last 1,000 years,
- After the millennium comes the **judgment before the Great White Throne**, where God will judge all who were not saved,
- Everyone whose name is not found in the **Book of Life** will be thrown into the lake of fire,
- Finally, Satan, hell, and death will also be thrown into the lake of fire.

After this, the **earth will be cleansed and reconciled** to the Father, prepared for the new heavens, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem.

Everything in heaven and on earth will be gathered together in Jesus Christ and reconciled to the Father. This is the beginning of the eternal future of God's Kingdom.

Connection to God's Plan

Eph. 1:8–10 “This grace He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and understanding. **He made known to us the mystery of His will** according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself— That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth...”