



Sunday School Text Book



Class

11

Published by
**Sharon Fellowship Sunday
School Association**

SHARON FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXT BOOK
CLASS - 11



Published by
SHARON FELLOWSHIP
SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
Thiruvalla 689 101

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXT BOOK

Class - 11

Malayalam Editions

First 2004

Second 2011

English Edition 2015

Copy right reserved:

Sharon Fellowship Sunday School Association
Tiruvalla, Kerala.

Published by:

Sharon Fellowship Sunday School Association
Tiruvalla, Kerala.
Ph: 0469-2607979

Printed by:

Darsana Offset

Cover & Page Layout:

Global, Tiruvalla.

Price: Rs. 80/-

CONTENTS

	FOREWORD	5
	DECLARATION	7
1	THE CHURCH: THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD AND ITS MEANINGS	9
2	THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH	13
3	TREE-FOLD MISTERIES OF THE CHURCH	16
4	THE FOUNDATION OF CHURCH	19
5	ORGANISATION (SET UP) OF THE FORMER CHURCH	23
6	FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNANCE	27
7	EPISCOPAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM (CONTINUED)	30
8	THE PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNANCE	33
9	THE CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM	36
10	PENTECOSTAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM	39
11	THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTERS	43
12	THE APOSTLES	46
13	PROPHETS AND EVEANGELISTS	50
14	THE TEACHERS AND THE PASTORS	54
15	THE DEACONS AND DEACONESS	58
16	THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH	61
17	THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH(CONTINUED) ..	64
18	THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED) .	68
19	THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED) .	72
20	FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH	76

21	REPENTENCE	80
22	BAPTISM	83
23	GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	88
24	GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (CONTINUED)	91
25	SEPARATION	95
26	THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINES AND FELLOWSHIP	99
27	PRAYER	103
28	THE LORD'S TABLE	109
29	MISSION OF THE CHURCH	112
30	MISSION OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)	115
31	THE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	119
32	HOPE OF THE CHURCH	123
33	CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN KERALA	127
34	THE JACOBITE – ORTHODOX CHURCHES	131
35	THE MAR THOMA CHURCH	135
36	CSI AND CNI	139
37	ST. THOMAS EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF INDIA	142
38	THE PENTECOST CHURCH	150
39	BRETHREN AND BAPTIST CHURCHES	146



SHARON FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Sharon, Tiruvalla, Kerala, India- 689 101

Dr. T. G. Koshy
(President)

FOREWORD

The role that Sunday school plays in moulding children spiritually is truly significant. It is noteworthy that the children who attend Sunday School are mentally and spiritually strong and are different from other children. The children who regularly attend Sunday School grow spiritually, excel in character formation and are blessed by the almighty in all their ways.

Through Sunday School ministry the church shapes a spiritual and righteous generation who will be worthy citizens in the society. Hence the church and the pastor should give due importance to the Sunday School and offer any encouragement needed for its smooth functioning. There are many men and women of God who accepted the Lord through the Sunday School and have later become great personalities. May the Sunday School ministry of our Church equip many more children to become famous in the Lord.

I congratulate the Sunday School Association workers for publishing thirteen textbooks, including one for playschool, and for having fulfilled the noble task entrusted to them. I praise the Lord Almighty for He was gracious and enabled the workers to bring out a English edition of the eleventh standard text book. I especially pray that all their efforts be fruitful and that our children and the churches be blessed always.

In His Service,

Dr. T. G Koshy

Manakala
02-01-2015

CURRICULAM COMMITTEE (2013-15)

Pastor Jacob George

Pastor Abraham Mannamaruthy

Bro. K. Thankachan

Bro. T. Thankachan

Pastor Jose George

Pastor Stanly Sebastian

Pastor Joy C. Kochakkal

DECLARATION

The Sunday School is an inevitable part of the church. The very existence and growth of a church depends to a great extent on the activities conducted for its children and youngsters. If children and youngsters receive Bible classes and spiritual training they turn out to become an asset for the church and the Kingdom of God.

Sharon Bible College, Tiruvalla and Faith Theological Seminary, Manakala had published text books for our Sunday School. Those text books ran out of stock and for a period of time there was a great shortage of good textbooks. Therefore enquiries for bringing out a good text book began to be directed to the Sunday School Association members.

Our Church Vice-President Dr.T.P.Abraham was instrumental in coordinating the efforts and bringing out text books for 1st to 10th classes for Sunday School in 1998 by the grace of God. These books were warmly received by the teachers and students of other Sunday School groups too. The books were distributed as soon as they were published and hence several reprints had to be made for books of all classes. When eleventh and twelfth grade classes were begun, we had to rely on other textbooks for the conduct of classes.

The decision to publish our own textbooks for classes 11 and 12 was taken by the Sunday School committee in 2003 and consequently the textbook for class eleven was brought out in 2004 and the textbook for class twelve in 2008. God also enabled us to publish a new textbook for nursery kids and a new activity based text books for Class 1&2.

The text book we have published not only facilitates a comprehensive study of God's Word from the beginning to the end, but also helps to learn about the church, history of the church, great missionaries, different religions and even about false doctrines.

Pastor Sabu Paul M.A.,M.Th is the author of this book.

In 2009, Sharon Fellowship Sunday School Association took the decision to publish the text books in English, as the demand was so high. Many of our students are studying in English medium schools and text books in English became inevitable. By God,s grace Sunday School Association published the text books for classes 4,5,6, and 7 in English language on 2010, and the text books for classes 1,2,3,8,9 and 10 published in English language in 2013. Now in this year 2015, by the grace of God, the Sunday School Association is publishing the text books for class 11 and 12. Now books for all classes are available in English language.

English translation of this text book done by *some volunteers from Sharon Fellowship Church, Gujarat Zone*, and edited by *Rev. Saji Philip Thiruvanchoor*. We extend our hearty thanks to those who transalated and edited the textbook.

This book is offered at the feet of our most merciful God with the prayer that it may touch the hearts of thousands of students and that it may be a blessing to the churches and that the name of God be glorified.

For Sunday School Association,

Pastor Abraham Mannamaruthy
(General Director)

Pastor Jacob George
(Chairman, Curriculum Committee)

Brother K. Thankachen
(General Secretary)

Thiruvalla.
02-01-2015

LESSON - 1

THE CHURCH: THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD AND ITS MEANINGS

Reading Passages : Acts 2:37-47; Philippians 3:4; James 2:7;
1 Peter 4:16

Memory verse : 1 Peter 2:9

Introduction : There are many denominations of Christian Churches. The truth seekers may puzzle as to which is the true Church. Therefore it is essential to know what the Word of God says about Church. The usages of the original words and the extent of its meanings are the essential part of this study.

What is Church?

All Christians are associated with a Church. Therefore the word Church is familiar to all. 'Church' was not a Christian word. It was in use even before the advent of Christianity. It meant 'body', 'assembly', 'place for gathering' etc. With the coming of Christianity, the term 'church' gradually gained the meaning of Christian society. At the same time the old meanings too continued. To get the very idea of Christian Church, it is essential to understand the broad meanings from Bible.

The Old Testament

In Hebrew, the original language of Old Testament, two words 'Quhal' and 'Edha' have been translated as Church. The word Quhal means 'a group called for a special purpose'. This was assigned to any gathering called out for a common purpose. The Israelites who had come from Egypt under the leadership of Moses were called by Stephen as 'the Church of Wilderness' (Acts 7:8).

The word 'Edha' means to meet or gather at a predetermined place. It was used to denote the gatherings or conference for official requirements.

Septuagint

The Septuagint, the Greek version of Old Testament, translated the Hebrew word 'qahal' in two senses. The word 'ecclesia' is used 69 times and 'synagogi' 37 times. Synagogues were the place where the Jews gathered for worship. Majority of the academicians agree that the most suitable translation for 'Qahal' is 'ecclesia'.

The New Testament

Referring to 'Church', the word 'ecclesia' is used in the New Testament for 116 times and the word 'kuriakon' is used for 2 times. Ecclesia is derived form of word 'Eccs' and 'caleo'. It means 'called out of'. In other words, Church means the gathering of the called out for special purpose. 'Kuriakon' is derived form of 'Kurios' and 'Oikos'. It means 'the House of the Lord'.

The representatives from all towns of Judea were included in the governing body of the main cities. There was a practice to call the general public by these people to bring forth their issues. Such gatherings were known as 'ecclesia'. The believers of the first century used the same term to denote their gatherings.

The meaning of Church

The meaning of Church is clear from the genesis of the word. It means 'the gathering of believers' rather than 'the place' or the 'building' for gathering of believers. The words 'call' and 'separate' has much significance in the New Testament. A person called out by Jesus is the member of a Church. The word 'call' has been mentioned for 700 times in the New Testament. God's calling is in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:14). It is to bear the name of Christian (James 2:7; 1Peter 4:16). The disciples were called and they followed Him. The Epistles of Paul study about the calling of Jesus Christ. By preaching, God has called us to save and to receive the glory of Jesus Christ by sanctifying the Spirit and believing the truth (1Thess 2:11), then to the fellowship of Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:9); and for the mission of preaching (Galatians 1:15-16).

The Christian Church is a community called and separated out of different societies of the world. This has been clearly revealed during the initial stage of the former Church. A clear separation from the practices of traditions was essential whether it was from the society

of Jews known as God's own people or from gentiles. Jesus Christ is the owner and controller of the Church. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness in to his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The Universal Church and the Local Church

The New Testament deals with the Universal Church and the Local Church. "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). There is only one Church in Lord's salvation plan. This church is built with Jesus as the corner stone and is invisible and universal. Each one saved from any part of the world is added to this universal church. This church will unite with Christ in His glorious appearance. This Church is the bride of Christ. The names of the members of this invisible Church are recorded in the book of life kept in heaven.

The Churches represented as the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), The House Church (Romans 16:5), The Churches of Asia (1 Cor 16:19) are the Local Churches. The presence of Lord is there where two or three persons gather in the name of Jesus. The local church is the place where the believers practice fellowship and the word of God. The New Testament has clearly drawn the guidelines for functioning of these churches. For the salvation of spirit, it is necessary to identify the real and genuine church functioning in accordance with the Word. It is not necessary that all that are in the register of local church are taken to be with The Lord at His second coming. However, it is sure that the members of the invisible Church whose names are mentioned in the book of life will be taken at His second coming.

Questions:

1. Mention whether 'church' was a Christian name?
2. Write about the words and its meaning in the Old Testament referring to church.
3. How the word 'quhal' has been translated in Septuagint?
4. Write the Greek words for 'church' and give its meanings.
5. What is the importance of the words 'call' and 'separate' according to the word of God?
6. Distinguish the Universal Church and the Local Church?

LESSON - 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

Reading passages : Matthew 16:18; 1Cor. 3:11; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1Cor. 12:13.

Memory verse : Ephesians 2:20

Introduction : When did the church start? Whether it was an extension of a former one or a new scheme altogether? This should be studied, because some Christian churches follow corrupt practices in the guise of some Old Testament traditions. Let us examine if there is any justification to continue with the Old Testament traditions particularly when Christ says 'the new wine is not stored in the old bottles.'

The Mystery of the Church

There are different opinions prevailing as to when the Church of God was started. Some teach that Church existed even in the Old Testament period. But Apostle Paul denies this argument. The fact that the Jews and gentiles will get together and become heirs in Christ and become parts of one body was not revealed in Old Testament. This mystery was hidden in the prophetic books and the calls for worship by Israelites.

The declaration of Christ

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, Who did Jesus ask as to what people understand about Him. Then Peter sternly replied: "You are Christ, the Son of the Living God". From the statement of Jesus that "on this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18), it is clear that building of Church was not started yet. 'Will build' indicates about an action of the future. Hence

the Church is not a continuation of an Old Testament system.

Christ the foundation

The Christian Church is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1Cor 3:11). When it is on Christ, it is impractical to say that Church was started before Christ. By giving the commandments of Lord's Table and Baptism (Matthew 26:26-29, 28:18-20), the Lord reminds the disciples about their duties. The Lord's teachings and directions to the disciples contains indications the plans of establishing His Church.

In his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter stressed two things: the death and resurrection of Jesus, the descending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ completed the work of redemption by His crucifixion. It is clearly recorded that Christ bought the Church of God by His own blood (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25-27). If so the Church was not established before the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Apostle Paul says "For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink in to one spirit" (1Cor 12:13). John the Baptist prophesied that the one who is coming after him will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, commanded His disciples to wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit in a few days (Acts 1:5). The statements of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as explained by Peter (Acts 11:15-16). It is clear from the above verses that the Church of God was established on the day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Birthday of the Church

The day of Pentecost on which the Holy Spirit came from heaven on around 120 people gathered in the house of Mark, as the fulfilment of promises, can be considered as the birthday of the Church. When the Pharisees complained to Jesus that the disciples do not observe Old Testament rituals, Jesus replied: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Mathew 9:16-17). The Holy Spirit, the new wine was kept not in the old wine sack of the Old Testament traditions but in the new wine sack, the Church. It means, the Church was launched with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of 3000 people and the subsequent revival caused to the quick growth of Church. The disciples and the new believers gathered in houses in Jerusalem for breaking of bread, fellowship and they gave much attention to the teachings and testimonies of disciples. They literally accepted the commandments of Lord that they will receive power when Holy Spirit is poured on them and expanded the Church to different nearby places. The signs and wonders ensured the Word of God.

The threat and persecution that stirred up against apostles could not hinder the growth of the Church. Though the people scattered after the martyr of Stephen, still many churches were formed at different places. Apostle Paul gave major contributions in expanding the Church among the gentiles.

The Church and the Israel

Many Christian Denominations teaches that they are the continuation of the Old Testament. But Saint Paul's words clarify that the Church is different from the Israel. (Ephesians 3:5-6). Chaufer points out some 25 differences between the Church and the Israel. Let us see some important differences:

Church	Israel
1. Established on the day of Pentecost	1. Started with the calling of Abraham
2. Is under the new covenant	2. Founded on the old Cvenant
3. Members comprises of different generations, languages and nations	3. Only one generation is involved, the Israel.
4. Christ is the Head	4. Abraham is the head
5. The evidence of covenant is Holy Spirit	5. Circumcision is the evidence of covenant
6. Membership with spiritual birth	6. Membership with natural birth
7. Heavenly citizenship	7. Natural (earthly) citizenship
8. All are generation of royal priesthood	8. Priests are only from the family of Aaron from the Levites

Questions:

1. Do the statements spoken by Christ (as given in the lesson) prove that Church was not established before Christ? Explain.
2. What do Peter stress on the sermon of Pentecost day?
3. What are the differences between the Church and Israel?
4. Prove that the Church is altogether a new scheme.

LESSON - 3

TREE-FOLD MISTERIES OF THE CHURCH

Reading passages : 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Ephesians 3:1-11, 6:19; Revelation 19:7-9.

Memory verse : Ephesians 3:5-6.

Introduction : The Church itself was a mystery. It was hidden in the Holy Heart of God the Father and was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets. There are three fold mysteries relating to the Church. We are going to study in this in detail.

The Church: Mystery

It was a mystery that the Jews and the gentiles would be built together on Christ and will take part the promises. The word 'mystery' is derived from the Greek word '*Musterion*' which means 'the hidden' or 'the secret.' Though the present sense is 'a secret of which no answer can be found', but this is not the intended meaning in classical Greek. In the New Testament usage, this word means 'that is going to be revealed' or 'the revealed secret', etc. Therefore this word matches with the word 'apocalypse' meaning revelation. The Apostle Paul has revealed mainly three mysteries about the Church.

1.The mystery of 'one body'

The call and vision given to Peter to incorporate the gentiles to the Church through gospel is mentioned in Acts Chapters 10 and 11. God knew that Peter, being an orthodox Jew, will not accept God's plan and therefore He dealt with Peter through visions and he recognized it. As the Holy Spirit initially descended on 120 people who were tarrying, the descending of the Holy Spirit on gentiles was the evidence of heavenly plans to accept gentiles too. But this mystery was revealed

only through Paul who was the special vessel chosen for sending to the gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-11, 6:19; Colossians 4:3).

It was a fact that was never understood nor accepted by Jews that the gentiles would inherit with them. There is a mystery behind such co-heritance too. It is a fact that Christ dwells in a believer. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27).

The Old Testament symbolically reveals about the birth, life and resurrection of the Messiah. Though the Spirit-filled prophets had foretold where and how the Saviour would be born, how He would work, how would be His death and resurrection. The heavenly plan that Messiah would dwell in the believer was a mystery. This is revealed in the New Testament. Though the words of Jesus Christ were indicative of this, it has been clearly stated by Apostle Paul. When person believes in Christ and would be totally changed as the result of Jesus dwells in him. And this is a mystery.

2. The Mystery of 'Bride'

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). The relation between Christ and the Church is compared to a husband and wife. In Revelation 19:7-8, John the Apostle explains about the wedding of Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom with Church, the Bride.

In the Old Testament, the Israel and Jehovah have been symbolically portrayed as wife and husband. "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God" (Isaiah 54:5-6). "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali" (Hosea 2:16). The New Testament relation between Christ and Church is much stronger than the Old Testament symbolical citations. As the bride of Christ, the Church has been given special power and position. Even the Israel was not permitted to hold such a liberal position which shows the special love of God towards the Church.

3. The Mystery of 'Resurrection'

The last revelation about Church is the plan of the ascension of the saints. Though the concept of resurrection was indicated here and there in the Old Testament, the scheme of 'ascension' was not known. "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19). "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). In all these verses makes clear that the dead would be resurrected and its ultimate end would be in two ways (eternal shame or eternal life). But the transformation of the living was a mystery. The Apostle Paul writes: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord". (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). While the second coming of Jesus was a clearly stated hope in the Old Testament, the ascension of saints was a mystery. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 15, Apostle Paul amply describes how the transformation would take place and what would be the specialty of the transformed body. The dispensation of church would end with the ascension.

The significance of Mysteries

All three mysteries about the Church are very significant. With the first mystery, an ineligible person becomes member of the Church; by the second mystery he is betrothed and live in the world. He lives a clean and holy life according to the scriptures gets ready to be united with Christ. With the third mystery of the ascension, the tarrying comes and then comes the end.

Questions:

1. What is the mystery of 'one body' of the Church?
2. Did the Church of God reveal to the Old Testament Prophets?
3. What is the hope of resurrection, as mentioned, in the Old and New Testaments?
4. What is the significance of mysteries?
5. Explain the three-fold mysteries of the Church.

LESSON - 4

THE FOUNDATION OF CHURCH

Reading passages : Matthew 16:13-20, 21-23; Acts 2:14-41; John 20:22-23; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4 -7.

Memory verse : Matthew 16:18

Introduction : The issue that Peter is the foundation of Church is one of the most contentious subjects. Those attributes more importance to Peter has also built a throne for him. While the Roman Catholics holds that the throne of Peter is in Rome, the Jacobites claim that the apostolic throne of Peter is in Antioch. Let us analyze the Word if Peter was made the foundation of Church.

Foundation: Different schools of thought

The Catholic Church teaches that there is a verse 'Peter, you're the rock. On this rock I will build my Church'. They believe that Peter is the foundation of the Church. But is written in the Bible as: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18). There are four opinions about the term 'rock.'

1. The rock is Peter. The Church is built on him and on his works.
2. The rock is the disciples. Peter is only the representative of disciples.
3. The rock is Christ. Only God is addressed as rock.
4. The rock is the confession of Peter that Christ is the son of God. This confession is the foundation of Church.

The first and the third of the above statement have been given more significance. While the Catholic and Orthodox churches approve the first statement, the Protestants believe that Christ is the rock. But the Brethren writer G. Sushilan also says that Peter is the rock (Vyvashitha Theology II Pp 309-312).

Why do some say that Peter is the rock?

1. The meaning of the word Peter is rock. The word light is used to denote the God, Christ and the believers (1 John 1:5; John 9:5; Matthew 5:14). Abraham has been called as rock (Isaiah 51:1-2). Therefore a man can also be given this name.
2. Historically, Peter was used in the hands of the Lord in building the Church (Acts 2:14-41; 8:14-17; 10:24-48).
3. Christ said to Peter that the keys of the kingdom of God is being given to you (Matthew 16:19).
4. Christ gave more importance to Peter. Therefore Peter is the leader of the Church. He reigned in Rome as the first Bishop.
5. Peter is an impeccable person.

But the Holy Scriptures and the history totally oppose these assumptions.

Peter is not the rock. Why?

1. The Greek name for Peter is 'petros' which means a fragment of rock. For the words 'on this rock', the word 'petra' has been used. It means massive rock. If Jesus has meant both words in the same sense, then the statement should have been "... you are Peter. On you I will build my Church".
2. The rock has been used in various occasions. But it has not been assigned to a man (1Samule 2:2; Isaiah 44:8; Romans 9:33; 1Cor 10:4, 1Peter 2:8; Matthew 7:24-27). Abraham was called as rock in a totally symbolical usage (Isaiah 51:1-2). It means Israel was born of Abraham.
3. Though Christ and the believers are called as light, there is much difference among them. Like moon shines by receiving light from Sun, the believers reflect the light of Christ, the sun of righteousness. Similarly, it is true that God's children are the pieces of the big rock God.
4. It is unbelievable that the Church of the living Christ is build on a dead person. If it is build on a man who has weakness and

shortcomings, the gates of hell would have prevailed over it; the persecutions would have disintegrated it.

5. Though Peter was used for the establishment of the Church, he preached along with other 11 apostles (Acts 2:14). Moreover, it is evident in the book of Acts that Paul was used more effectively than Peter for establishing the Church.
6. Peter has the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and not of the Earth. The authority to bind and loose was given to the other apostles too (Matthew 18:18; John 20:22-23; Acts 1:8; 2:43). All believers too have received this authority (John 14:12; Mark 16:17-18).
7. Peter has not been given any special authority. The other apostles were also the foundation stones of the Church (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 2:14). The apostle James had the same authority. (Galatians 2:1-10). James chaired the Jerusalem Council in which Peter was a member (Acts 15:13-19). Peter identifies himself as an elder among elders. This condemns the argument that any special power was given to him (1Peter 5:1).
8. Peter was impeccable. Paul has condemned Peter upon his faults (Galatians 2:11).
9. The Holy Bible does not say that Peter has established a Church in Rome or he was the Bishop of such a church. It is presumed that the Roman Jews who were present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem spread the gospel in Rome (Acts 2:10). No apostles visited Rome before Apostle Paul. If Peter was there, there would have been no need for Paul to go there. (Rome 1:9-15; 15:18-32). While Paul was greeting the people in Rome, he would have greeted Peter too (Romans 16:1-23). As it was a gentile church, the Roman Church was more closer to Paul, the apostle of gentiles and not to Peter, the apostle of the circumcised (Galatians 2:7). The centre of Peter's work was Jerusalem.
10. Peter himself condemns the argument that he is the foundation of the church (Acts 4:11; 1Peter 2:4-7).
11. The writings of Paul and John gave underlined evidence that the foundation of church is Christ (Ephesians 2:20; 1Corinthians 3:11; Revelations 21:14).

When Jesus said "destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in 3 days" the people surrounding him misunderstood that he was talking about the temple which was built in 46 years. However, Jesus talked

about his body (John 2:19-21). In the same way, some people misunderstood misunderstand the word “*this rock*” as Peter.

Questions:

1. What are the schools of thought about Peter’s Throne by the Jacobites and Catholics?
2. What are the different interpretations about the foundation of the Church?
3. Explain the arguments put forth to establish that Peter is the rock.
4. Prove that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church.
5. What is the reason to say that Peter was not given any special authority?

LESSON - 5

ORGANISATION (SET UP) OF THE FORMER CHURCH

Reading passages : Acts 2:42, 4:32-37, 6:1-6, 13:6-13;
1Cori. 16:1-3.

Memory verse : Acts 2:42

Introduction : The set up of many churches of today is very complex and distinct. It is full of rituals, traditions and customs that have been entered into it from time to time. However, the set up of the former church was very simple. Still all necessary things were in it.

The Church of Jerusalem

Like the beginning of the church, its set up was also simple. The functioning of the Church of Jerusalem shows this fact. Some features of the set up of the former church are given below.

1. The number of members in the church was known to believers. Matters like 3000 people baptized consequent to the preaching of Peter and the number of male believers is about 5000 were recorded (Acts 2:41, 4:4).
2. They gathered for prayer meetings and worship (Acts 2:42-46).
3. Those who believed were baptized and the saints used to perform Lord's Table (Acts 2:41-42, 46).
4. In the former times, they disposed off their possession and belongings and treated everything as common. But this was not a teaching (Acts 2:45, 4:32-37).
5. They took disciplinary actions (Acts 5).
6. There were different positions for various services (Acts 6:1-6).

7. They collected means for the work of the Lord (1Cor. 16:1-3).
8. They wrote letters to introduce brothers to other churches (Acts 18:27)
9. Believers used to gather on a fixed time. Initially it was on a daily basis which was subsequently fixed as the first day of the week (Act 20:7).

THE ASSEMBLY

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ the disciples assembled on the first day of the week (John 20:19, 26). However during the initial days of the Church after the day of Pentecost, they gathered on a daily basis. The breaking of the bread was performed in houses. The possession and belongings were disposed off and divided according to the need. The apostles who took the missionary work went first to Jerusalem then to Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth in accordance with the word of Christ. But as the hostility of Jews increased, the gatherings for worship were shifted from the Temple to houses.

The daily assembly was changed to once in a week on the first day of week (Acts 20:7). It is presumed from the statement of Paul, "Upon the first day of the week let everyone collect according to God has prospered them" (1Corinthians 16:2) that that such gatherings were held on the first day of every week. Apostle John was in the spirit of God at Patmos on the days of the Lord (Revelation 1:10).

The Functionaries

Certain people teach that God's children should assemble, break the Bread and learn the Words without any prescribed organizational rules and regulations. The thought behind this is that those who are controlled by God's Spirit shall do everything rightly without any inspiration or force of others. However, when we study about the church at Jerusalem, it is seen that there were pastors to guide and control the church. For growth of the church there were apostolic doctrines, fellowship, prayer (Acts 2:42), Baptism (Acts 2:46) and charitable activities (Acts 6:1-2).

The control and caring of the church were not vested on the apostles. Paul appointed elders in the church (Acts 14:23). Paul directs Titus to appoint the elders in the church (Titus 1:5). And so, it is clear that elders were not elected in the church. Certain churches teach that the elders should be elected locally. In the Jerusalem church the appointment of elders were done by the church under the supervision

of apostles. There were teachers and elders in the Churches of Ephesus, Antioch and Philippians (Acts 13:1, 20:17).

Independence of Local Churches

Some Christian denominations teach that in the former church, each local church was independent and they were only at the command of Christ. The essence of this teaching is that the pastors or deacons have no authority over and above what is held by the believers. But we get a different picture in the book of Acts as well as the epistles.

The leaders had the authority to take universal concerning the church at large on general matters (Acts 6:1-7, 15:2,6,19), to punish the guilty (Acts 5:1-11, 13:6-13; 1Corinthians 4:21, 5:1-8), to appoint elders i.e. pastors in the local churches (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), to frame rules to resolve the disputes in respect of doctrinal matters (Acts 15, 16:4; 1Corinthians 4:17), to govern the churches (Hebrews 13:7,17), to lead the work of churches (Acts 20:28; 2Corinthians 11:28; Galatians 2:1-15).

Letter of Commendation

When a believer goes from a local church to another, a letter of commendation was produced. When Appollos went from the church of Ephesus to Corinth, the disciples wrote to the Corinth church to receive him (Acts 18:24-28). A similar introduction is seen in the epistle of Romans sent through Feba (Romans 16:1-2). A believer was accepted in another fellowship based on such commendation letter from the local church or a renowned person from a church (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1; 2Corinthians 3:12; Colossians 4:10).

Collection for the saints

While writing epistle to the Corinth church, Apostle Paul reminds his instructions to the church in Galatia regarding collection for the saints and appealed them to do the same (1Corinthians 16:1-3). The Apostle was referring the Galatians Church as an example. He makes the Corinthian believers as example to the Macedonians (2Corinthians 9:2). The Corinthians and Macedonians churches were presented as example to Romans (Romans 15:26). The collections were gathered on the first days of the week. The giving has to be liberal and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 8:7-9, 9:6-7). The Macedonian Church was an exemplary and cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Apostle appreciates the financial help as a fragrant offering (Philippians 4:18).

Questions:

1. Explain the organization of the former church from the function of the Jerusalem Church.
2. How were the gatherings of the former Churches?
3. How was the independence of local churches?
4. What is the importance of commendation letters?
5. Write an essay on the set up (organization) of the former church.

LESSON - 6

FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNANCE

Reading passages : Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 15:4, 22, 16:4; 1 Peter 2:9

Memory verse : Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction : We have studied the organization and the governance set up of the former church. Now we are going to analyze the study of the organization and governance of the church today. The ugliest face of the church governance is seen in the Episcopacy system. Let's learn how the simple ministries prevailed in the former church has become luxurious today.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) sends his disciples with a commandment to go to the end of world, make disciples and to baptize. During the apostolic period, for the purpose of the growth in the faith in believers and also for the indivisibility of the church, various decisions were taken and implemented; but no formal governance system was drawn. In today's Christian society, governance at different hierarchy is seen. Some of them are:

Episcopacy

The system of governance of church by a Chief Bishop is called Episcopacy. This system mainly has three level governance i.e. by the Bishop, Presbyter (priest) and Deacon. The authority to appoint other Bishops and Presbyters are vested on the Chief Bishop. They propagate that the position of Chief Bishop is inherited from the apostles. The Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Marthoma Church,

The CSI, The CNI, etc. follow this system of governance.

The Priest was a religious position in the Jewish religious system. The word 'priest' is translated from the Hebrew word 'cohen'. It means 'to stand'. It points out to a meaning 'to stand before the God for the people'. "So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (2Chronicles 5:14). Now a days, this part of the scripture is being interpreted interestingly like the priest could not stand means they fell. In 2Chronicle 7:2 we see that "And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house". From both these verses one should understand that the priest could enter into the holy place for doing the service.

In Greek, 'Hiereus' is used to denote 'priest'. The Jewish priesthood is carried forward by Aaron, Moses' brother. During the period of Jesus in this world, there were 18000 priests in Jerusalem Temple. But there was no priest in the former church. Peter records that all church members are the 'royal priesthood' (1Peter 2:9).

The Episcopacy and Papacy

Papacy (The sovereignty of Pope) is the full grown state of Episcopacy. The Anglican Church gives a higher position and power to its Bishops than the Methodist church. However, in the Roman Catholic Church, pope has a greater position than any other church. According to Louis Berkhof, Roman Catholic Church is in the full control of the Pope, a monarch who demands absolutism (autocracy) and uses ultimate sovereignty over teachings, worship and governance.

Pope is the Bishop of Bishops. In Latin, Pope means 'Father'. Christ taught us that "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). Therefore the position of and the addressing of 'Pope' in the very name is not divine. The history witnesses that the claim that Pope is impeccable is swallow. On 12th March, 2000 in the St. Peters Baslica, Pope John Paul II asked forgiveness from God and public by saying '*meyakulpa*' (I am guilty). During the last twenty centuries, the Roman Catholic Church asked forgiveness for some seven mistakes. These are subjects like Division of Christian Society, Cross Wars, Forced Conversion, Inquisition (Religious Prosecution), the faults on the approach towards Jews, the faults on the approach of minority and women, Human Rights Violation, etc. This pleading of guilty prove that mistakes were committed by the the former Popes. Thus the impeccability of Pope

comes to an end. (But the Catholic Church is not ready to accept this).

Historical beginning of Episcopacy

The Bishop responsible for the former local church grew as a political leader during the second and third centuries. The Bishops in the cities received more respect and regard. Consequent to religious conversion of Constantine, the bishop of Rome got special powers and position. As the Emperors and the Lords helped the church financially, the bishop of Rome became owner of a very large area of land.

These bishops started known as 'Metropolitan' in the Eastern countries and 'Arch Bishop' in the Western countries. There were no 'apostolic throne of pope' existed in Rome till AD 313. Till that time the church was going through very cruel persecutions. During the period of AD 366-384, Damascus bishop demanded special powers and reverence and empowered his position himself as 'the apostolic throne'.

By the fifth century, the bishops had become unquestionable leaders in the church. During this period, the bishop of Rome attempted to control the church globally. In the opinion of historians, the first Pope was Gregory I (AD 590-604). Thus the position of Pope was begun in the sixth Century. By declaring the Roman Church as the National Religion of the Roman Empire, the governance system of Roman Empire too came to exist in the church. This was the beginning of the hierarchical governance.

Questions:

1. What is Episcopal system of governance?
2. What is the meaning of Priest according to the Old Testament?
3. What is Papacy? Explain.
4. It is nonsense to say that Pope doesn't commit mistake. Why?
5. How Episcopacy did begin?

LESSON - 7

EPISCOPAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

(Continued)

Reading Passages : Mark 3:14; Acts 20:17-18; Hebrews 5:5

Memory verse : Hebrews 5:5

Introduction : Catholics believe that the apostolic lineage begins with Peter. They believe that Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the successor of Peter as also the visible head of Roman Catholic Church. We have learnt the Episcopacy and Papacy in the previous lesson. Let us see the feasibility of their hierarchy.

Royal Priesthood

The Apostle Peter wrote: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1Peter 2:9). All those saved and become member of the Church is a Royal Priest. In the Church of Christ, there is no segregation like Priest or laity. The position of Bishop (chairperson) as seen in the Bible and what we see today are totally different. Bishop in the Bible is the servant of God whereas the position of Bishop as seen in today's Churches is totally majestic.

Arguments favouring this theory

The followers of Episcopacy claim that Christ had passed over His powers to the Apostles (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). In support of this, they state that Timothy and Titus were vested with the apostolic authority. With this they appointed Elders in the local churches. Paul and Barnabas appointed Elders in their missionary journey. They deem that the authority being exercised by today's bishops is the same as

Apostle James had in the church of Jerusalem.

In the New Testament Churches, those who were proved to be experts in doctrine and lead a holy life were given authority. Moreover, it is clear that instead of the position, the ministry was given more emphasis. There are evidences that position like Bishops (or Episcopa), Presbyter (Elder) were given to persons who did same kind of ministries (Acts 20:17-28). For example, James had presided over the Jerusalem council. He used to declare the opinion and views of apostles or elders or the entire church and not of his own opinion (Acts 15:4, 22; 16:4).

The Counter Arguments

1. The legacy from Aaron

The main foundation of Episcopacy is the lineage of Aaron. They claim that the priesthood of Aaron was given by Zechariah to John the Baptist, John the Baptist to Jesus, Jesus to His Apostles, Apostles to one of the denomination of the Christian church. This claim itself is not scriptural. Jesus did not get the priesthood from John the Baptist but from the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5-6). The Priesthood of Aaron is never given out of Levite tribe whereas Jesus was born in the tribe of Judah.

Though John the Baptist was the son of a Priest, he never wore the garments of priest and ministered in the Temple. He performed the prophetic mission in the form of the voice of the one crying in the wilderness. The Jews of Jerusalem sent the Priests and Levites to John to ask who he is. They asked him: "Are you Elijah or the other prophet?" They did not ask him if he was that Priest. This shows that the Jews understood that he had a prophetic ministry (John 1:19-22). However, many people could not understand the ministry of John the Baptist.

2. Biblical lineage

No inferences about the lineage or inheritance can be drawn from the commands and directions of Jesus to the apostles (Mark 3:14). However, in the Old Testament, clear instructions about lineage were given. There is no evidence available from the records of the New Testament about delegating any authority to anyone or someone claiming lineage from apostles. Though Mathias was elected in place of Iscariot, it was not regarded as an appointment amongst the twelve apostles. There is no indication about this even in the last instructions of Paul to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28). Nowhere in the

scripture is noted that only those who have got the ministry through laying of hand were recognized and accepted. The work of the church was started in Rome and Antioch much before the apostles reached there. It is more likely that the churches at Colossian, Laodicea, Hierapolis were founded by brother Eppaphras (Colossians 2:1, 4:13).

3.The Historical lineage

From the list of bishops in Rome as presented by the Catholic historians, it is not possible to prove an unblemished apostolic lineage of Peter. In the list, after Peter, which begins with Linus (AD 67-78), the thirty-third person is Melchiasad (AD 311-314). Peter never laid his hands on Linus. Most of the people in this list were died as martyrs. It is not possible for a martyr to appoint another by laying of hands.

Some of the names in this list were anti-Popes. The laying of hands would have not happened on those who opposed the official Pope. Those who closely check this list, one can find out that there was no Pope for certain periods. Thus the lineage theory is flattened. Even in this present context, there were occasions when the laying of hands could not be done due to sudden demise of certain leaders. There has been occasion when the lineage was passed on by putting the hands of the deceased.

The Priesthood of believers

The Biblical doctrine “priesthood of all believers’ makes the apostolic lineage theory insignificant. There is another theory that when the lively presence of Jesus Christ is in each believer and in the Church in general, no one is required to over depend on the official ministries of those who claim apostolic lineage.

As already pointed out, there is a truth existing but unknown to those who claim the priesthood lineage of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron would not be given to an Israelite unless he is a member of the family of Aaron. Then how can an Indian get?

Questions:

1. What are the arguments of those who raise the lineage theory?
2. Who are eligible for the priesthood of Aaron according to the scripture?
3. Does the Bible states about apostolic lineage?
4. What does the history says about lineage theory?
5. What are the evidences of the lineage theory?

LESSON - 8

THE PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNANCE

Reading Passages : Acts 15:1-35, 16:1-4

Memory Verse : 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Introduction : While the Episcopacy run after the luxury, power and belittle others, the Presbyterians have a totally different governance system. Here the council of Elders performs the governance.

Council of Elders in the Scripture

In Jewish Synagogue, there was an elected council comprising of aged, matured and knowledgeable people to govern it. A similar governance system is seen in the New Testament period (Acts 15:1-35, 16:1-4). Paul and Barnabas along with some others had gone to the Elders and Apostles in Jerusalem to set right certain issues relating to the gentiles converted into Christianity (Acts 15:1-2). As the discussions completed, Apostle James who was the Bishop (chairperson) announced the final decision in public. They were approved by the general assembly of the church, the same were sent to the church at Antioch (Acts 15:19-30). Here we see the Jerusalem synagogue as a superior governance committee having powers over the local churches. In the Compassion Services also a similar cooperation and working is seen (1Cor 16:1-3).

The Presbyterian Community

John Calvin, one of the reformists is the founder of Presbyterian system. His disciple, John Knox (1505-1572) started the Presbyterian Church in Scotland in 1555. The Presbyterian Church in Scotland has the same position as the Anglican Church has in England. In 1661 this

church was declared as the official church in Scotland.

A committee of elders elected by either the church members or the representatives of the local church performs the matters relating to governance. One of these members will be the chairperson. The other members are known as Presbytery. In some churches there are Synod and General Assembly.

Jesus is the only Head of the Church according to the basic faith of the Presbyterian governance system. Christ leads and governs the church with His Word and Spirit. The church identifies and elects those who are filled with the spiritual gifts for teaching and leading and accept their leadership. Their teaching is that there is no separate group in the church who are vested with special powers by lineage and anointing by laying of hands. All groups of the Presbyterian Church follow the creed and governance system as approved by the Westminster Assembly in 1643-49.

An image of the governance system of the New Testament is seen in the Presbyterian system. The elected Elders represent the church members in the governance. Regular consultation and meetings takes place between the believers and the Ministers. This system has a precious quality of giving privilege and acceptance to the capable Elders. It is a marvelous system due to its complete solidarity to Christ's Lordship and participation by general church in the governance. The church takes decision only according to the doctrines or guidance of the Holy scripture.

The deficiency

Though the Presbyterian system excels in many things, there are many shortcomings too to be pointed out in the same. In the words of William Stewarts, "There can be possibility of losing the spiritual love and individual responsibility during the performance of responsibilities according to the rules and statutes". The deficiency of a spiritual father to approach during any critical time is felt here. There is no scripture support for the different committees existing in the system. Though it is said that each believer participate in the governance, practically it does not take place. Generally it is seen that the Elders govern the believers.

Questions

1. What does the Scripture say about the council of elders?
2. Where and by whom the Presbyterian Church was found?
3. How does the Presbyterian Church function?
4. What are the shortcomings of Presbyterian governance system?

LESSON - 9

THE CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Reading Passages : Matthew 18:5-17; Acts 1:15-26, 6:2-6, 15:4

Memory Verse : Matthew 23:8-9

Introduction : In the Presbyterian system the Elders govern whereas in the Congregational governance system, the local church members are given significance. They bring forth scripture based evidence for this too. But it is a fact that we cannot agree to it completely. Certain denominations oppose this type of governance. They argue that the Holy Spirit will control everything.

The Congregational Governance System

This system is the one which gives importance to the independence of local church. The self governance of a local church independently without subordination to any organization or leader is called congregational governance system. This system is more democratic as in the local church, the members are given more importance and the governance is centralized on them. Each local church is a unit with the power of self governance. The church has no subordination except to Christ.

They point out that the New Testament does not put any supervision by any system or organization over the local church and the scripture gives each member equal position. No powers have been given to any Elder or Minister beyond the local church. They harp that responsibility of teachings, etc. is vested with the church itself.

The Congregational Churches

A Reformist organization started by Robert Brown in the Church of England initially known as Brownist and later became a Congregationalism. The authoritative basis for Brown's exhortation is a book titled 'The Life and Actions of Real Christians'. He could not agree to the autocratic method of church governance or to the federal governance method.

Brown believed in the supremacy of God in the governance by closely holding the words of Christ "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mathew 18:20). He taught that no external humanly authority has any power over the local church for exhortation to teach. The Brownists were known as Congregational Church from 1640 onwards.

The Congregational Governance Method

Favourable Arguments

Those who favours the Congregational Governance System put forth the following arguments.

1. In the former church, the ministers were elected and strategies were formed in general. The election of Mathias (Acts 1:15-26), the election of deacons (Acts 6:2-6), Paul and Barnabas giving their work report to the Church (Acts 15:4), etc. the examples.
2. The teachings of Jesus stress that the Christian ministry is a service (Luke 22:25-27). From this it can be presumed that Jesus' goal is democratic system and not hierarchism (from top to bottom).
3. In the opinion of Jesus and Paul, the authority to punish is not vested on an individual or a group but with the church in general (Mathew 18:15-17), 1Cor 5).
4. The Epistles of Paul is to the church in general. The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, etc. are written not because of their leadership in church but on an individual basis.
5. The responsibility of observing the counseling is on the entire church. The discerning of spirit is by church (1John 4:1). The commandment is on church (1Cor 11:23).
6. As the head of the church is Christ, each part is directly attached to Him (1Cor 14:40, Romans 12:16, Philippians 2:2,4). The Royal Priesthood is an honour to each child of God (1Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 10:19-22).

Counter Arguments

The authority given to the apostles in the former church cannot be overlooked. If the local church corrected itself then there was no need for Apostle Paul to interfere in the matters of Church of Corinth. Paul strongly rebuked this church in the matter of fornication which was not even seen among gentiles. The command of the Apostle was to remove him from among them (1Cor 5). At the same time Paul presented his decision as if it was being taken together by the church generally (1Cor 5:4).

While studying about the former church, we have seen the position of Deacons in addition to bishops. While the deacons did the material services like handling financial matters, food arrangements, etc., the bishop's ministry was prayer, preaching, to fulfill the spiritual needs of the believers and the church.

It is worthy to note the addressing of the angels of church (Elders, Deacons) in the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3. Here the church leaders have been given a chief position. Therefore it is not agreeable to the theory that all are equal. The Theologian Louis Berkhof says "the method of deciding the ministerial position in the church based on the thoughts and actions of church members is not as per the script". The view that each local church is independent does not encourage the vision of the unity of Christian Church. It can lead to indiscipline in the governance of church.

The Opposition to Governance System

This theory is that the believers can be led or controlled by the light of the Holy Spirit without the need of a visible governance system or human leaders. The Protestant like The Quakers, Plymouth Brethren, etc. falls in this group.

But the Biblical teachings and the examples of former church does not match with this theory. The claim that each member of the church expresses their opinions, take decisions and take actions on the complete control of Holy Spirit is a misconception. This is proved by the teachings on taking punitive actions. The feelings in the leaders that they are guided by Holy Spirit more than the ordinary believer and the claim that they possess spiritual gifts prove that fundamentally contradictory thoughts are generating in them. It is worth to remember here the differences between Paul and Barnabas and among the protestant leaders.

Questions

1. What do you mean by Congregational governance method?
2. Explain about the genesis and continuance of congregational governance.
3. What are the favourable arguments towards congregational governance?
4. What are the counter arguments about the congregational governance?
5. Is opposing of congregational governance System is correct? Why?

LESSON - 10

PENTECOSTAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Reading Passages : Acts 6:1-7, 13:1-3, 15:1-29; 1 Timothy 2:1-10, 3:1-13, 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:1-6.

Memory Verse : 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Introduction : Pentecostal churches can be divided into two namely mainstream churches and independent churches. Even though all organizations start independently with one or two local churches, it later expands as a result of further work. When it attains deep influence in the society, they are called mainstream church. In this way, all churches which began with godly vision will become mainstream churches. We can divide the Pentecostal church into three: (1) Churches which are under Foreign Mission (2) Local Organization (3) Independent church without any organization.

Different governance method

We have been learning about the differences in church governance. The Bible does not prescribe a specimen for church governance. Therefore, we can adopt any method which is not against the Word of God. The structure of the former church is a good example. The unholy alliance between church and State is not allowed in the Bible. The Presbyterian governance method has more similarity to the Roman Empire than the New Testament systems. At the same time, the church is not an unbound book but a fenced garden. To rebuke, correct and punish are the part of the doctrine and it should be done in spirit of love. In the former church, while the local churches were

independent but were under the control of the body of apostles and elders. There is a mixture of the Presbyterian and Congregational church governance method is seen in the former church. This has greater similarity with Pentecostal governance system.

Pentecostal Church Governance Method

The Independent Church

As already mentioned, various independent churches are in the Pentecostal faith. In such churches, the Pastor and the aged and matured brothers takes the decisions together, lead the church and solve the issues according to the Word of God. No other body or individual has any power over the independent churches. This matches with the Congregational church governance as the local church has more importance.

Mainstream Pentecostal Churches

Mainstream Church gives importance to the independence of local churches but at the same time a working committee is also constituted to give doctrinal directions and take action if required. The apostle who took the initiatives in formation of the church along with pastors and representatives of the believers having experience and maturity in church ministry are the members of such working committee. This was the set up of the former church.

1. Sharon Fellowship Church

Let us see the governance system of our institution.

Managing Council

The supreme governing body of the Sharon Fellowship Church is the Managing Council. It comprises at least nine members. It has office bearers like President, two Vice Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurer, etc. The qualification to become a member of the Managing Council is clearly prescribed. Those who have worked faithfully in the General Body for at least seven years for the spiritual and material edification of the church; those who firmly believe in the basic doctrines of Sharon Fellowship and those who have exemplary life and good testimony are only qualified to become a member of the Managing Council.

Ministers' Council

The President of the Managing Council of the Sharon Fellowship Church, its Vice Presidents, Secretaries, and District Ministers are

the members of Ministers Council. The President of the Managing Council shall be ex-officio President of Ministers' Council. In addition to President, there will be two Vice Presidents, one General Secretary, one Working General Secretary, one Secretary, etc. are the office bearers of Ministers' Council.

The responsibility to appoint local pastors, district and section pastors, transfer of local pastors, monitoring of the subsidiary organizations, resolving the difference in the church or the ministers are vested on the Ministers' Council.

The General Church Body

The members of the Managing Council, members of Ministers' Council, District and Section Ministers, Representatives of the Pastor's of Section (the representatives of local churches elect the representative of a section), the General Presidents and General Secretaries of the subsidiary organization are called the General Church Body.

It convenes at least once in a year to discuss and decide matters useful for the general growth of the church like the spiritual and material needs, General Convention, and other general gatherings.

2. The Indian Pentecostal Church of God

The General Governing Body is the General Council. The members are consisting of Pastors and Believers in the ratio of 11:10. This Council has a President, a Vice President and one General Secretary (all Ministers), one Treasurer (Believer) as office bearers. There are state councils which work below the General council and District councils below the State council. The tenure of the general council and state councils is three years.

3. Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God has an Executive Working Committee comprising of Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, General Secretary, Treasurer, Members (all Ministers). They are elected by the ministers and the representatives of the approved local churches. There is a general presbytery comprising of regional directors and section presbyters also to help the Executive Committee in the matter relating to governance. Its tenure is two years. The believers have no representation in Presbytery.

4. Church of God (Full Gospel)

The Supreme Council of the Church of God (Full Gospel) is the

Governing Body. The State Overseers are responsible for leading the work of each District appointed by the Church of God World Mission Board. This appointment is made on the basis of the nomination by majority of the state council and ministers and recommended by the Asian Superintendent. He will help the Council Overseer elected by the Ministers in the matters of governance. The tenure is two years.

Questions

1. What are the reasons for divide the Pentecostal churches into Mainstream and Independent ?
2. Explain the governance method of independent churches.
3. What type of governance methods are seen in Pentecostal churches?
4. Explain the governance method of Sharon Fellowship Church.
5. Analyze the Pentecostal governance system.

LESSON - 11

THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTERS

Reading passages : Romans 15:15; 16:1; 1Cor 9:9; 2Cor 4:5;
5:17-20; 1Peter 2:9, 16; Revelation 1:6; 5:10

Memory Verse : 1 Corinthians 14:26

Introduction : There are vast differences between the bishops or the ministers among various churches. While some reveals themselves with luxury, vanity, reverence, special attire and the like, others are seen in total simplicity. Once we understand what the scripture teaches about responsibility of the church, we can discern the Word based ministries too. Let us see the meaning of 'minister' in the Bible.

The Ministers and the Ministries

According to the Old Testament traditions, certain tribe was separated for regulating the worship and other religious rituals. The members from the family of Aaron were vested with priesthood and the families of Levites were engaged in different ministries in the Temple. Those who neglected this were punished (Numbers 16; 2Chronicles 26:17-19). Those who claim that they have the lineage of the Old Testament priesthood are forgetting this aspect.

According to the New Testament, all members of the Christian Church are from the generation of Royal Priests (1Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). There is no division among the members as ordinary believer and priest. At the same time there are ministers who are called by God for the spiritual edification.

During the Old Testament period, when theocracy existed, the

prophets and the priests led the period. When it was replaced with monarchy, changes took place. Monarchy was not the perfect will of God, rather permissive will of God accommodating to the need of the people (1 Samuel 8:7-8).

Where there is the Lordship of Christ and the control of Holy Spirit, everything would be decent and in order. However, leaders are required even today as in the first century, to lead the people and for the spiritual edification. Referring to 'ministry', the scripture uses the Greek word '*Diakonia*.' This word attributes priority to service rather than authority. To mention authority, the Greek words '*Arche*' and '*Tima*' are used. While treating the work of Jesus Christ, the writers give more emphasis to His service. (Mark 10:45; 20:26-28; Isaiah 42:1-4).

There are three different words used in the New Testament for ministry:

1. *Doulos*

It means 'one who is devoted himself as a slave (servant) to another.' In the first century, the word servant (slave) was very familiar. Those who are submitted for the service, deny himself and give his life for fulfilling God's complete will (Romans 1:1; James 1:1; Revelation 1:1; 1 Peter 2:16). The essence of Christian ministry is service even in respect of others (2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Cor 9:19). Humility is clearly revealed in 'Doulos'.

2. *Leitourgos*

In the Greek background, this word denotes to general ministry. The word Liturgy is derived from this word. It means individual service (Philippians 2:30), Godly worship (Acts 13:2) too. While writing 'Joshua was a servant of Moses', the Hebrew word 'Mesaret' has been used (Exodus 24:13; Joshua 1:5). This word is the equivalent to Greek '*Leitourgos*'. It is also used to state about Jesus Christ, the minister of the holy Tabernacle. It is meant where Paul states about himself as the priest ministering gospel as a servant of Jesus Christ (Romans 15:15-16). In respect of ministry this word matches where the temple and priestly ministry are mentioned.

3. *Diakonia*

This word means 'a person who serves the food', 'a person who does petty jobs', etc. It indicates service rather than right or title. It has been individually used for the apostles (Acts 1:17-25; Colossians 1:25) and saints (Ephesians 4:12). It has also been used for ministry of the

Word (Acts 6:4), ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) and different ministries (Colossians 4:17). The noun 'deacon' has been derived from the word 'diakonia.'

The gifts (charismata) and ministries are related to each other. When a person with gifts divulges the same, he also does the ministry entrusted by God. At the same time it is not necessary for the person to have a ministerial position. Here is the difference between gifts and ministries. Though a believer can perform the ministry of gifts, he has to be subordinate to the leadership of the church. It is also not necessary to separate each person with gifts for the general ministry.

The presence of gifts was disclosed right from the inception of Christian church. An example to this is the revelation of other tongue and prophecy when Paul had laid on his hand (Acts 19:6). However as far the bishop of the church is concerned, his prime responsibility is to preach the Word. It is the responsibility of the minister of the church to organize the gifts among the members in a decent and orderly manner for the edification of the church.

While the church should identify those who are called for the ministry and honor them, there is lot of significance for their appointment in the name of the Father (2 Cor 5:18), and of the Son (Ephesians 4:11) and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Wayne Grudem defines ministers as: "The minister in the church is a person who is publicly honoured and has the right and responsibility to perform the general welfare work for the entire church".

Questions

1. What are the specialties of Old Testament ministries?
2. Which are the words that indicate authority?
3. Explain the words used in relation to ministry in New Testament.
4. Explain the relation and significance of ministry and Gift.
5. Write an essay about as to how the New Testament ministries should be in the light of the Holy Bible.

LESSON - 12

THE APOSTLES

Reading Passages : 2 Chronicles 17:7; Matthew 10:1-20; 1 Corinthians 9:1-5; Corinthians 11:5-15, 12:12; Ephesians 4:11-13

Memory Verse : 2 Corinthians 12:12

Introduction : Continuing the study about the former church and the ministry, in this lesson we are going to learn about the Apostles. Everyone knows that Apostles are the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Has the Apostleship ended with the twelve? To know this we must understand what are apostleship and its signs.

General Ministers and Local Ministers

The ministries in the former church can be divided in to two: **(1) General Ministers:** They are used for the work of the entire church. It is done by ministers with the help of gifts to establish and monitor new local churches. **(2) Local Ministers:** They perform their ministries mainly with respect to local churches. Though under special direction they may conduct their ministries under a general minister, their main responsibility is on the local churches entrusted to them.

General Ministers

There are five types of ministries seen in the divine arrangements for taking caring of the church (Ephesians 4:11). Though it is opined that these are about the general ministers, the opinion of Robert Sosi is widely accepted that pastor is a minister of the local church. The common opinion is that pastors and teachers exist together. Jerome the church father had this opinion. The usage of pastors and teachers

can be treated as pastor-teacher.

The Apostles

The word apostle has been used more than eighty times in the New Testament. It is seen more in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. The word apostle is derived from the Greek word *apostolos* meaning envoy or messenger.

This word was used even before Christ. In the work of Herodotus, it is recorded that apostles (envoy/delegate) were sent from Sparta to Miletus. In 1Kings 14:6, the Hebrew word *shaliah* (another woman) has been translated as '*apostolos*' in the Septuagint. The representatives sent by the rabbies to collect the share money and offerings for the Temple from the Jews living outside Palestine were known as apostles. The princes sent by King Jehoshaphat to teach were also translated as *apostolos* (2Chronicles 17:7).

In the New Testament the word Apostle has been used differently and with a broad sense. The writer of the Epistle of Hebrews has described Jesus Christ as an apostle. But the word apostle is first used in the New Testament to denote the twelve who were chosen and commissioned by our Lord (Matthew 10:1-20; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 6:13).

The twelve have been the witness from the inception of the public ministry of Jesus Christ till His resurrection. While selecting the person in lieu of Judas Iscariot same yardstick was used. From the name of twelve apostles inscribed on the foundation of the New Jerusalem, it is clear that there is considerable significance in the names of the apostles directly selected by Jesus Christ.

But we read that Paul was called an apostle (2Cor 11:5). James, the brother of Christ (1Cor 15:7), Andronicus, Junias (Romans 16:7) and Barnabas (Acts 14:14) were known as apostles.

Saint Paul writes to the church of Corinthians (1Cor 9:2): "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." It is divulged that the result of his work suggests the apostleship. Establishment of church through evangelization, training individuals to monitor and continuation of such work, giving scripture based guidance can be seen as apostolic ministry. Paul has recorded the signs of apostles: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2Cor 12:12).

The Apostolic Ministry and the Foundation Work

The Brethren Church teaches that apostolic work is not

continuing today. The major reasons are:

1. There is no mention in the scripture about continuation of apostolic work.
2. The apostolic ministry is related to the laying of foundation of church (Ephesians 2:20, 3:5; 2Peter 3:2). There is no need of apostles for the work above the foundation.
3. The title of apostleship is peerless. It cannot be transferred. Jesus Christ sent his disciples by giving the authorities (Matthew 10:40).
4. All believers are equal before God. All have the right and priesthood to come to the mercy seat.

Response

The above arguments are mainly related to the twelve Disciples of Christ. But Paul and Barnabas were segregated for the apostolic ministry by a special commission of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). Similarly, even today there are apostles being segregated by the commission of the Holy Spirit. Those who are engaged in the ministries of gifts, establishing of new churches and monitoring them according to the scripture doing the ministry of apostles.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things”! (Romans 10:14-15). There should have an authoritative apostolic ministry to organize for establishment of a pioneer work.

It is necessary to see the statement seriously that the apostolic ministry is required only for the foundation work and not for the work above it. The church is founded on the salvation work completed by Jesus Christ, the words of the former prophets (2Peter 3:2) and the authority of the doctrines of apostles. Nobody, not even an angel from heaven, can change it (Galatians 1:8-9).

Can it be said that the presence of Jesus, the corner stone, is not the work above foundation? The continuity of the apostolic and prophetic ministry is essential for the church even though it is not from the lineage of the twelve. The scripture does not say that it has come to an end. Note the words of the Lord: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father “ (John 14:12) “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name

shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17-18). We must remember that Jesus' promise was for all the believers. In Latin, 'missionary' has been used in place of 'apostles'. Its primary meaning is 'those sent for evangelization'.

Questions

1. How many divisions are there in the ministries in the former church? Which are they?
2. Who opined that the ministry of pastor is a local church ministry?
3. Explain the meaning of the word apostles with the Old and New Testament background.
4. What are the reasons to say that apostolic ministry has come to an end with the foundation work of church?
5. Apostolic ministry is still going on. Can you prove it?

LESSON - 13

PROPHETS AND EVEANGELISTS

Reading Passages : Acts 8:4-8, 21:10-11; 1Cor. 14:3-4, 24-25;
Ephesians 4:11-13

Memory Verse : 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

Introduction : While certain believers are passionate on prophecies and prophets, another group is very indifferent to even hearing about them. We need to study as to whether the prophetic ministry according to the Word still exists in its real sense. In the former times and at the end of nineteenth century, the church grew due to the works of the evangelists. It is a matter of doubt if such ministries are neglected today.

The Prophets in the Old Testament

Prophecies and prophets can be seen in the New Testament as a continuation of Old Testament. In the former church, the prophets were treated at par with the apostles (1Cor 12:28; Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, 4:11). For 'prophet', in Hebrew 'Nabi' in Greek 'prophetus' is used. The word prophet is the English translation of the Greek word 'prophetus'. Prophets are the persons who convey the message of God and unveil the future through the commission of the Holy Spirit.

Irenaeus, the church father, has stated about prophets as "prophets are the persons poured with the grace of God to talk at the time and place according to the will of God". Though Abraham has been called a prophet for the first time in Bible (Genesis 20:7; Psalms 105:5), the Old Testament prophecies have attained its right yardsticks and form during the life and personality of Moses. From the words of Jesus,

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Matthew 11:13), it is clear that the Old Testament prophetic period was over by the ministry of John the Baptist.

Three Hebrew words have been used for prophet: *Nabi*, *Royeh* and *Hoseh*. The meaning of first word is ‘prophet’, the second means ‘Seer’ and the third means ‘to see’. As there is no equivalent word in English, it has been translated as prophet (Isaiah 30:10) and ‘Seer’ (1Chro 29:29-30).

The essence of the ministry of Old Testament prophets was to give warning of God’s judgement against ungodliness and unrighteousness. Prophecies for individuals and also to the society were very common in those days. Prophets like Nathan and Elijah were famous for impartial ministry. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah had given message not only about Israel but also about other countries.

New Testament Prophets

In the New Testament it is pointed out that the prophecies reveal the secrets of the hearts by which the consciousness of sin takes place (1Cor 14:24-25). Individual prophesy (Acts. 21:10-11; 1Timothy 1:18) and general prophecies (Acts. 11:28) have been very clearly recorded. But the main objective of prophesy is the spiritual growth of the church (1Cor 14;3-4). The strengthening in faith by Words is also a part of prophetic ministry (Acts 15:12).

Prophets can be seen at two different levels: (1) the prophets doing general ministry and (2) prophets work only in the local churches. There are prophets who does a pioneer for a local church and also work for the general welfare (1Cor 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 15:32). There are prophets who work only for the spiritual growth of the local church (1Cor 14:29-33; Acts 21:8).

Even in the first century itself were false prophets, so that it is necessary to discern the prophets and prophecies. As said by Christ, the prophet has to be discerned on the basis of the fruit and the prophesy on the basis of the Word of God.

Has the prophesy come to an end?

As learnt in the previous lesson, the interpretation of Brethren church is noteworthy. The names of twelve apostles are inscribed on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14) whereas the name of any prophet has not been inscribed. From this, two possibilities can be inferred: (1) all apostles were filled with gifts and all of them were prophets (‘Apostles and prophets’ were about

the twelve disciples.); (2) the church was built on the basis of the words of the holy prophets (2 Peter 3:2).

Those who argue that there is nothing exists like prophetic ministry also interprets that preaching is prophesy. While there are teachers and evangelists available exclusively for preaching, it is heresy to say that prophesy is preaching the Word only. If we analyze the evidences put forth by J.R.W Stott that no prophets exist, there are two main arguments: (1) In places like Ephesians 4:11, 1Cor 12:28 it is mentioned about prophets immediately after apostles whereas in Ephesians 2:20, 3:5. It is mentioned that they were in the foundation work. (2) Now a full and complete Testament is available of which no further continuation is required, there is no need of any new revelation or divine Words (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Let us see the second one. Even the Pentecostal churches accept that there is no requirement of any further revelation or prophesies in respect of the revelation through Christ or the way of salvation or the testament for Christian life. At the same time, it is difficult to believe that the living God who speaks and act in contrast to the idols would not give directions through prophesies in certain special situations. Even today, there are prophesies reminding from the Words according to the need of the hour to warn the individuals and the communities to be careful.

Evangelist

The ministry of evangelists is mentioned in three places in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; 8:4-8; 2 Timothy 4:5). The gospel was preached in the entire Samaria by Philip. He guided the Ethiopian eunuch too. Paul exhorted Timothy to do the work of an Evangelist. The word Evangelist is the English form of the Greek word Euangelist. It is derived from the Greek word Euangelism (Gospel).

The church, separated from the darkness to the marvelous light, has a general commission to preach gospel. There are people who specially gifted to do the work as an evangelist. The work of an evangelist is mainly to be sent and preach thereby opening a way for the establishing a church. The church historian Eusebius has recorded that "the ministry of evangelist has great significance even after the period of apostles".

Both Evangelist and his ministry are essential for the universal as well as the local churches. Unfortunately, today the ministry of evangelist is almost in the verge of extinct. It is a matter of doubt whether evangelism is misunderstood with the ministry of Pastors.

For the growth of the church it is essential to have evangelists supported by the local churches.

Questions

1. Analyze prophets and their mission according to the Old Testament.
2. What did Irenaeus, the church father say about prophets?
3. How were the New Testament prophetic ministries?
4. Is prophesy existing today? Give reasons.

LESSON - 14

THE TEACHERS AND THE PASTORS

Reading Passages : Acts 13:1, 11:30, 14:23, 15:6; 1Cor 12:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 2Timothy 3:14-17; Titus 1:5-9

Memory Verse : James 3:1

Introduction : While the teacher is a part of the general church, the pastor stands as a minister of the local church. Paul has been teaching the Word as a Teacher and has been proving that Jesus is the Christ. The Epistles of Timothy and Titus contain a detailed description about pastor.

Teachers

The elementary word for teacher is '*Didaskalos*'. While in 1Corinthians 12:28, it is mentioned as 'thirdly teachers' whereas in Ephesians 4:11 it is combined and referred to as 'fourthly pastors and teachers'. Here it is pointed out that the work of teaching is of pastors. From the verse 1Corinthians 12:28, Acts 13:1, etc. wherein the teachers have been highlighted, it is clear that there were teachers who were not pastors.

Teachers are the people who, with the clear knowledge about the script, lead the church in spiritual growth and maturity. The Lord who gave the warning that "*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures*" (Mathew 22:29) gives instructions through His last day commandments to teach (Mathew 28:19-20). The apostles gave due importance to this ministry right from the inception (Acts 2:42). Study of Word is essential for spiritual growth and for countering false doctrines (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 1:17-19; 2Timothy 3:14-17). John Chrysostom mentions about the difference between the ministries of prophesy and teachings.

All the statements of a prophet are filled with the Holy Spirit whereas a Teacher teaches out of knowledge.

While Paul writing to Timothy, he makes it amply clear to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ” and “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”. It is essential for a Teacher to have knowledge of Word and to be Spirit filled. One has to study the Word with prayer and grace. A believer without having studied the Word cannot grow spiritually.

Those who teaches the Word has to be an example through his own life. The apostle James advices that “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). It is not a ministry seeking only the honour on the pretext of Paul’s words that “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1Timothy 5:17). Teaching of Word is to be done under the commission of God.

The Ministers of Local Churches

1. Pastor/ Bishop/ Elder

In the New Testament, two types of ministers are seen. Pastor (Elder or Bishop) and Deacon. The word *Pastor* is the Latin word for shepherd. In Greek it is known as ‘Poimenas’.

The responsibility of a Pastor is to take care of the sheep i.e. the Church as a good shepherd as revealed in Psalms 23. While some include Pastors in the general ministry, Robert Sosi opines that all the three positions i.e. Elder, Bishop and Pastor are same and it relates to the Local Church only.

For the word Elder, the Greek word Presbyter has been used. The word Elder is universally used in Jewish religion. They were the one holding administrative responsibilities and were prudent and matured in the Law of God. In the Jerusalem Church, there were Apostles and Elders (Acts 11:30, 15:6, 21:18). There were Elders in the Ephesus Church (Acts 20:17). Paul and Barnabas appointed Elders in the Local Churches (Acts 14:23). Paul advised Titus to appoint Elders in each city (Titus 1:5). Peter calls himself the fellow-Elder (1Peter 5:1).

The original word for Bishop is Episcopos. Episcopos is the combination of two words viz ‘Epi’ means higher and ‘Scopoyo’ means

watch. Episcopos means overseer. When the Greek Kings sent his authorized representatives to the main cities, they were given the title as Episcopos. The Esenin, a reformist group in Jewish Religion had a leader known as Episcopos. The Malayalam word 'Methran' is the translation of English word Bishop. It did not mean to the same extent as is seen in today's church. The chairperson of a church used to be called as Bishop.

Only one official position

Evidene can be pointed out from the Holy Script showing that the words Pastor, Elder and Bishop are one and the same.

1. In Acts 2:17, Paul addresses the Elders who were invited from Ephesus as Bishops.
2. Paul advises Titus to appoint Elders in each city. While prescribing their qualifications, he calls them as Bishops.
3. In the instructions for Timothy, the bishops and Elders have equal qualifications (1Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17).
4. While giving commission to the Elders in 1Peter 5:2, there is an indication about the ministry of pastor in the words 'feed my flock'.
5. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul states about 5 types of ministries. While he stated about pastor, he missed the words Elder and Bishop. This indicates that all these are one and the same words.

The qualifications

We can group the qualification of bishop into three.

1. Personal qualifications

a) Five unavoidable qualifications [i] blameless [ii] vigilant (1Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8) [iii] of good behaviour (1Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8) [iv] sober (1Timothy 3:2) [v] patient (1Timothy 3:3).

b) Six things to avoided [i] Not given to wine [ii] No striker [3] Not greedy of fithy lucre [iv] Not brawler [v] Not covetous [vi] not selfwilled (1Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).

2. Social qualifications

[a] the husband of one wife (1Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6) [b] ruleth well his own house (1Timothy 3:4-5) [c] having faithful children (1Timothy 3:4) [d] given to hospitality (1Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8) [e] have a good report from outsiders (1Timothy 3:7).

3. Spiritual qualifications

[a] a lover of good men (Titus 1:8) [b] mature (1 Timothy 3:6)
[c] just [d] holy (Titus 1:8) [e] Holding fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9)
[f] apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).

Questions

1. What is the significance of the ministry of Teachers?
2. What is the meaning and importance of the ministry of Pastor?
3. Analyse the meaning and responsibility of the position of Elders and Bishops in the light of New Testament.
4. Prove that Pastor, Elder and Bishop are the same.
5. Give an account of the qualification of Bishop.

LESSON - 15

THE DEACONS AND DEACONESS

Reading Passages : Acts 6:1-5; Romans 16:1-2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Memory Verse : Acts 6:3

Introduction : Deacons and deaconess are the people who work for the glory of God in the local churches under the Bishop. The beginning of their work is seen in the book of Acts Chapter 6. The Holy Spirit has made the arrangements so that the ministry entrusted to each one should be utilized for the edification and fruitfulness of the church. The works of women as laid down in the Bible should also be accepted.

The Deacons

In the introduction in the epistle to Philippians, Apostle Paul addresses the Deacons (Philippians 1:1). The word '*Deacon*' meaning helper was derived from the Greek word '*Diakonain*'. This word means servant, helper, worker, etc.

It is essential for a Deacon to have meekness, faithfulness and sacrificial mindset. The Deacon should mainly do the social and material services but he should also be in the forefront to do the spiritual ministries. As the verb form of Deacon has been used for the services on the table and also in the house, it is difficult to say as to which ministry this position has actually been given. The service of Deacon is not seen in the Old Testament and in the Jewish culture.

The details of selecting deacons have been recorded in the book of Acts Chapter 6. The church itself selected 7 men filled with

knowledge, Spirit and possessing good testimony to resolve the complaint by the Greek speaking Jews that their widows were neglected in the ministry. From this, it is clear that while Elders (Pastors) were appointed by either the apostles or their representative, the deacons were selected by the local church itself.

Some people argue that what is stated in Acts chapter 6 is not about the ministries of deacons. However, as the qualifications for deacons as mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:6-9 have been used in the book of Acts Chapter 6 and also that the verb form of deacon has been used therein, it is clearly understood that it is all about deacon only.

The Church Elder Irenius had accepted the seven men as the first deacons of the church. In the thanksgiving epistle to the Ephesians for their financial help, Paul specially saluted the deacons. From this it is evident that they were earmarked for the compassionate work.

The deacons, along with their social and material services also help the pastor in spiritual matters. The objective of selecting deacons was to lessen the overburden of the apostles and to set aside time for prayer and preaching, etc. (Acts 6:4). However, at present, though there are deacons, we see a situation where the apostles and pastors do all the general services and struggle to segregate time for prayer and preaching.

Out of the 7 elected men, the history of Stephen and Philip is seen continuously in the book of Acts. Though Stephen, the first martyr of the New Testament was selected to serve on the table, he has proved through his life that those who are filled in spirit and knowledge cannot be distanced from evangelism (mission).

The Qualifications

Paul clearly mentions about the qualifications of deacons immediately after stating the qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:8-13). While specifying the qualities of deacons, 'to be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre' are personal qualifications; 'be husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well' are social qualities and 'holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience' are spiritual qualifications. It is important that selection should be of the persons already possessing the above qualifications and not that these qualities are developed after the selection.

Deaconess

The statement of Paul about Phebe, the deaconess of Cenchrea

church (Romans 16:1-2) points out that there were deaconess too served in the church like dedicated deacons. If we listen to the statement of Paul, it can be understood that Phebe shined in the church exactly like the meaning of her name. Paul had sent the epistle from Corinth to Rome through Phebe. The two women, Euodias and Syntyche, as described in Philippians 4:2 are believed to be the deaconess of that church.

In 1Timothy 3:11, Paul explain about the qualifications of deaconess. It is worthy to note that after stating the qualifications of bishop in 3:1, the qualifications of deacon starts in verse 8 with a prefix 'likewise'. This word is again used before stating about the qualifications of deacons in verse 11. Some argue that this is about the wives of deacons. However when the qualifications of the wives of Bishop is not mentioned by Paul, there is no possibility of stating the qualifications of the wives of deacons. In the report sent by the Roman Governor, Pleen to the Trajan emperor in AD 112, it is mentioned about the persecution of two Christian deaconess. From this it is evident that there was deaconess in the former church.

Qualifications

From the statement in 1Timothy 3:11 that "*even so must their wives be grave, not slanders, sober, faithful in all things*", it is clear that the deaconess also must have the same qualification as of deacons. The deaconess should be careful not only in displaying the 'graveness' in their behaviour but also to be faithful in everything.

According to the historical records of the third century, the responsibilities of the deaconess were to serve in the matters like helping other woman during their baptism; visit the houses of those women coming to the church alone; to help, serve and pray for the sick women; help the women in learning the Words; etc.

Questions

1. How the selection of deacons was done?
2. What are the responsibilities of deacons?
3. What are the qualifications of deacons?
4. Explain about the qualifications and responsibilities of deaconess.

LESSON - 16

THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH

Reading Passages : Ezekiel 34:11-16; John 10:1-18; Romans 12:4-10; Ephesians 1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:13.

Memory Verse : Ephesians 4:25

Introduction : Examples are helpful to understand about the plans of God. Matters like body or flock (of sheep) are easily understood by anybody. Paul imitates the style of Christ our Lord i.e. 'from known to unknown' through the example of body. The imagination about 'flock' is of Christ himself.

1. The Church – the body of Christ

The verses like Ephesians 1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:13, 4:25-26; Romans 12:4-10; 1Cor 12:12-28, Colossians 2:19, explains about the church i.e. the body with Christ as head. The relation between Christ and Church is not a mere organizational unity but is an active unity. The body cannot function without active relationship with the head. Each part of the body is connected to the head with joints and nerves.

The New Testament indicates about 3 types of body of Christ
(1) **Personal Body:** In this body, Christ lived in this world till His death
(2) **Symbolic Body:** This is the bread being used in the Lord's Table. Like the wheat corn grinds, the body of Christ had crushed in the vine press of the fierceness of God's wrath
(3) **Mystical Body:** This is the New Testament Church.

(a) The relation between Christ and the Church

It is considered that the teaching of Paul comparing the Church with the body of Christ is one of the finest theological presentations.

By tearing His body on the cross, He abolished the enmity between the Greek and the Jews. The verse 1Cor 12:13 explains as to how a person becomes member of the Church. By one Spirit we all are baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and all have been made to drink into one Spirit.

The Church i.e. the body gets life and nourishment from the head i.e. Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Being part of the holy body, the children of God should lead holy life. The Lord, the head is part of the miseries of the body, the church. For this reason, Lord asked Saul while persecuting the Church "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me" (Acts 9:4)? The sovereignty of Lord, the head of church is a very significant subject. Each movement of the church must be in accordance with the will of Christ. The member of the Church (the part of the body) cannot do things according to his wish.

(b) The relation among the members

The body also points out about the relationship and fellowship among the believers. The caring and sympathy as mentioned in 1Cor 12:26 that "when one member is suffered it becomes the suffering of all" should be demonstrated. All parts of the body have equal importance. No part has been created fruitless. The principle of diversity is explained here. Though the usefulness of each part is different, all of them are used for the common interest of the whole body.

Though there is difference in the ministries and services, all of them are equal before the God as the purpose of different ministries is the spiritual prosperity and increase of church in general. The cooperation among the different parts is essential for the survival of the body. Certain things which are prescribed to be done by believers among themselves are [1] honour one another (Romans 12:10) [2] strengthen one another (Nehemiah 2:18) [3] submitting one to another [4] exhorting one another [5] to be clothed with humility (1Peter 5:5).

2. The Flock (of sheep)

The flock is an apt image for the Church that experiences the good caring of the good shepherd. In the Old Testament, the God Jehovah is portrayed as Shepherd and the Israel as sheep (Psalms 23:1, 79:13, 80:1, 100:3; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11-16). Chapter 10 of the Gospel of John amply illustrate the relation between Christ, the shepherd and Church, the flock.

(a) The Good Shepherd

Christ who claimed himself as Good Shepherd also presents the

qualities of Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep. On the Passover night, He interpreted the prophecy that "... smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered ..." (Zechariah 13:7) is written about himself (Mathew 26:21). God's Church is the flock bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd (Acts 20:28).

(b) The Caring

The caring of the Good Shepherd is beautifully demonstrated in Psalms 23. It is the assurance of the shepherd to the flock about pastures and water, the experience of restoring of souls (redemption), protection from dangers, victory over enemy, the mercy and goodness that follows throughout the life. The picture of the shepherd's search for the lost sheep is the finest presentation of God's love towards the seeking of sinner. Those who are called for the ministry as deacons are being exhorted to perform the preservice of sheep with full responsibility and gentleness (John 21:16; 1Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11). The shepherd (deacon) has the responsibility to give accounts to the Chief Shepherd (1Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:17).

(c) The commitment of flock

Like the sheep depends on the shepherd for its needs, the Church must fully depend on Christ. The flock must comply with the directions and control of the shepherd. Like the sheep recognizes the voice of its shepherd, a believer must identify God's voice and Will. Like shepherd lead the flock through controls, Jesus too leads His Church through instructions for which He has commissioned ministers (deacons). Therefore, the church members should be careful in obeying Jesus Christ the most and must be obedient to the ministers appointed by God as well. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" Hebrews (13:17).

Questions

1. Which are the three bodies of Christ?
2. Explain about Church i.e. the body of Christ.
3. How should be the relation among the members of the Church?
4. What are the qualities of Good Shepherd?
5. How should be the submissiveness of flock be put in to practice by church members?

LESSON - 17

THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH (Continued)

Reading Passages : Psalms 45; Isaiah 5:1-5, 54:5-6; Mathew 25:1-12, John 3:29, 15:1-5, Ephesians 5:26-27

Memory Verse : 2 Corinthians 11:2

Introduction : We are continuously studying about the likeness of Church. While Christ depicted church as the branches of vine, Paul figuratively visualized it as bride. Some of the parables said by Jesus Christ in the Gospels support it.

3. The Bride

Paul portrays the Church as the chaste virgin espoused to Christ (2Corinthians 11:2). In Ephesians 5:26-27, he writes that "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish". The relationship and the duties between husband and wife is symbolized here as spiritual relation between Christ and Church.

Some Old Testament parts portray the Church as the wife of covenant of Jehovah (Isaiah 54:5-6, 62:5; Hosea 2:7). While Christ is symbolized as heavenly Bridegroom in the Gospels (Mathew 9:15, 25:1-12, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34-35), John the Baptist himself called as the friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29).

The Church being virgin has to keep herself holy and clean. As per old matrimonial customs of the Middle East countries, the bride has to be owned by giving bridal dowry. Our Lord earned the Church by giving his own blood. The period starting from the time of engagement

till the marriage is very crucial. During this period, the bride has to prove her holiness (chastity).

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). The marriage of the bride of the Lamb (Christ) is going to be happened in near future. Each of those church members who have attained rebirth and filled with spirit is waiting with such hope.

The duties of the Bride

The main duty of the bride is to keep her holy without the worldly faults. The bride get herself adorned for the marriage rather than getting adorned by others. The special robe of the bride is the righteous deeds of the saints (Revelation 19:8). The fact that judgement according to the deeds of one while in his body is emphasized in 2Corinthians 5:10. One cannot attain the position of bride after death with the adornment (prayers) of others. Holiness is the face seal of the Church. The believer should not ignore the warning that “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:11-12).

In Psalms 45, the chief sign of the Princess who is shadow of Church is “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty”. The children of God are the one who have abandoned all rites of the gentiles and all acts contrary to the Word of God who should love Christ more than their parents, brothers and sisters.

4. The vine branches and the closed garden

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1). “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4). This is another example of revealing the lively relationship between Christ and the Church. In the book of the Song of Songs which is portrayed as the Bride’s Chamber in the Holy Palatial Scripture, the Church is illustrated as closed garden.

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (Song of Songs 4:12). From these verses it is seen that church is a garden and God the Father is the husbandman (keeper)

and our Lord is the true vine. It is worthy to note a statement of Apostle Paul with exactly similar meaning. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building " (1Corinthians 3:8-9).

The qualities of the enclosed garden

The Church as a closed garden has certain noteworthy facts.

1. As the garden is closed it is evident that it has an owner.
2. The trees and saplings in the garden are the planted ones and not grown of its own.
3. This garden is separated from other open land.
4. The objective of growing in the garden is to grow and provide fruit.
5. As the garden is closed, it is specially secured. Cruel wild animals cannot enter into it.

True Vine

The rightful declaration of Jesus Christ that I am the true vine is very meaningful. While all the teachers and religious leaders of this word are sinners and are vines with shortcomings, Jesus is the only faultless and perfect vine.

The Israelites are portrayed as vine in the Old Testament (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21, 12:10; Ezekiel 15:1-5, 19:1-14; Hosea 10:1-2). God brought Israel, the vine out of Egypt; cast out the heathens from there; planted them; to be blessed and growing and spreading, He prepared favourable conditions and fenced them with the Holy Law, thrown out the stones of sins and arranged everything for them but they brought forth wild grapes.

Israelites were the natural branch but God understood that the tendency to sin was deeply rooted in them. As a precautionary measure to this, the believer has been grafted to the sinless true vine. Therefore the longing for growing wild grapes (committing wrong) disappears. The believer is cleansed in Christ.

A believer cannot bring forth fruit without staying in Christ. A lively relation like the vine and its branches is essential between Christ and the believer. The vigor of the branch and its ability to bring forth fruit depends upon its relation with the vine.

Pruning

The pruning done to provide more fruits (John 15:2) is a special mention of this parable. When the number of branches increases, the vine will spread over but the chances of fruiting it become meager. Therefore, pruning is done to lessen the number of branches. Now the increase of fruit is more than the increase of leaves. Some trials given by God to His children are to clean them more to enable them to provide more fruits (1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5-11). God does not desire that one should continue unclean and fruitless.

Questions

1. What does the parable of bride mean?
2. What are the duties of bride?
3. What are the specialties of the closed garden?
4. What are the inequalities of true vine?
5. Why do pruning is done?

LESSON - 18

THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH (Continued)

Reading Passages : Leviticus 7:11-15; Romans 12:1-2; Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 4:14, 10:10, 14:22, 1 Peter 2:4,8.

Memory Verse : Exodus 19:5-6.

Introduction : The New Testament emphatically stress that God do not desire to dwell in handmade buildings and it happens only in the hearts of man. In the beginning of the creation of man, God literally used to come to the garden to have fellowship with man. Today He gives a more liberal opportunity to the believer for fellowship. This aspect is hidden to those who try to make palatial buildings to place the God. While the Old Testament Priest is from a specific group, each New Testament believer is a royal priesthood.

5. The Royal Priesthood

The expectation of God from the Israelites was that they must be a kingdom of Priests for Him (Exodus 19:5-6). Since they could not meet this expectation, God desired to raise the New Testament Church as the royal priesthood.

When the Church is compared as Temple, Christ is its Chief Priest (Hebrew 4:14). In the Old Testament, when the Levites and other Priests do the ministries in the Temple along with the Chief Priest, the other tribes stands at a distance and do not join them in the ministries. In the Church of God while Christ minister as the Chief Priest, others are royal priesthood. In the Old Testament, the Chief Priests offer

sacrifices for his own sins and of his people and repeat the same every year whereas the New Testament Priest is not required to offer sacrifice for his own sins as He is sinless. Christ has offered one sacrifice for the everlasting redemption of all (Hebrews 10:10-14).

The Old Testament Priests could not reach up to the Mercy Seat. The Chief Priest could enter in to the Most Holy Place only once in a year. However, the New Testament priest can enter in to the Mercy Seat at any time (Hebrews 4:16). Therefore a New Testament believer is greater than the Old Testament priest.

The basic qualification for a New Testament Royal Priesthood is the relationship with the High Priest (Hebrews 4:14, 7:26-27; 1Peter 2:4-5). There were certain rules for purification while selecting the Old Testament priests. Similarly the royal priesthood i.e. Church of God has also have some cleansing by the Word and Blood (Hebrews 10:10-22; 1John 1:7).

The Ministries

1. The offerings of the Body

While the Old Testament Priest offer repeated sacrifice for the sins, Christ has performed the perfect sin offering once for all and therefore the New Testament priest need not offer sin sacrifice any more. Anybody who accepts the redemption work of Jesus Christ and confesses the sin is saved from the yoke of sin. The main part of the offering of sacrifice by the Church Members is the offering of their body. Through this sacrifice the fleshly desires are killed and daily transformation takes place and become like Christ (Romans 12:1-2). Paul also states about similar ministries in Philippians 2:17.

2. The thanksgiving sacrifice i.e. the fruit of lips

In the Old Testament, the Thanksgiving sacrifice was one of the rarely offered sacrifices offered along with the peace offerings (sacrifice). It was an offering to God towards His favours (Leviticus 7:11-15). In the New Testament ministries, it is a continuous offering. A believer should thank the Lord continuously for everything (1Thesolonians 5:18).

3. Virtuous Deeds

The third offerings is of good deeds (Hebrews 13:16). This includes financial help to the needy, spending towards the growth of evangelism, etc. Paul accepted financial help from the believers in Philippian Church as sweet smell sacrifice (Philippians 4:18). This

brings glory to the God (Mathew 5:16; 1Peter 2:12).

4. The souls that are saved

The fourth offering is the souls that are led towards the salvation. Paul portrays that those first timers who accept the Christian faith are offerings before God (Romans 15:15). While the Old Testament Priest is called as the messenger of Jehovah (Malachi 2:7), the New Testament believer is the messenger of salvation (1Peter 2:9; 2Corinthians 5:20).

5. The Intercession i.e. Prayer

Intercession was important in the ministry of the Old Testament Priest. They were commissioned not only for offering sacrifice but also for weeping (Joel 2:17). The New Testament believer is duty bound to share the burden of each other, pray for the magistrates (officers), evangelization, healing of the body, etc. For this, there are examples and directions available in the New Testament (Acts 12:5,12, 13:3, 14:23; James 5:14-18, Romans 10:1, 1Thimothy 2:1-2).

6. The Temple

The image of Temple is seen in the usage of the word 'build' by Jesus as mentioned in Mathew 18:18 that "I will build my Church". God instructed in the Old Testament as "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). In the New Testament, the temple i.e. Church is being built with the believers as the living stone (1Peter 2:5). Moreover each believer is a Temple of God (1Corinthians 3:16).

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22). Normally, the laying of corner stone and foundation are the crucial primary phase of the building process. Further building is done on the perfectly completed foundation. The Church is built on the salvation work (foundation) and the Apostolic and prophetic doctrines. Therefore Paul reminds the Galatians that "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Two crucial aspects are there with respect to Temple (1) Foundation and (2) living stones.

1. The unchangeable and perfect foundation

As already discussed above, the foundation of God's Church can never be changed. The Word speaks that nobody can build foundation except that of Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 3:11), some Christians tries to lay foundation of Peter. This is absurd and against the Word. Even Peter emphasized that Jesus is the foundation (1Peter 2:4-8). Jesus revealed this in His Sermon on the Mount (Mathew 7:24-27).

2. The living stones

While building the Temple by Solomon, the same was "...built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house,...." (1Kings 6:7). This is aspect is essential in building God's Church. The conversion of religion without transformation (conversion) of mind is useless. Only those stones can be seen in the Church which are saved by Jesus Christ and are living stones. There is no entry to the dead stones that are borne as a traditional Christian. Like the premises of the temple should be highly clean (holy) (Ezekiel 43:12) was a stringent rule, there is no place for the unholy in this temple too. God's ordinance is not that one should become holy in a phased manner after coming in to the Church (today such repentance is common) but those who have actually repented should come to worship the God.

Questions

1. What is the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament priests?
2. What are the ministries of the New Testament Priest?
3. How is the image of Temple present in the New Testament?
4. What are the important factors in the image of Temple?
5. Explain about the living stones.

LESSON - 19

THE SEVEN LIKENESS OF THE CHURCH (Continued)

Reading Passages : Isaiah 49:15, 66:3,12; Mathew 6:9, 23:9;
Romans 8:15; Ephesians 2:19, 3:14-15.

Memory Verse : Ephesians 2:19

Introduction : Naturally all individuals are borne and bought up in a family. Therefore the example of family is easily understood. Like the primary lessons of love is learnt in the family, it is essential to have the overflow of love in the Church, the family of God. There should be provisions to resolve the issues in a Church exactly like problems are solved in a family. We are going to learn about the last of the seven likenesses of Church.

7. The Family

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God...” (Ephesians 2:19). “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” (Ephesians 3:14-15).

Through these words, Paul presents the Church as a family. While the heavenly God is the Father and Mother of this family, the first born Christ is the Eldest Son. All children of God are the members of this family. Our Father is so loving and merciful who says that “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isaiah 49:15) and “As one whom his mother comforteth, so

will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 66:12-13). This statement gives lots of strength and consolation to the children of God.

Father the God

The Holy Scriptures says that God, the father of the Church the family holds five types of paternity. **1. He is the father of all** : He being the creator of all, He is the father of all men. “Have we not all one father? Hath not one father created us?...” (Malachi 2:10). **2. God is father of fatherless (orphan)** (Psalms 68:5): His special caring to the weak is revealed here. **3. The father of Israel** (Exodus 412; Hosea 11:1): Those who are specially called and separated is protected and cared as a father. **4. The father of Jesus Christ** (1Peter 1:3; 2Corinthians 1:3): During the time of Christ’s baptism a statement was said from heaven as “He is my beloved son”. Moreover, during His ministry, Christ addressed God as His father. This relation is with respect of the Trinity. **5. The father of the Church** (Mathew 6:9) : “ But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). The Old Testament saints prayed to God by addressing Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The New Testament Church addresses the God as ‘our Heavenly Father’. God has given us the “Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).

The Church of God has no one else to call as Father. The titles or position like Pope, Father, etc. are against the Word and is from Babylonian. “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9).

The Children of the family (as the Church)

Nobody can become a member of the Church, the family of God by natural birth from a parent. It is clear from the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus that it is essential to born again by the Word and Spirit (John 3:3-5). When the incorruptible seed i.e. God’s Word is sown in an individual, the re-birth takes place with the dealings of Holy Spirit. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...” (2Corinthians 5:17).

There is vast difference between the first birth and the re-birth. The first birth is natural and with corruptible seed whereas re-birth is spiritual birth. It occurs with the incorruptible seed i.e. Word of God. By first birth, one get the right to patrimony and a name in the register of this world but by re-birth one become partaker with Christ and a name written in the book kept in heaven.

The children in the family of heaven keep separation from the destructive worldly children. It is useful to discuss some special qualities of the children of the family of heaven.

1. The children of light

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1Thessalonians 5:5).

The heavenly Father has another name as the Father of Lights (James 1:17). Jesus Christ has claimed that He is the light of the world. In God there is no darkness at all. This reveals the highest altitude of His holiness and goodness. It is the desire of a father that his son should be like him. He says “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*”. The children of God should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). If we keep ourselves away from getting spotted and blamed in our life, then only we will be able to reach His Holy presence (Revelation 3:4-5). While the worldly sons are in the darkness of sin and evil, the children of God reflect the lights of holiness and goodness. We get this light from the Father of lights and Christ, the light of the world.

2. The obedient children

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Peter 1:14-15). The children of this world are called disobedient children (Ephesians 2:2). The entry of sin was made due to the disobedience of first parents. Thus by obeying God, His Word and the Holy Spirit, God’s children stand against sin. In order to be holy, besides keeping away from all sins, one has to live according to the Word. Majority of believers give attention not to sin. But the other part is also essential for a life of faith. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

3. The praying children

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:14). This verse represents the prayerful habit of the believers. Jesus Christ gave lots of importance to prayer in His life and also was example to the disciples. The Lord spent long hours in prayer before doing any important task. Seeing this, the desire to pray was generated in the disciples. Personal prayer is the most important part in the life of a believer. At least from age of 13 years, a child should be practiced to do personal prayer. In addition to prayer, fellowship is also an important subject (1John 1:4).

The example of family is easily understood by anyone. The relation between parents and children is important than any other relation. Like the children convey all of their need to the parents, the children of God has the right and courage to convey their needs to Him. Here there is no need of a mediator. Like the training of parents form good character and future in their children, God's trail is for the goodness of His saints. It has to be borne gracefully and march ahead obediently.

The other similes

In addition to what has been learnt by us, some more examples of the Church have been given in the Script [1] The Last Adam and the New Creation [2] The Temple of God (1Thimothy 3:15) [3] The Master and the disciples (John 15:8). As these are similar to the one already learnt by us, there is no need to have further study on this.

Questions

1. Who are the members of the family of Church?
2. Explain the characteristics of God the Father.
3. Discuss about the qualities of the family of Church.
4. Whether the example of family dismisses the idea of mediator?
Give reason.
5. In what all ways God the Father is a Father?

LESSON - 20

FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH

Reading passages : Deuteronomy 4:7, 6:7; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:37-42; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:3.

Memory Verse : Colossians 1:28

Introduction : The Church of God has clear foundations. The Church, of which the foundation is Jesus Christ, cannot alter the Words of Christ. If it does so the Church will lose its originality. In this lesson, we are going to discuss the fundamental doctrines of the Church.

Fundamental Doctrines

The second Chapter of the book of Acts in which the historical beginning of the Church was made clearly records about the fundamental doctrines of the Church. When the Holy Spirit was descended on the 120 people who were tarrying according to the promise of our Lord, they spoke in other tongues. The people who heard them aired different opinions. Apostle Peter along with the other disciples, who filled with the Holy Spirit delivered a detailed sermon and those who gathered there were repented and asked 'brothers what have to do by us? As a reply to this, he spoke the fundamental doctrine of the Church. Though Peter told this without any explanations, the New Testament writers made these doctrines official with explanations.

The basic words

The word 'doctrine' has been derived from the Latin word 'doctrina'. It means 'to teach'. In Hebrew, there are three words for

‘doctrine’: (1) *Lequach* – it means ‘to receive’; (2) *Musar* – meaning ‘rebuke’, ‘exhortate’; (3) *Shemuah* – means ‘that was heard’.

In Greek, the basic language of the New Testament language has three words for doctrine: (1) *Didaskalia* – Teaching; (2) *Didake* – To teach; (3) *Logos* – the word. These words are used at different occasions.

Significance of fundamental doctrines

There were conditions that a real Jew must a person who is trained in the Law (Romans 2:17-18). He should be a teacher who teaches the Law to his children (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7; Proverbs 22:6). Teaching is an essential feature of the New Testament Church too. This is evident in the later teaching of the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20). Paul instructed Timothy to be engaged in reading, exhortation, teachings till his returns (1 Timothy 4:13). The Christian fundamental doctrines are based on the Bible. It should not be the philosophy or enticing words but needs to be taught without any fault.

The Christian fundamental doctrines are "that Christ began to spoke; also God bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of Holy Spirit according to His own will and was confirmed unto us them that heard Him" (Hebrew 2:3). When Jesus taught in the Temple, those listened to Him were astonished and said as to from where this man has this wisdom and these mighty works? (Matthew 13:53-55). Jesus told them: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). Nicodemus accepted Jesus as 'teacher came from God' (John 3:2).

Those who drink the unadulterated milk of Word and build according to the doctrines will grow up to Christ. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). The doctrine is defined in different ways in the New Testament.

It is pictured as the sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10), good doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6) and doctrine which is according to the godliness (1 Timothy 6:3) - the right doctrine - based on the Word. The doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1) and doctrines of men (Colossians 2:21) are contrary to God's word.

Whether God's Word or Tradition?

What is the basis of the doctrines? The nominal Churches, in spite of clearly knowing the truth that their traditional rituals have no support of the Word, argue that tradition is more important than the

Word. The statement that Bible is imperfect and the interpretation of the Bible rests with the Church is totally baseless excuse.

One can understand that the full New Testament is the apostolic doctrines. 'The Holy Spirit shall come and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you' was about the Gospels, 'he shall teach you all things' was about the Epistles and 'it shall made known to you which is yet to come' was about the book of Revelations. The Word of God contains everything that is needed for the life and godliness of a New Testament believer. The Holy Word of God was written by different servants of God commissioned by the Holy Spirit so that it stands together as one without any contradictions. Being so, even if any Epistle has been lost, the same will not be contrary to the Holy Word of God.

The foolishness of those who do not obey the already revealed doctrines but claim that what they are following is the lost part of the doctrines is evident here. The words of Apostle John is noteworthy: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30,31). The Bible contains everything that is required for the faithful and rightful spiritual life of an individual. Our primary need is to live according to it.

Lord Jesus Christ himself condemns the argument that tradition has more significance. Jesus Christ strongly questions the Jews when they weakened the Law of the Lord by the tradition of men (Mark 7:5-12). Jesus said: "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13). The Lord sternly proclaims that nobody has the right to add or delete anything from the Word of God (Matthew 5:18-19). "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1Corinthians 3:11). Apostle Paul wrote: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8).

The Church was formed on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrines were formed after the establishment of Church. The doctrines of apostles are the explanations of the existing foundation. No alterations were made. The Church will not sustain if it retract from its foundation. How can one accept worship of idols where there is the strong commandment that you shall image? Traditions can be

changed according to the situations and the leadership of men prevailing. But the Church of God stands on the unchangeable foundation of the Word of God.

Questions

1. Where are the fundamental doctrines of the Church recorded?
2. Explain the original word for the fundamental doctrines and its usages.
3. What is the significance of fundamental doctrines?
4. Does the Church follow the Word of God or the tradition?

LESSON - 21

REPENTENCE

Reading Passages : Joel 2:13-14; Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3; John 3:1-8; Acts 5:30-32, 26:18; Romans 2:4

Memory Verse : Acts 2:38

Introduction : Repentance is the first step towards obtaining membership in the Church of God and entry into the kingdom of God. Conducting or doing any other rites neglecting this aspect will be in futile. Let us study the significance of the doctrine of repentance.

As already studied in the previous lesson, the fundamental doctrines are there in the first sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Thereafter similar doctrines are seen in the clarifications about the working of the former church. This is recorded in Acts 2: 38 - 42. The Christian Church has seven fundamental doctrines: (1) Repentance, (2) Baptism, (3) Gift of Holy Spirit, (4) Separation, (5) teaching of the apostles and fellowship, (6) Breaking of the Bread and (7) Prayer.

Repentance

Repentance is one of the most important doctrines of the New Testament. As it is the first step towards spiritual life, there is no other ways to enter into heaven neglecting repentance. Non repentance is the forerunner of destruction (Luke 13:3).

The Old Testament synonyms

In Old Testament, mainly two words have been used for repentance: (1) '*Nachum*': indicating deep sorrow, the state of receiving deliverance; (2) '*Shubh*': meaning turn, turn back or return.

The New Testament synonyms

In New Testament, there are three main words: (1) *'Metanoia'*: This word is derived from *'metanoiac'* which is a combination of two words *'meta'* and *'navus'*. *Meta* means after and *'navus'* means knowledge. From *'metanoiac'* we get the idea of 'after knowing'. For every man there is a period of ignorance. God does not consider the times of ignorance (Acts 17:30). The period after knowing what is required to be known.

(2) *'Epistrophe'*: This word has the same meaning as of the Hebrew word *'Shuba'*. This means turn, turn back and return.

(3) *'Metamelia'*: The verb form of this word is used in New Testament. It means 'come as help next' and 'come next.'

What is repentance?

Repentance generally means the change of mind. But the Holy Bible give some deeper sense. It means turning back to God by hearing the Word of God who was otherwise walking from birth in a way and direction against the will of God. In Paul's words, repentance means "...to open the spiritual eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God....." (Acts 16:8).

How does repentance occur?

The most significant fact about repentance is that it comes from God as a gift (Acts 11:18). If God do not show grace on man in his wretched state, he will not be able to come to repentance of his own. "The grace of God that brings salvation to all men is by giving His own Son as sacrifice for the remedy to our sins". In Romans 2:4, it is said that the goodness of God leads us into repentance.

Though God has given to every person, repentance comes by hearing of the Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Peter preached the gospel along with the eleven; those who heard it become aware of sin. The invisible work of the Holy Spirit who reproves the world of sin, of righteousness and judgement was behind it. The conscience of God's punishment is also a factor which leads to repentance. The rebuking and chastening of God too generates a desire for repentance in us.

The need and importance of Repentance

The Bible says: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). So, all need repentance. The Bible proclaims that neither sacrament nor the sacrifice under the Old

Testament could not bring perfect repentance and forgiveness of sin. It is received by those who believe in the sacrifice of propitiation of Jesus Christ. There is no other way of salvation or a savior for the spiritual salvation of a person.

The significance of repentance is clearly recorded in both Old and New Testaments.

1. The Old Testament prophets preached repentance (Deuteronomy 30:12; 2 Kings 17:13; Jeremiah 8:6; 26:3; 42:10; Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30, 24:14; Jonah 3:9-10; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:1-6).
2. John the Baptist who was sent by God emphasized it. (Matthew 3:1,2,8; Mark 1:2-4).
3. Jesus Christ started His public ministry with the preaching of repentance (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15).
4. It was stressed when the 70 disciples were sent (Mark 6:7-12; Luke 10:13, 24;47) and in His last commandment (Luke 24:47).
5. Peter preached repentance on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38).
6. In the former days, repentance was the main message of the Apostles. (Acts 3:19,30-32, 8:22, 11:18, 17:30, and 20:21).

As it is given much of importance, a real Christian cannot ignore this subject or teach to use any other way for salvation.

The fruits of repentance

The heaven rejoice over a sinner that repents (Luke 15:7, 10). Likewise when the lost sheep is found, the good shepherd, Christ rejoices (Luke 15:6). Besides, the repented person gets God's mercy and forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7), remission of sins (Luke 24:47), sins blotted out (Acts 3:19) and enable to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The repentance and born again

When the Word of God and Holy Spirit work in a person, he is born again (John 3:5). Here, the 'water' figuratively indicates the Word of God. The born again do not takes place by the deed of baptism but by God's Word (James 1:18; 1Peter 1:23; Galatians 3:2) and by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5, 6, 8).

Questions

1. What are the words used in Old Testament for 'repentance'?
2. What are the words used in Greek for 'repentance'?
3. What is repentance?
4. Explain the need and importance of repentance.
5. How is repentance and born again related?

LESSON - 22

BAPTISM

Reading Passages : Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 7:30; John 1:6, 32, 33, 14:23-24; Acts 8: 36-40; Romans 6:4

Memory Verse : Mark 16:16

Introduction : Baptism is a matter of discourses. It is due to the practice of Episcopal churches following child baptism and sprinkling method. It is pity that these people refuses to abandon wrong tradition being practiced for years tries to save themselves relying on petty justifications. However, some people in these churches recognize this mistake.

Water Baptism and the Lord's Table are two ordinances given by Lord to be performed by the believers. While baptism is for taking part in the death of the Lord, Lord's Table is for remembering His death. Any person who accepted Jesus Christ as savior should be baptised. As God is very particular not to add any doctrine of men to these acts, these are being taught as an ordinance of the Lord. Except the groups like Quakers and Salvation Army, all other denominations conduct baptism.

Usage in original Languages

The words related to water in Hebrew and Greek languages are distinct and clear. Study of these words leads us to the foolishness of the false teachers.

1. Wash: In Greek the word '*nipto*' has been used (John 13:5-8, 1 Timothy 5:10, Matthew 6:17, 15:2).
2. Bath: In Greek the word '*Luo*' has been used (Acts 9:37, 16:33;

John 13:10; Hebrews 10:22; 2 Peter 2:22).

3. Sprinkle: The Greek word '*Tantisso*' has been used which later became '*Raino*'. From this word, the English 'rain' was formed. For sprinkling, the word '*tantismos*' is used in Greek (Hebrew 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2).
4. To pour: The word '*Echayo*' (John 2:15, Acts 2:17-18, 37; Revelation 16:1-4, 16:6).
5. To dip, to immerse, plunge: For this the word '*baptisdo*' is used. This is derived from the word '*bapto*'.

From the words used above, for the fundamental Christian doctrine baptism, no other word except the Greek words 'baptiso' or 'bapto' or 'baptisma' has been used in the original text. In the Greek-English Lexicon, these words mean to dip, to sink and to immerse.

In the translation of Bible from Syrian to Malayalam, the usage like dipped, were immersed, dips, etc. are used. There is a very clear definition has been given in the official book of 'Hoodaya Canons' for baptism as 'immerse in water'.

What is baptism?

The New Testament gives us very clear definition for baptism.

1. It is God's counsel (Luke 7:30)

God sent John the Baptist to baptize (John 1:6, 32-34). Though there were many types washings prevailed among the Jews (Exodus 30:17-21, Mark 7:1-5; John 13:4-11, 2:6), there was no custom of baptizing the repented by immersing in the water. It is presumed that the 'proselyte baptism' was given to the gentiles who were interested to convert to Jewish religion.

Though John the Baptist was the son of a priest, he was not priest. He did the work of a prophet. He had an ascetic array and eild food. But the voice from the wilderness commissioned by the God were taken in vain by many.

2. It is the ordinance and example of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)

Jesus, who said that if a man love me, he will keep my commandments (John 14:23-24; 1 John 2:4) commandment to His disciples to be baptized (Mark 16:15-16) and to baptize (Matthew 28:18-20). He Himself showed an example by His own baptism in the river of Jordan.

3. It is the Apostolic teaching and practice of the former Church (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12, 36, 40).

Many Christians think that immersion baptism was introduced by the Brethren or Pentecostal denominations. But it is clear that baptism by immersion was prevalent from the time of John the Baptist. The Apostles preached that those who believed should be baptized and accordingly those who accepted the Word were baptized.

4. It is the fulfillment of the righteousness of God (Matthew 3:15)

Jesus walked around sixty miles from Galilee to Jordan to get baptized. When John the Baptist forbade him, the reply was "*for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness*".

5. It is the answer to the good conscience (1Peter 3:21)

In the English translation of the Bible, baptism is seen to be defined as the answer to good conscience of man towards God. The answer received in the conscience of an individual who believes in the truth is to join with Jesus. The person who openly announces his submission to Christ through his Baptism gets united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This is the death of one's flesh before uniting with Christ and the resurrection as a new creature.

The mode of Baptism is only immersion

1. The usage of elementary word

In the beginning of the lesson we have discussed in detail about the elementary words of baptism. Professor Godwin of the Harvard University states that he has not seen any other meaning to the word '*bapto*' in any Lexicon except the meaning like *to dip, to immerse* or *to fully sink into the water*.

2. The person goes to the water

It is amply clear that wherever baptism took place in the New Testament, the person went to the water and not the water came to him (Matthew 3:6,11; Mark 1:5,9; Acts 8:38). The usage like '*went up straight away out of water*', '*they came unto a certain water*', '*and they went down both in to the water*' are noteworthy.

3. The meaning of Baptism

Baptism means unison with the death-burial-resurrection of Jesus Christ. If this likeness is to be completed, the immersing baptism is needed. One who is baptized in water unites with the burial of Christ and by coming out of water he joins with His raising. The statement that "...we are buried with him by baptism in to death: you then be

risen with Christ" is noteworthy.

4. The statements of those who does not follow the immersing method

From the Book named as Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 2 page 261, it is seen that the method of immersion baptism was prevalent in the church till twelfth century. In Chapter 2, pages 19-26 of the 'Hoodaya Canon', the foundation stone of Syrian Christians, it is repeatedly mentioned that baptism has to be given publicly by immersing in water. Bishop Yuhanon Marthoma in his book 'A Study book for the First Communicants' in page 48-52, has written that there is no evidence in the Bible for child baptism; that it is written in the book of Acts and in the Epistles that those adults who believed has to be given baptism by immersion.

Infant Baptism

Till the fifth century the custom of infant baptism was not prevalent in the Church. History says that till fourth century, special Bible study classes were organized for the baptised. As it is strongly considered that one cannot do sin after baptism, certain people extended their baptism till the death bed. The Roman Emperor Constantine was one of such people who accepted this type of baptism which is also called as Clinical Baptism. Therefore, it is doubtless that child baptism was not recognized till the end of fourth century.

Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), the church father, while teaching about baptism has said that those who have studied the Word, believes it to be true and according to the Word should come for baptism with prayer and fasting and the person giving baptism too should fast. (First Apology, Chapter 61).

However, by fifth century the faith that baptism brings remission of sins and those children who are not baptized will not enter into heaven led to infant baptism. Both these teachings are unbiblical.

Repent and baptize is the biblical way. Those who follow infant baptism disobey this. They baptize the child when it is not matured and do a confirmation after its maturity. The confirmation takes place when the faith is confessed. In order to justify one mistake, they present another sacrament which is not taught anywhere in the Bible. The confirmation also establishes that child baptism is not complete. Only after the confirmation that they have the freedom to receive 'Qurbana (the so - called Lord's Table) in the Episcopal denominations.

Questions

1. What is baptism?
2. State the reason for baptism is only through immersion.
3. Is child baptism a right thing? Why?

LESSON - 23

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Reading Passages : Joel 2:28-29; Luke 3:22; John 3:5, 16:8, 20:22; Acts 1:5, 10:44 - 48, 11:16; 1Corinthians 12:13.

Memory Verse : 1Corinthians 12:13

Introduction : The Church that began with the work of Holy Spirit preached the gospel to the end of the earth in the first century itself. Having understood this, Satan tried to lessen the significance given to the work of Holy Spirit and the official church even accepted such a policy. However, the power of Holy Spirit that worked in the first century repeated and spread the same work in the twentieth century with similar force. Those who were against these are now longing for the gifts of Holy Spirit. Still many people try to obstruct it with their understanding.

The Holy Spirit

In the words of Apostle Peter, we see the sequence of repentance, remission of sins, baptism and gift of the Holy Spirit.

We know that Holy Spirit is the third person in the Divine Trinity. It is the age (dispensation) of the Holy Spirit. According to the dealings of the divine Trinity, the Old Testament period is called the age of God the Father, the period of gospel is of the Son Jesus Christ and the period from Pentecost Day to the time of rapture is called the age of the Holy Spirit.

As the Holy Spirit convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) it is clarified that born again

is possible only by the Word of God and through Holy Spirit. It is evident that the Holy Spirit works in the repentance of a person. The Brethren and Baptist Churches teach that as the individual is saved by the Holy Spirit, and so baptism of Holy Spirit is not required.

It is evident that the apostles had dealings with the Holy Spirit. Jesus breathed on them and said, "You receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22). But the same apostles tarried for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus, who was born by the Holy Spirit, took baptism, the Holy Spirit ascended over him in the form of dove (Luke 3:22). Though it can be argued that these things happened before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, still there was the very presence of the Holy Spirit. We have to think conjunctively about the principle of Elisha asking for double portion of Spirit of Elijah.

With this, it is essential to study about the various functions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1. Baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5)

Jesus Christ, in His promise to the disciples after His resurrection had told about baptism in the Holy Spirit to strengthen them. The same idea is suggested in Act 11:16. Those gathered in the house of Cornelius, upon hearing the sermon of Peter suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. When somebody is baptized in the Holy Spirit, it is the repetition of the day of Pentecost and it is the same experience of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as said by Peter (1Corinthians 12:13; Acts 10:44-48). It is worth to state that the same things happened to whom were saved but not baptized yet (Acts 10:44-48).

2. Filling with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)

It is recorded that when the promise of baptism with Holy Spirit was fulfilled, "all were filled with the Holy Spirit." Here, it can be understood that both these events are the same. Ananias uttered the words 'be filled with the Holy Spirit' while talking to Paul to receive his sight.

3. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17, 18, 33; Joel 2:28-29)

Peter stood up in the middle and emphatically said before those who were anxiously gathered to know what was happening on the day of Pentecost quoting the prophecies of Joel. He said: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which

ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Outpouring means giving abundantly (without measure).

The same meaning is applied while saying the Holy Spirit fell on them (Acts 10:44, 8:16).

4. Endue (clothing) with Power (Luke 24:49)

Here the pouring of Holy Spirit is portrayed as clothing with power. The Holy Spirit who stands as a support to the believer covers him with its power like wearing clothes so that man’s weakness is not manifested. Those who empowered by the Holy Spirit had given strength and courage to witness Jesus Christ.

5. The anointing of the Holy Spirit

If the baptism of the Holy Spirit is immersion in the Spiritual River, the anointing of the Holy Spirit is the commission to evangelization. In the Old Testament period, the prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil. Peter states about Christ; God anointed Jesus with Holy Spirit and with who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38). Like each part of our body has to perform different functions, each believer has different ministries.

Each believer is anointed with the Holy Spirit. “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1John 2:20, 27).

Questions

1. Is the Holy Spirit received at the time of repentance sufficient for a believer?
2. Explain the different usages of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.
3. What do you mean by baptism in the Holy Spirit?
4. What is anointing of the Holy Spirit?

LESSON - 24

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Continued)

Reading Passages : Acts 19:1-7, 8:14-24, 10:44-48

Memory Verse : Isaiah 28:10-11

Introduction : Speaking in other tongue is misunderstood by many. Those who oppose the gifts of the Holy Spirit by giving strange and ungodly interpretation are now astonished seeing the growth of the believers that believe in the work of the Holy Spirit. The problem is in not having an approach with unbiased mind.

Is the baptism in the Holy Spirit essential?

The Brethren and Baptist churches teach that as the Holy Spirit is dwelling in those who are saved, so that further baptism of Holy Spirit not required. They rely on the statement of Paul that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost". We have already seen that a person is saved with the presence and deeds of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us see if the baptism of Holy Spirit is required or not.

Paul's question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? (Acts 19:2) shows the necessity of the baptism by the Holy Spirit. 'Believed' means believed in Jesus Christ. Thus, it is seen that the faith of a person is not perfect with the work of the Holy Spirit only at the time of believing in Jesus Christ. Though the disciples in Ephesus were not received Christian baptism but they believed in Jesus Christ. Otherwise it would have been said that Paul baptized them without believing in Jesus Christ. If their faith was not correct, Paul ought to have been taught them the salvation through Jesus Christ.

Here Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ and prayed for the Holy Spirit to come upon them.

If the Holy Spirit that they received at the time of believing was sufficient, the disciples at Ephesus were to be taught only the correct belief and baptized as according to this claim. When true faith is received, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. From the act of Paul laying his hands upon them for the baptism in Holy Spirit, it is apparent that all these arguments are only to escape from truth.

Is the other tongue a sign?

The next main issue is whether there is any sign for baptism in the Holy Spirit. This can be seen from the event in Ephesus discussed above. To the question 'have you received the Holy Spirit' should have been answered either in 'yes' or 'no'. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not of a feeling. Like spiritual birth occurs in a person, baptism of Holy Spirit should also be visible.

In the Old Testament, those who were poured with Spirit seen prophesying (Numbers 11:25-26; 1 Samuel 10:10). When the power of Spirit present in Moses was poured on the 70 elders and the Spirit came upon King Saul, all of them underwent the same experience. Visible events too occurred in the New Testament when the power of Spirit came. Speaking in other tongue was the visible sign in all these events.

Some teach that the special events occurred during the day of Pentecost because the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven so that no tarrying is necessary for the baptism of Holy Spirit. But what is the experience as described in the book of Acts Chapters 8, 10 and 19 about the Samaritans, those gathered in the house of Cornelius and the people of Ephesus? The occurrence, which the opponents of speaking in other tongues say is not repeatable, was experienced by all these three groups. To this they give interesting interpretations: the Jews were baptized on the day of Pentecost; the next groups were (1) the Samaritans that are half Jews and (2) people in the house of Cornelius were gentiles, Speaking in other tongue was demonstrated at these places was the inauguration of spiritual baptism for them. If this is true then what about the people in Ephesus? What inauguration was it? While the Bible divides the people into two viz. the Jews and the Gentile, What is the basis of the third division took place? How can we teach that this was separate inauguration for different group of people when the Scripture does not speak so?

We believe that the descending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is a special experience. It is because that the sound of rushing mighty wind occurred and the cloven tongues like as of fire was appeared. But these occurrences are not repeated anywhere else. However, other tongue is spoken as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit in those who are committed.

The fact that baptism of the Holy Spirit has not been exhausted with the day of Pentecost is apparent from the words of Peter: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). This promise has to be continued with the generations and those who are called from far.

Languages known and unknown

Some people give interpretation on why those who received baptism of Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost spoke in other tongues. They say that on that day there were people of different languages. So other tongues was spoken that to understand things by all of them (a common); and wherever people of same language gathers, there is no necessity of speaking in other tongues.

It is obvious that this teaching too is due to misunderstand the scripture. On that day the devout men dwelling at Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven were gathered (Acts 2:5). The name of some 16 countries have been mentioned there (Acts 2:9-10). Besides this, those who scorned them by saying that these men are full of new wine could not understand this language. If each of them roused and calmly spoke their own language, there was no possibility for other people to gather and scorn them saying they drank wine? We can genuinely assume that emotional noise was raised there.

Then Peter preaches in his mother tongue clearing the doubts of all gathered there. This was the language that could be understood by all Jews gathered there. As they were gathered from 16 different countries and were either Jews or proselytes, they understood the language of Peter. Therefore the argument that the other tongue was spoken so as to understand by different language does not hold well. Then why did they speak other tongue? Other tongue is a sign to non believers and God's promise to the believers.

The language spoken in continuation of the day of Pentecost, as mentioned in the book of Acts, cannot be presumed to be the language of the people gathered. It can be genuinely presumed from the writing of Paul to Corinth Church wherein it is written like 'nobody understand

it' and 'desire for prophesy in order to understand by people listening' (1Corinthians 14), there are languages which could be understood and which could not be understood by men. Here, the usage of the words 'languages of men and angels' (1Corinthians 13:1) have to be read conjointly.

Is speaking in other tongue a beginning?

We have already discussed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during Old Testament period. At that time people prophesied only when the spirit was poured on them. Thereafter it was not continued. But the speaking of other tongues on the day of Pentecost does not remain as the first sign. St. Paul says: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1Corintinas 14:18). It is evident that the speaking in other tongue was continuing at the time of writing the epistle to Corinthian church.

Why baptism in the Holy Spirit required?

1. To do powerful ministry (Acts 1;8, 4:18-24; Ephesians 3:16; 1Thessolonias 1:5-6).
2. To remove the fear and witness Christ courageously. (Acts 2; 14-36, 4:8-12).
3. To attain in-depth holiness by the believer (Romans 15:15;1 Thessolonians 4:3; 2Thessolonians 2:13-14).
4. To walk in the right direction (Romans 8:14; Acts 13:3, 16:7)
5. To provide the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Mathew 7:16-20).

Another allegation to point out that other tongue has no significance in other epistles other than Corinthians. While writing epistles to the churches, the apostles handled the issues prevalent there at that time. Only in the Corinthian Church the usage of other tongue was done indecently and disorderly. Since the subject was rightly handled in other churches, no mention was needed. The Lord's Table is the most important subject but is mentioned in the letter to Corinthians only. This is because it was conducted there disorderly. Thus, those who are raising such argument have to say that there is no importance to Lord's Table.

Questions

1. Is the baptism in Holy Spirit necessary?
2. Explain the relation between Spiritual Baptism and other tongue.
3. Can speaking in other tongue be understood by the hearers?
4. Why spiritual baptism is necessary.

LESSON - 25

SEPARATION

Reading Passages : Leviticus 20:24; 1Kings 8:53; Malachi 2:10-16; Acts 2:40, 19:18-20; Philippians 2:14; 2Corinthians 6:14-17, 11:1-3.

Memory Verse : Malachi 3:18

Introduction : Power of godly people is in holiness and separation. The Word of God does not permit to corrupt it. The Israelite dwelled alone and did not reckon among nation. If we lose the holiness, we will become weak like Samson or any other ordinary man.

Separation is one of the excellent qualities of a redeemed believer. Only if separated from the crooked generation, the holy seed can survive. God made all nations of men from one blood (Acts 17:26). Though God desired for singularity of men, advent of sin divided men into two: God's children and children of Satan (1John 3:10).

Need of separation

We see the doctrine of separation for the time from Genesis 1:4. God separated the light from darkness. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, comparing believer and non - believer, a question is asked: 'how can there be fellowship between light and darkness.' Peter in his speech beseeches to escape from this crooked nation (Acts 2:40).

The last part of Old Testament ends with the statement that "then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not (Malachi 3:18) whereas the last part of New Testament warns that "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him

be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:1-12).

Separation in the Old Testament

Separation from various heathens

Israel is a nation chosen by God with a special covenant. Therefore they should be separated from all other communities (Leviticus 20:24; 1 Kings 8:53). Inter-communal marriage was not permitted for even those came from Babel captivity (Malachi 2:10-16).

During Israel's captivity in Egypt and at the time of their wilderness journey, they had to observe different customs and rituals. The Gentiles were staying in the promised land of Canaan too. Bound with the principle of holiness and separation, they lived as a separate community in the land of Goshen in Egypt but maintained their uniqueness. As uncleanness occurred upon the advice of Balaam, they corrected themselves according to the counsel of God (Numbers 25:1-9, 31:15-20). From time to time, God has been giving them commandments not to indulge into idolatry. When they worshipped idols, God had given them the anointed so as to work conscientiously to forbid it.

Separation in Ministry

Normally the Levites separated themselves from Israelites in respect of ministry. It was essential to serve in the Tabernacle of Congregation with utmost cleanness. For this God gave them statutes and commandments. "Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine (Numbers 8:14).

When a person commits a vow of Nazarite, he shall separate himself from rest of the Israel unto the Lord and for the Lord. He was not permitted to drink wine, strong drink, no razor to come upon his head or shall not come at dead body (Numbers 6:1-8).

Separation in the New Testament

Paul asks the believers who converted from gentiles: "...for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). He also beseeches to be blameless and harmless and be without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. He further points out that their minds are being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ due to the agreement with the infidel (2Cor 6:16-17, 11:1-3). It is also

noteworthy that when Christ would return as the King of kings, he will separate the righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 25:32).

Where do we need separation?

1. In life and teaching

Life and teaching are two inseparable aspects of Christian life. Jesus warned to be aware of the leaven, the false teachings of the Pharisees and of the Herod. As far as doctrines are concerned, the Epistles of Galatians and Hebrews have its significance. In the epistle of Galatians by Paul opposes the believers who had come from Jewish traditional background and wanted to go back to their earlier faith. A false teaching tried to enter into the Church in the first century that one can attain full salvation without circumcision. However the Apostles and the elders assembled in Jerusalem, discussed it and decided that the yoke of Law that could not be borne even by our forefathers cannot be put on the gentiles. Later, when the same issue was cropped up again, Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians.

The same is seen in the epistle of the Hebrews. Here we can see that there is intolerance as far as doctrine is concerned. Paul specifically name Hymenaeus and Alexander as they have put away the good conscience (1 Timothy 1:19-20). Apostle John also talks about those who have denied the divinity of Jesus Christ (2 John 7-11).

2. Separation from Superstitions and bad rituals

As already discussed in the beginning, God had warned the Israelites not to replicate the ugly rituals of gentiles. For this reason Saul had eradicated the witchcrafts during his period. But when the traditions of gentiles slowly sneaked into them through different ways it led them to failures. Even in India, it is miserable to see that some believers have adopted the false traditions like observation of 'auspicious times', 'first sight' and '(bad) omen.'

In the New Testament Church, many believed and confessed their deeds. "... Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (Acts 19:18-20). Instead of doing the wrongs of the unknown past, one should follow the Word of God and abandon the deeds that are against the will of God.

The believer should form his views according to the guidance of the Word. What is not written in the Word of God does not suit him.

Questions

1. What is the need of separation?
2. Explain the doctrine of separation relating to Old Testament?
3. What are the dimensions of separation?
4. What is the doctrine of separation in the New Testament?

LESSON - 26

THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINES AND FELLOWSHIP

Reading Passages : Acts 2:14-36, 5:19-32, 4:13-20, 7:2-53, 13:16-41, 10:34-43, 17:2-31; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:14, Colossians 1:27; 1 John 1:3.

Memory Verse : Acts 2:32-33

Introduction : Some remain aloof after salvation. The Word of God stands against the view that one is required to maintain relation only with Jesus and having silent prayers and worship is sufficient. It also stands against certain TV discussions of similar nature. In addition to hearing of the sermons, it is essential to have fellowship with the Triune God and also with the fellow believers for a sustained life of faith.

Apostolic teachings

Apostolic Doctrines and Fellowship are bound together. Teaching is unavoidable in Christian life. While doctrine is teaching, fellowship indicates about the physical assembly. The apostles learnt the basic truths directly from Jesus Christ, then practiced it and imparted it to believers without any change. Many times these truths accompanied their testimony too. They quoted passages from the Old Testament while teaching the believers from Jewish community.

What was the Preaching?

Though there were teachings of the apostles (Acts 2:42), it is not explained everywhere what are all they taught. Some preaching recorded in the book of Acts clarifies what all doctrines were

emphasized upon. When we study the sermons of Peter on the day of Pentecost and thereafter (Acts 2:14-36; 5:29-32; 10:34-43), sermons of Stephen (Acts 7:2-53) and sermons of Paul (13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:2-31), we can make sure that the apostolic doctrines are based on three things.

1. They proved that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 3:18)
2. They presented the ascension of Jesus Christ without any doubt (Acts 1:22, 2:24, 32).
3. They proclaimed the salvation in Jesus Christ's name (Acts 2:38, 3:16)

How was the preaching

Some key aspects in the preaching of apostles are to be noted.

1. Spiritually reviving messages

As indicated by Paul, the Apostles relied not on the enticing words of man's wisdom but emphasized on the inspiration of Spirit. Therefore there has been pouring of the Holy Spirit on the spectators at the time of hearing the Word (Acts 4:31, 33; 10:44).

2. Messages on their own experience

The apostles have not been preaching after studying something. They preached the Word with their own transformation.

3. Courage and reliance on God

They did not fear the Jewish religious leaders, opponents of gospel or the kings. When they were warned not to talk or teach in the name of Jesus, they gave a just reply that it is not right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God (Acts 4:13-20, 5:25-32). They knew that no wrong can happen without God's knowledge. They prayed to Him for help (Acts 4:24-31) and called others to pray for them.

4. Interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures

The writings about Christ in the Books of Law, the Prophetic books and in the Psalms were interpreted to understand easily and preached (Acts 2:17-21, 3:22-25, 4:25-26).

5. Strengthened with miracles

The apostolic (Word) ministry was accompanied by signs, wonders and miracles. It is because of the ministry of miracles that sorcerer was overpowered. The writer of the epistles to Hebrews has mentions this (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Fellowship

It can be said that the power of the former Church was in their fellowship. In the earlier days they gathered daily due to abundance of happiness. Thereafter it was changed to once in a week. In Greek the word '*Coinonia*' has been used for fellowship. It means, universal or common. The Christian fellowship is not a gathering of the organization but the unification of an individual with God and co-brothers who attained similar experience.

The uniqueness of fellowship

Immanuel is one of the names given to Jesus (Matthew 1:22). It means "the God is with us". When a person is saved, Christ the hope of glory dwells in him (Colossians 1:27). The only fellowship which death cannot separate is the fellowship with Christ. The person in whom Jesus dwells comes closer to God by death. Death is a rest and blessing for a believer (Philippians 1:2; Psalms 116:15).

Christian life is a life of fellowship. A philosopher has said that 'to be a Christian and to be married are matters which cannot be done alone'. Our fellowship is with God the Father (1John 1:31), Christ the Son (1Corinthians 1:9), Holy Spirit the Guide and Comforter (2Corinthians 13:14) and with the saints of God (1Corinthians 10:26-17). "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6). Those who walk in the light have fellowship with one another and similarly those who walk in the darkness have fellowship among themselves (1John 1:7).

Essential factors of fellowship

1. Reconciliation

The sin separated man from God and therefore they are in enmity. However, Jesus stands in between the sinner and God to reconcile them. Those who have not attained this reconciliation cannot experience the fellowship (1Timothy 2:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

2. Holiness

As God is Holy, all come to Him are to be holy (1Peter 1:14-16). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication" (1Thessalonians 4:3). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrew 12:14).

3. Obedience

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). While the children of this world are the children of disobedience, God’s children obey His statutes.

4. Humility

Paul exhorts the Philippians that if anyone has fellowship of spirit he should have one accord with lowliness of mind and esteem the other better than him. Moreover, Jesus is portrayed as the role model of meekness.

For believers, fellowship is essential in the matters of income and expenditure too (Philippians 4:15). The goodness given by God must be utilized for the expansion of the work of God.

Questions

1. What is the importance of the apostolic teaching?
2. What was the main message in the sermons of Apostles?
3. How the sermons were conducted by the disciples?
4. What is the importance of fellowship?
5. What are the essential factors of fellowship.

LESSON - 27

PRAYER

Reading Passages : Psalms 50:15; Jeremiah 33:3; Mathew 6:9; :7; Acts 20:31; Luke 11:1-13; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18-20; 1Thessalonians 5:17; 2Thessalonians 3:1-2.

Memory Verse : John 9:31

Introduction : Prayer is the lifeline for a believer. Personal prayer and collective prayer are essential. It is important to pray rather than preaching or teaching about prayer. Prayer does not need neither a style nor method but require a broken and contrite heart.

Like breathing is necessary for survival, prayer is essential for sustenance of spiritual life. Prayer can move the hands of Lord which controls the universe. Prayer brings changes in individuals and situations. Those who pray cannot live in sin.

Original words

In Hebrew, three words have been used for prayer.

1. *Lachash*: means chant or mantra (Isaiah 26:16).
2. *Sichah*: Means meditation (Job 15:4; Psalms 64:1)
3. *Tepphillah*: Means Hymns and Praises (2 Samuel 7:27; Psalms 4:1; 6:9; 17:1).

There are four words in Greek.

1. *Deesis* : Supplication (Luke 1:13; 2:37; Romans 10:1; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Hebrew 5:7).

2. *Enteuxis*: Mediation, Prayer (1Thessalonians 4:5).
3. *Euche*: Desire, Prayer (James 5:15)
4. *Preseuch*: Pouring (Mathew 17:21; Acts 1:14; 2:42; Romans 1:9; Revelation 5:8).

Practice of Prayer

The Old Testament saints led a prayerful life. The services of Priest or Prophet necessitated prayerful life. Kings like David never lessened the significance of prayer even in the midst of busy governance of the country. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself has introduced prayer. Jesus was an inspiration and example for prayer. It is because of this inspiration from Jesus Christ that His disciples learned the urgency of prayer. Praying for long hours before doing any important work was the unique practice of Jesus Christ. Jesus exhorted the disciples about the necessity of Prayer and fasting. The lessons of the prayer taught by Jesus were imitated by His disciples. The Holy Spirit was descended on the assembly of prayer. The Apostles prayed themselves and requested prayer of others.

Significance of prayer

1. *It is the commandment of God the Father* (Psalms 50:15; Jeremiah 33:3).

“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” is an inspiring factor for the saints.

2. *It is the example and commandment of Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ's life in this world was a prayerful. He taught His disciples to pray and commanded them to pray (Matthew 6:9, 7:7; Luke 21:36).

3. *The Apostles prayed and taught to pray*

Paul completed his mission with tears and prayers (Acts 21:31). Timothy used to pray with tears (2Timothy 1:3). We can see a number of motivational callings in the Bible for prayer (1Thessalonias 5:17; 2Thessalonians 3:1-2; Ephesians 6:18-20; 1Peter 4:7; Colossians 4:2).

4. *The Holy Spirit brings perfection to the prayers*

As the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered, the prayer of the believer is made perfect (Romans 8:26).

If prayer is to be heard

1. Pray according to the will of God (1John 5: 14-15)

2. One should be righteous and godly (Psalms 34:5-17; Proverbs 15:29; Psalms 32:6; 145:19).
3. One should abide in the commandments (1John 3:22)
4. One has to dwell in Christ and remain in the Word (John 15:7)
5. To be with God (Psalms 91:1, 14, 15)
6. To rely and rejoice in Jehovah (Psalms 37:4-5)
7. To be submissive (Psalms 9:12; 10:17-18)
8. To have broken and contrite Heart (Psalms 34:18; 51:17; 2 Kings 20:3; 1Samuel 1:10).

Hindrance to Prayer

1. Inequities in Heart (Psalms 66:18-19)
2. Apathy in the Law (Proverbs 28:9)
3. Deafness to the cry of the meek (Proverbs 21:13)
4. The behavior of exalting oneself (Luke 18:10-14; Romans 10:9-13)

To whom should we pray?

1. To pray to God the Father (Luke 11:13; John 16:22; Acts 12:5)
2. We can pray to Jesus. "Jesus, accept my spirit" was the last prayer of Stephen. (Acts. 7:59). Besides this, there are many occasion when prayer was done to Jesus (Acts 9:1,10, 13; 2Corinthians 12:8-9; 1Corinthians 1:2; Romans 10:12-13; Timothy 2:22).
3. There is no bar in praying to the Holy Spirit. Though it is said that the prayer should be to God the Father in the name of Son, it is not theologically wrong if we pray to the Holy Spirit like we occasionally pray to Jesus. This is because it is the triune God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit hears the prayer. Only the triune God is deserved to be worshipped.

To who should be prayed?

We must pray for:

1. Ourselves (1Chronicles 4:10; Psalms 106:4-5)
2. Others (James 5:16; Job 42:10)
3. Those who does the ministry of preaching (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3; Acts 13:2-3)
4. Those who have repented (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; John 17:9, 26)

5. The sick (James 5:14-16)
6. All the saints (Ephesians 6:18; Psalms 36:10)
7. Our children (1Chronicles 29:19)
8. Our rulers (1Timothy 2:2-3)
9. Those who think ill about us, curse us or persecute us (Luke 6:28, Matthew 5:44)
10. All the men (1Timothy 2:1).

The time and place for prayer

Time: There is no fixed time for prayer as it is said to pray at all times, continuously and fervently. The script advises us to “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrew 4:16). The Scripture is full of records that the saints who prayed in the morning, noon, evening, midnight, fourth watch, in the third hour, and in the sixth hour (Ephesians 6:18; 2Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 21:36; Psalms 55:17; Acts 16:25).

Place: As our God is omnipresent, the place where the saint kneels becomes the place of God’s presence. Saints have prayed at Temple, home, closet, upper room, wilderness, in the open, seashore, by the side of well, under the sea, in the palace and the like (Luke 2:27; Acts 3:1; 12:12; 21:6; Matthew 6:6; Daniel 6:10; Genesis 24:63; Jonah 2:1-6, Nehemiah 2:4-5).

Whether the Lord’s Prayer is necessary?

Some of the Christian denominations (Episcopal churches) insist that the Lord’s Prayer should be said invariably. In fact this is not the Lord’s Prayer but it is the prayer of the disciples. It is recorded that the Lord Jesus prayed all night and alone for long hours. Hence the disciples have not heard what the prayer was. In the Gospel of John in Chapter 17 the prayer did by the Lord is mentioned as it is. This is known as the ‘high priestly prayer’. This prayer should be called as the ‘Lord’s Prayer’.

Today the prayer known as the Lord’s Prayer is the specimen that the Lord has given to the disciples saying to pray like this. This, as already mentioned, in fact, is the prayer of the disciples. The disciples who have seen the prayerful life of the Lord and the miracles thereafter wanted to teach them a prayer. Here the Lord gives a format of prayer for the beginners who do not know how to pray.

When a child is taught the alphabet in the beginning, he is not supposed to repeat the same for all of his life. Likewise, those who did not know to pray were given an example. In the beginning they must have prayed according to it. But it has to be judiciously presumed as they had learnt to pray of their own. This is because in the books like Acts and the Epistles where the prayers of apostles have been recorded do not reveal that they have prayed the so - called Lord's Prayer. Peter who was about to sink in the sea did not pray 'our Father in Heaven'. When persecution was faced by the church, the believers prayed for the grace to endure the persecution (Acts 4:24-31).

Though saying the Lord's Prayer is not wrong, it is not necessary for the matured people. It is ridiculous to pray asking for the 'daily bread' during a burial ministry instead of praying for the consolation of the bereaved people.

Questions

1. What are the original words for prayer?
2. Explain the practice and significance of prayer.
3. It is right to pray to the Holy Spirit. Why?
4. Do we need the Lord's Prayer? Explain.

LESSON - 28

THE LORD'S TABLE

Reading Passages : Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 11:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42-46; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:15-21; 11:23-32.

Memory verse : 1 Corinthians 11:26

Introduction : The Breaking of Bread is an ordinance established by Jesus Christ and conducted the former church. Later on, people deviated from the objectivity as commanded by the Lord and gave different measures and made it 'divine sacrifice'. Let us see what is according to the Scripture

While the Old Testament is full of deeds, the New Testament is a way of faith. The Old Testament says "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 18:5) whereas the New Testament declare "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). The church has been given two ordinances with respect to our Lord's death and resurrection. We have already learnt Baptism. Now let us learn the Lord's Table.

The Names

According to the Bible

The Lord's Table is known in various names. These are based on the Bible are as follows :

1. The Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21)

2. The Lord's Supper (1Corinthians 11:20)
3. The Holy Communion (1Corinthians 10:16)
4. Breaking of Bread (Acts 2:42-46; 20:7)
5. The Eucharist (Matthew 26:27; (1Corinthians 11:24)

In the former church, the Lord's Table was known as Breaking of Bread (Acts 2:42). From the statement of Paul, the Cup and the Bread are the fellowship of the blood and body of Jesus Christ, the name "the fellowship of the Holy Communion" was emerged (1Corinthians 10:16). The name of 'Eucharist' has been derived from the Greek word 'Eucharisteyo' meaning 'give thanks' and 'thanksgiving' (Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:24). The Church fathers like Justin Martyr and Ignatius used this word. This has been organized by the Lord. Spiritually, the word Lord's Table or the Lord's Supper gives the meaning that we are taking part in the table set by the Lord.

Tradition

1. Mass

The Roman Catholic Church calls the Lord's Table as Mass. This word has been derived from Latin original word 'mittere' meaning disperse. At the end of the ministry, the priest says to the church 'Ite-Missa-Est i.e. go, you have been dispersed.

2. Qurbana

In most of the Eastern countries, the Syrian word Qurbana is being used for the Lord's Table. The Syrian Verb form 'qruv' has been given the meaning 'offered' or 'to present.' It denotes the sense of 'offering sacrifice'. The word Qurban (Corban) has been used in the Bible with the meaning as 'gift' (Matthew 15:5; Mark 7:11).

Establishment of the Lord's Table

The Lord's Table was established by the Lord Himself on the night of the betrayal (1Corinthians 11:23). Its detailed history has been given in synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 11:22-25; Luke 22:19-20) and in the writings of Apostle Paul (1Corinthians 11:23-26). On the Passover night, the last Passover Feast according to law was celebrated and established the Lord's Supper. It denotes the end of an era and the birth of another era. That the dispensation of Law ended and the dispensation of grace started.

The Passover was started on the midnight massacre of the first born (Exodus 12). At the same time it was pointing out to the death of

Christ. With the crucifixion of Christ, the celebration of Passover too came to an end. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Lord's Table envisions the cross at the back and His second coming in the front. Luke and Paul have recorded the direction of Lord to "do in remembrance of me". Our Lord desired that He should be remembered through the Lord's Table when His visible presence is not available. This sacrament commanded by the Lord and to be continued by the Church was viewed by the disciples seriously and observed it regularly.

The presence of Christ in the Lord's Table

There are mainly three theories about the presence of Christ in the bread and vine used in the Lord's Table.

1. Transubstantiation

According to the faith of Roman Catholic Church, the qurbana is the real body and blood of Christ. When the priest blesses the bread and says that 'this is my body', it becomes real body of Christ. It is an atypical reasoning that while there is no change to the external formation and the taste, the essence is changed. Therefore this is taught as the mystery of faith. This teaching was officially accorded in the Trent Council in 1545-63.

2. Consubstantiation

This theory is approved by the Lutheran Church. According to this, though there is no change occurs to the material, the presence of Christ is there. The bread does not change to the body of Christ. But there is the material presence of Christ in it. When a person consumes the bread and vine after the prayer, he actually becomes partaker of His body and blood. Luther understood the presence of Christ as same as the fire on burning steel.

3. Commemoration

The reformed churches generally accept this thought that Christ's commemorating presence is available in the bread and vine. In the opinion of Phinis Daik, the statement of Christ that "this is my body" has the same meaning as we say that 'this is that person' pointing out to a picture of a person. The statements like "I am the true vine..." (John 15:1), "I am the door..." (John 10:9), etc. were said as exemplar parable by Christ. Likewise Jesus did not mean literal bread. The

disciples did not see the bread as Jesus physical body because His body was well before them while saying this statement. As this is the interpretation acceptable according to the Word, all Pentecostal Churches follows this interpretation.

The qualifications for taking part

1. *To be repented* (Acts 2:38; 41, 42)

Those who have repented and became disciples took part in the Lord's Table.

2. *To be baptized*

In the period of first century, the practice was that a repented person immediately took baptism. Therefore there was no time gap between repentance and baptism. The delay in baptism occurred only in case of Saul was due to the delay in arriving of the baptizer.

3. *To have good conscience with men and God*

Things that are not considered

1. *Place*: There is no compulsion to conduct it at a particular place. The former church conducted it at homes, secret places and later on at worship places. It can be conducted at any gathering in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. *Time*: It is not necessary to conduct the Lord's Table only at night. Barring the condition that "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come", no time is specified. The disciples used to conduct the 'breaking of Bread' whenever they gathered.

Questions:

1. What are various names of the Lord's Table?
2. Explain the establishment of the Lord's Table.
3. Analyze various theories regarding the presence of Christ in the Lord's Table.
4. What are the qualifications required for those who takes part in the Lord's Table.
5. What are the things that not considered in the Lord's Table.

LESSON - 29

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Reading Passages : Amos 2:6, 5:11; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 13:1-3; Galatians 6:9-10; Philippians 4:15-18; 1 Timothy 3:15.

Memory verse : Luke 24:46-47

Introduction : God has certain objectives in revealing the mystery of the Church and establishing it. If the target of God is to be completed, the Church has to understand its mission and fulfill it. It is doubtful that today's has forgotten the responsibility entrusted to her. The church that forgotten its mission is lifeless.

Mission – internal and external

Mission of the church can be divided into two: (1) Internal: the responsibilities towards believers and towards God, (2) External: the responsibilities of evangelism, eradicate social evils, social services etc.

1. Evangelization

The prime mission of the Church is evangelization. It is essential to expand the existing work and to form new local churches. The last commandment of our Lord includes this great commission. This has been repeated five times in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

The teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ during his public ministry had great significance. In the former Church, God's people including the Apostles engaged themselves in evangelization. In the words of Emil Bruner, "the church which has no gospel mission has

no sustenance like the one standing in the fire". The relation between Church and evangelization is inseparable.

In the former church, evangelization was not institutionalized. As it was considered to be the responsibility of each believer, everybody engaged in evangelization. After the martyr of Stephen, all except the Apostles scattered to Judea and Samaria. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Their main element of their preaching was the spiritual salvation through Jesus Christ.

If an angel had been deputed to preach the gospel, perhaps the entire world would have evangelized quickly. But God's mandate was that those who have already saved should become witness. The mission to evangelize to the end of the world is entrusted to the Church.

The Lord has commanded not to transform everybody but to preach the gospel. However it is a fact that those who accept and obey the gospel would be transformed. The Church has a liability to provide an opportunity to each person to hear the gospel and accept Christ as his personal savior. Today, some institutions of the church claim that transformation is not necessary. However, in the former church, those who have heard the gospel got baptized and led a life in the church according to the Word. Those who violate are deviating from the Word.

It is the duty of the Church to pray for sending the workers (Matthew 9:36-39). Those who have engaged in the evangelization has to be helped financially (Philippians 4:15-18). At the same time, Church should send the missionaries (Acts 13:1-3).

2. Obstruct the evil

Though the evil spirit is functioning even now, its progress is obstructed by the Holy Spirit. At the same time the Holy Spirit is equipping the church ready. By the ascension of the Church, the Holy Spirit will move from the world and the son of perdition will appear. Now it is the Church which obstructs the evil and unrighteousness from its heights in the society. The Word says about the children of God as the 'salt' and the 'light' of the world. The presence and prayers of God's children keep the world from perishing. The Church of God is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Old Testament Prophets like Amos (Amos 2:6, 5:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:17-29) are the people who had raised voice against the evil.

3. *Do all good*

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10). The first duty of a believer is to the co-believers. But the responsibility towards the world should not be forgotten. Though the believer has to maintain separation (1 Corinthians 6:14-17), it is not just to avoid from the responsibilities towards the world. The life of Jesus Christ is the paramount example for this. Jesus Christ traveled throughout healing the sick, consoling the poor and helpless, accepting the discarded and emphasized charitable work by saying the parable of the Good Samaritan. The social work done by the believer should be to display the good testimony of Jesus Christ. We must not ignore the contributions for the saints as told by Paul (Romans 15:25-27) and the calling of Apostle James about the practicability of acts (James 1:27, 2:1-11).

4. *Bring edification of spirit (spiritual growth)*

The Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers have been appointed in the Church for the spiritual edification of the body of Christ i.e. the Church (Ephesians 4:11-16). “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Corinthians 14:4). “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (1 Corinthians 10:23). The word ‘lawful’ is used to mean ‘permitted’ or ‘allowed.’ Paul says, though he has the lawful authority to do everything but he gives significance to see whether it will aid growing spiritually.

When we say to do all goodness it relates to the internal outward things. However to bring spiritual growth is an internal matter of the Church. It should become the main goal of each believer.

Questions:

1. How can we classify the mission of the Church?
2. Explain evangelization.
3. Is it the duty of the Church to obstruct the evil? Why?
4. To whom one should do goodness?
5. Explain ‘bringing spiritual growth’.

LESSON - 30

MISSION OF THE CHURCH (Continued)

Reading Passages : 1Chronicles 29:20; Psalms 42:4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28; Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:15-20.

Memory verse : Colossians 3:16

Introduction : In the previous lesson we have studied about God's objective and goal of planting Church on earth. Those were mainly the duty towards individuals. But the prime accountability of the church is towards God who redeemed us and made sons and partakers. The church worships God as a response to this liability. God does not demand worship rather it happens when the hearts of people are filled with gratitude.

Worship

Worship is the foremost and prime duty of Church towards God. It happens automatically. The importance given to worship by the church from its inception is very clear. According to the Word, the inspiration for worship is not given by God but man gives to another man.

Original Words and its meanings

In Hebrew, the words which denotes worship are 'shakhah' (meaning submission, bowing down, etc.), 'qura' (meaning call upon). In Greek 'proskuneo' (meaning submit, give respect, bowing) and 'latreuo' (meaning service, offering, etc.) are used.

The English word worship was derived from Anglo-Saxon word 'Weorthshipe'. It means give reverence, give worthiness, etc. S.P.

Gibson has defined worship as ‘worship means the beats from those hearts which has tasted the Heavenly Father as provider, the Son as Saviour and the Holy Spirit as a guest who dwells with us daily’.

Worship according to the Word

Though it is mentioned in Old Testament about individual worship (Genesis 24:26; Exodus 33:9 to 34:8), due emphasis is given to community (congregational) worship (Psalms 42:4; 1 Chronicles 29:20). Various activities to be conducted at the Tabernacle and the Temple were given lot of significance. However when the temple was destroyed and people went into captivity, the worship started in synagogue. Here prayer, praise and meditate the word were the part of worship.

Even though the initial worship was somehow related to the Temple and Synagogues, Christian worship came into effect in its originality when Christianity and Judaism were distinct from each other. The day for worship was Sunday known as the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7). The house churches became symbols of affection. The worship did not have a special sequence except that it comprised of praise (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), Prayer, meditation of Word, preaching, speaking in other tongues (1Corinthians 14) and the feast of charity after the Lord’s Table (1Corinthians 11:23-28).

During worship, the personality of an individual is fully submitted to God. The usage of ‘all your strength’, ‘all your heart’ and ‘all your spirit’ indicates such a submission. The main element in the Pentecostal group is that the individual is able to worship God without any barrier. It is an invaluable opportunity for those who have had by-hearted certain things within certain framework and have been repeating it. In former times, the Pentecostal churches emphasized emotional worship whereas now they are giving opportunity to devotional worship too.

Is speaking in other tongue necessary in the Church?

As already pointed out, the New Testament does not suggest any sequence or structure for worship. We have already seen the contents that comprise the worship. Out of which, speaking in other tongue is mentioned only in the Epistle to Corinthians (1Corinthians 14). This part of the scripture has undergone much discourses and arguments. In the Church of Corinth, there was speaking in other tongues without order and decency. If we read carefully, we can see that the Apostles tried not to end speaking in unknown tongue but to regularize its appropriate usage.

Worship has two parts: speaking to church and to God. Exhortation, preaching and prophecy should be done to the church whereas praise, hymns and prayers are offered to God. If a person prays in unknown tongue in the church from the beginning to the end, no one can say Amen. If there is a new person in the church and if everybody speaks in unknown tongue, he would not understand anything. This is why Peter spoke in the mother tongue to those who head the unknown tongue.

Singing in unknown tongue or praying in spirit for a short while with the guidance of spirit during prayer or praising in spirit due to burning of heart in spirit while hearing the word are not restricted. The Apostle has asked them to control the untimely and over usage of speaking with tongues. Paul himself says "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1Corinthians 14:18). Why those who emphatically say to control speaking in other tongues do consider this verse? Those who speak in other tongue in private life will certainly speak with unknown tongue in the midst of worship.

Paul in his personal life sang (praised) and prayed in unknown tongue (1Corinthians 14:14-15). He gave certain restrictions on speaking in unknown tongue is not indented to prevent it. His condemns people who do not speak in unknown tongue tries to forbid it.

Should women be quiet in the Church?

Though there were women who witnessed Jesus during His public ministry as well as during Paul's time, the Brethren churches argue that women have no place in the church and they should remain silent. The Feminists, on the other hand, argue that the Bible has written in a male dominant background so that women were not given due respect therefore there is a need to revise the Bible.

We see two verses in the Bible suggesting woman to keep silence: 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1Timothy 2:12. Here, it is said: "... if they will learn anything ...". As per the practice, during first century, there was time for asking questions during preaching of Word. The members used to clear their doubts by raising questions so as to obstruct the preaching itself. This may be the reason or background for Paul saying in 1Timothy 2:8 "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting". However Paul does not give such a right to women. If they have a doubt let them ask their husband at home. This was to conduct to keep the flow of the ministry.

Women did have the chance to pray and prophecy in the Church (1Corinthians 11:3,10). It was necessary for a woman to wear the veil while praying or prophesying. It is clear that in the former times, there were no meetings like ladies meeting or youth meeting or cottage meeting and the like today. The church gathered only for church meetings. Therefore the woman prayed and prophesied only in the church. Evangelist Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). The Brethren Church interprets prophecy as preaching of the word. If this is correct, we have to agree to that the woman can preach the Word (Word ministry).

According to 1 Timothy 2:12, woman has no authority over man. If a woman prophecy or pray or preach the word in public, it should be under the supervision and control of a man. When Paul allows a woman to prophecy wearing a veil, will he disallow her to be silent in the Church? Women who were chosen by God have ministered even in the Old Testament period when the male domination was very strong. It is evident from Paul's statements in Romans 16:1, 3:6, 12, 13, 15 that certain women were working hardly in gospel work. So he was not against women's ministry.

Question:

1. What are the original words for worship and its meaning?
2. How was the worship in the New Testament Church conducted?
3. Can we say unknown tongue in the middle of worship? Explain.
4. Should the women be silent in the worship? Analyze

LESSON - 31

THE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Reading Passages : Matthew 18:18; Acts 5:1-10; Romans 16:17-8; 1Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:16-18, 4:14

Memory verse : 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Introduction : Persons with different backgrounds become members of the Church of God by hearing the Gospel. It is the duty of everyone to live with good testimony for the edification of the Church and spiritual growth of individual. But, the Word says that disciplinary action should be initiated against those who do not live as an example to others. The Church of God is not an unbound book but a community who obeys the commands of God.

It is evident from the word 'ecclesia' itself that the members of the church are those who have been saved, separated and lead a holy life. The character of a person is formed according to his family and the circumstances in which he was born and bought up. There is a possibility to occur human weaknesses till our bodies are redeemed. Therefore, it is clear from the messages to the church that disciplinary actions are necessary to maintain the identity of the Church.

There are people who argue that disciplinary actions are not required in the church as the Master has allowed waiting till the harvesting. But in Matthew 13:37-38, the Lord Himself has interpreted that the field is not the church but the world. It is the Lord who judges the people of this world. But execution of the commands of God has given to the church.

The Lord Himself has told that if the brother who did a wrong does not listen to those who try to make him aware of his wrongs and contempt to the church, he should be terminated from the church. This disciplinary actions taken by the church is approved by the Heaven. If the church forgives, it shall be forgiven in Heaven. Jesus told about this that “.... whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...” (Matthew 18:18). The Apostle Peter (Acts 5) and Paul (1Corinthians 5:13) have accepted similar actions. The action by which one is excluded from the church is said to be “To deliver such one unto Satan” (1Corinthians 5:5).

Main reasons

The disciplinary action is required to be taken against three main reasons.

1. False doctrine

The false teachers should be cast out from the church. Hymenaeus and Philetus overthrew the faith of some people by saying that the resurrection is past already (2 Timothy 2:16-18). Alexander is the person who opposed the true doctrine of the Apostle (2 Timothy 4:14). The unruly, vain talkers and the deceivers teach things which they ought not to have taught (Titus 1:10-11). Those who speak against the basic doctrines of the church should be identified and excluded.

2. Mistakes in life

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). When fornication not even named among the Gentiles was not taken away by Corinthians Church caused the criticism of Paul. In the message to the church of Thyatira, the Holy Spirit points out a fault that they were allowing the woman called Isabel.

3. Those who divide the church

In the verse in Titus 3:10-11, it is mentioned that the person who brings division in the church in spite of repeated warnings should be avoided from the church (see the verse). One has to be careful about those who by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:17-18). We must remember that Paul who has asked for such a requirement had rebuked when a group was formed

in his name (1 Corinthians 1:11-15). When one makes his own group, he cannot command others not to do it.

By taking disciplinary action by Church, the guilty get a chance for repentance, cleanness and surrender. The church too benefits it.

The benefits to the church

1. Uncleanness is not spread

“... a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6). “Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour” (Ecclesiastes 10:1). “... Any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). If there is uncleanness among God’s people, it should be rectified as soon as possible. Otherwise it will spread. If an evil in a person is ignored, it will become an opportunity for others to follow.

2. The testimony of Church is protected

The unworthy lives of church members will blasphemy the name of God. This is a pity thing (Isaiah 32:5; Romans 2:24). “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2 Peter 2:12). The works of David has given a great opportunity for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme (2 Samuel 12:14). The disgraceful deeds of God’s children restrict others. But the good testimony will lead others to faith.

The attitude behind the discipline

The disciplinary actions should be taken with love and meekness. There should not be rage and revenge behind it. The Lord desires the individual to be restored and not to cut off from the Church. The disciplinary action of church should take like parents punish their children with the sole and real intention of their welfare. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). It is necessary for a church taking disciplinary action to be ready to forgive. Paul tells about a person who underwent the disciplinary action in Corinthian Church. “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Things to be remembered while taking actions

1. It should be according to the Holy Scriptures.
2. It should be inflicted only after exhausting all efforts to restore/re-establish (Matthew 18:15-17)
3. It should be after examining many witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19)
4. It should be impartial (1 Timothy 5:21)
5. We should continue counseling and prayer (2 Thessa. 3:14-15)

Who should inflict punitive actions?

The disciplinary actions in a local church should be initiated by the church. However, it is better to seek opinion of the supervisors. The Word does not permit anybody to criticize anyone. As seen in the evidences in the Holy Scriptures, the Apostles who have shredded their sweat for the establishment of the former church warn about certain individuals. The main responsible person for the organization, under which the local church functions, should sort out the matters. This is because the leaders of the organization have sent the evangelists for establishing church. Above all, there should be love, tolerance and care while taking punitive actions.

Questions:

1. Is disciplinary action necessary in the Church?
2. Why should the disciplinary actions be taken?
3. What are the advantages of the Church by taking disciplinary actions?
4. Who should initiate punitive actions?

LESSON - 32

HOPE OF THE CHURCH

Reading Passages : Matthew 25:31; John 14:1-5; 1Corinthians 15:20-58; 1Thessalonians 4:13-17; Jude 14-15; Revelation 22:7-30

Memory verse : 1Thessalonians 4:16-17

Introduction : Each saint has a hope. The church members become confident even in the midst of worldly afflictions and troubles by remembering the credence of the everlasting glory to be revealed in the future. The hope as promised by the faithful God of promises is an incorruptible inheritance, undefiled and that does not fade away.

The church which was called and separated by believing in the salvation of Jesus Christ and going ahead by fulfilling their mission in this world among themselves and towards others and wait for a very important event to be happened in the near future. This future hope leads the church from its inception. The church is guided by its prime goal keeping in view of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

In relation to man, the Lord will come to the earth in two ways: First, through incarnation which already happened 2000 years ago; second, the glorious appearance. This has two parts: (1) Coming in the mid - air for taking the church; (2) For millennium rule along with the saints.

The evidences for the coming of Lord

Though there are many prophecies and verses concerning the second coming of Christ. Four of them highlighted here.

1. The testimony of Christ

There are many occasions during the public Ministry the Lord Jesus Christ talked about His second coming. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31). "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7). "He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen" (Revelation 22:20).

2. The testimony of Angels

The Angels said to the disciples present during the ascension of Jesus Christ as: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

3. The testimony of the Apostles

The fact about the second coming of Jesus Christ has been mentioned in the entire Epistles. The events to be happened during the coming of Lord are mentioned by Paul (1Thessalonians 4:13-17). The uniqueness of the second coming is highlighted by Peter (3:10). The state of the believers in respect of the second coming has been recorded by James (James 5:7). The cleanness of believers by John (1 John 3:3) and the objective of the second coming are revealed by Jude (Jude 14-15).

4. The testimony of the Lord's Table

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1Corinthians 11:26).

The Ascension of the Church

The coming of the Lord in the mid - air is to receive His church. This is very clearly stated by Paul. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1Corinthians 15:51-52). "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Besides these, there are many other verses stating the ascension of the church (John 5:25; 11:25; Philippians 3:21). By ascension, the church would get various positions.

The glorification of the saints

The last phase of the salvation is glorification. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). While justification is done during the lifetime on the earth, the glorification occurs upon the resurrection. On the return of Jesus Christ, our subservient body will be transformed into the glorified one fashioned like Him. During this course of perfection of the body of each believer, the church also gets perfect.

In Hebrew, the word 'kabod' is used for glory. God is the King of Glory (Act 24:7-10). The angels praise the God before His powerful Glory. The disciples saw the glorification of Jesus on the high mountain (Matthew 17:1-5). Similarly, the glorification of the saints will occur during the glorious appearance of Christ. God's children will own a spiritual body by changing their material body. The Bible gives an amply clear records about the glorification (Philippians 3:20-21; 2Corinthians 3:18; 1Corinthians 15:42-44; 1John 3:1-3; Colossians 3:3-4).

Join with Christ

At the time of salvation, the chaste virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2), the church, betrothed to the spiritual bridegroom, Christ (Ephesians 5:27). The marriage of the Lamb will happen in the middle of the sky (Revelation 19:7). This portrays the everlasting relation between Christ and the Church (Romans 8:16-17; 1Corinthians 1:9).

They rule along with Christ

The Lord will eliminate all the powers of this earth and establish His own kingdom. This is mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel. In his vision a stone cut out untouched by hand will break all powers and spread on the earth (Daniel 2:31-45). During the time of our Lord's rule, the church will sit at His right hand and take part in the reign (1Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 1:6; 3:21; 20:4, 6; 22:5). The church will have part even in judging the angels (1Corinthians 6:3). During the

millennium rule (Revelation 20:4, 6) and thereafter during the eternity, the bride will live with the Bridegroom for ever (Revelation 22:5).

The reward for the Church

The church will receive its reward at the throne of Christ (1Corinthians 5:10). Mainly five crowns are given as follows:

1. *Crown of life*: Those who were faithful till the death get it (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
2. *Crown of Glory*: Those who take care of the church get it. (1Peter 5:4)
3. *Crown of rejoicing*: For those who win souls (1Thessalonians 2:19).
4. *Crown of righteousness*: For those who keep hope in the coming of Christ (1Timothy 4:7).
5. *The incorruptible Crown*: For those who leads successful Christian life (1Corinthians 9:25).

Questions:

1. What is the hope of church?
2. What are the evidences of the second coming of Jesus Christ?
3. How ascension of the church will occur?
4. What are rewards to be distributed at the throne of Christ?

LESSON - 33

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN KERALA

Memory Verse : 2 Corinthians 6:16

Introduction : We have already seen what is church and its faith and ordinances according to the Word. However, when there are many churches around us in different names, we have to compare the rituals and sacraments of them so far as to find out the right and true church according to the Word. For this, let us study the main churches in Kerala.

Roman Catholic Church

History

In the initial phase, the church grew totally in accordance with the Word. However, with the religious conversion of Emperor Constantine without transformation of mind made the foundation of the Word weak. The chief of the local church was known Bishop or Episcopa. Slowly, the urban Bishops were revered and accepted the most high. During the fourth century, the Bishops were given the same status by Constantine as of the government officers. The subsequent Emperors promoted the Bishop equivalent to the Princes of the state. The Bishops of Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, Constantinople and Alexandria became more authoritative. Thereafter, the Bishop of Rome received the Title of Pope and claimed to be the sovereign authority. The Pope Damascus I (366-384) claimed that he is the successor of Peter and thus he should be given special powers. The authorities of Popes become powerful when Gregory I was appointed as Pope in AD 590. The church was split into two with one accepting the authority of Pope and the other not acknowledging his authority.

The church under the Pope's authority was known as Catholic Church. This is the origin of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Churches in Kerala

The maiden entry of Catholic Church occurred in Kerala through the Portuguese Merchant Vasco-de-Gama reached Kerala on 21st May, 1498. The Portuguese reached here with the 'padrovado', the authority of Pope to appoint Bishops and decide about the organizational matters relating the church. The Marthomite Christians (Syrian Christians) then available there accepted them gracefully.

Though Catholics tried to make the Syrian Christian Church aware that Catholic Church is the real church and planned many strategies to bring them under their control, it could not succeed. At the end, the Archbishop of Goa intervened and with his influence and threat he convened a Council in Udayamperoor on May 14, 1599 and the Syrian Christians were made under their control. However, on third January, 1653 through the 'koonan kurisu (bent cross) oath', a group of Marthomite Christians disbanded from Catholic Church. Those who accepted the faith of Roman Catholic through the Udayamperoor Council were known as 'Zero Malabar Church'. The Marthomite Church that was united with the Catholic Church under the leadership of Mar Evanios in 1930 was called 'Zero Malankara Catholic Church'. Besides, the missionary work the Catholic Church became stronger. Through the missionary work among the fishermen, the Latin Catholic Church was established.

The position in the Census

The maximum strength among Christians is of Roman Catholic Church. According to the Census in 1999, there are six billion (600 Crores) people are in the world. Among them two billion are Christians.

The detailed accounts of Christians are given below:

1. Roman Catholic Church – 1 billion (100 crores)
2. Pentecostals/Charismatic – 575 million (57.56 crores)
3. Orthodox – 222 million (22.2 crores)
4. Anglican Churches – 73 million (7.3 crores)
5. Baptist Church - 60 million (6 crores)
6. Lutheran Churches – 58 million (5.8 crores)
7. Presbyterian – 58 million (5.8 crores)
8. Methodist – 33 million (3.3 crores)

The Faith and Rituals

1. *The Holy Scriptures*

While the Reformist Churches believe in the supremacy of the Holy Scriptures, the Catholic Society believes in the sovereignty of the Church. The sequence of supremacy is to tune the Church Administration, tradition and then the Bible. In each situation, the Church Administration interprets what Bible and the tradition means. This is unscriptural.

While all other Christian groups believe in the Bible comprising 66 books, Catholics added five books known as Apocrypha to the Old Testament in the Trend Council of 1546. However, the Jews, Jesus Christ or the Apostles did not approve the Apocryphal books.

2. *The Supreme Authority of Pope*

The Roman Catholic Church believes that all creatures should be under the sovereignty of the Pope of Rome and those who do not approve the Supremacy of Roman Catholic Church will not be saved. The Catholic Church further deems that Peter is the foundation of the church and he established a throne in Rome. He had been a Bishop in Rome for 25 years and the Pope is his successor. We have already seen that all these are against the history and the Word.

3. *Purgatory (Buspurcana)*

This is the purifying place for the punishing souls. Catholics believe that souls which could not fulfill God's righteousness before death are taken to this purifying place. With the punitive actions in the purgatory coupled with the prayer of church they get remission of their sins and reach the heaven. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus made it clear that where one's soul goes after death. One cannot go to paradise by good deeds and Mass (qurbana). This is being taught in order to increase the income of church and the power of priests.

4. *Idolatry*

The Catholic Church does not teach the second commandment but split the 10th commandment into two and complete it. But as the Bible has now become universal, the common believer has now understood this mistake. Idolatry is the most hated sin in the Bible.

5. *Intercession of the saints*

Catholics teach that the saints will hear our prayers and will intercede for us. The Holy Word opposes the prayers and worship to saints. This aspect was strongly opposed by Peter, Paul and Barnabas

(Acts 10:25; 14:14-18). The one and only mediator is Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5).

6. *Worship of Mary*

Mary is considered as perpetual virgin by Roman Catholic Church who declared in 1950 that Mary was ascended to Heaven with her body. The Word of God says that after Jesus was born to Mary, she gave birth to other sons and daughters (Matthew 13:55-56). The former church did not give any special significance to Mary. She was one among 120 people who were baptized in the spirit on the day of Pentecost.

7. *Confession and remission of sins*

This is the teaching that when some one confesses before the priest, he gives remission to the sins. But the Word says only God can forgive our sins.

Besides the above, there are many other anti-Bible faiths in the Roman Catholic Church.

Questions:

1. How the Roman Catholic Church was established?
2. How the Catholic Church was formed in Kerala?
3. Explain the strength of Christians according to the world census of 1999.
4. Analyze the main faith of Roman Catholic Church and its authenticity according to the Word.

LESSON - 34

THE JACOBITE – ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Memory Verse : 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Introduction : It is believed that the Churches in India has the same age as of Christianity. It is assumed that Apostle Thomas reached India for the mission work in AD 52. As a result, the Marthomite Christian (Malankara Church) was formed which stood united till the Portuguese reached India in the 16th century. Thereafter there was an eventful history behind the sustenance of Jacobite Church.

Origin of Jacobite Churches

The Bishop of Antioch became more superior by the fourth century. Antioch was the third throne and church of the Roman Empire. The decisions taken in the Council of Calcadonia in AD 451 was not accepted by the strongest group of the Antioch Church. They were known as 'the group of singular characteristics'. As they did not have proper leadership, there were twenty different opinions among them. One Jacob Burdana played a significant role in uniting these 'singular characteristic groups.'

Those who accepted the decisions in the Calcadonia Council were joined with the king's side and were called as 'merkitians' and those who accepted the leadership of Jacob Burdana were known as Jacobites. During AD 542-543, he secretly became the Bishop and lived in fancy dress. He wore old clothes in travelling. Therefore he was known as 'Burdana'. In AD 557, Jacob and his supporters appointed Bishop Serjius as the Theodor Patriarch of Antioch. Patriarch means the universal father. The Patriarchs appointed from

1229 onwards received the title as Ignatius. Now, the Ignatius Zacharias I was Patriarch is the supreme authority of this church.

According to Jacobite beliefs, Antioch was the universal capital of the churches with Peter as its head. Therefore, Patriarch is the successor of Peter. But history does not match with these things.

Jacobite Church in Kerala

Is it History or myth?

Though the Christian Churches in Kerala believe that Apostles Thomas came to Kerala, there is no historical evidence to prove this. While Malankara Church was brought under the control of Catholics through Udayamperoor Council, all historical evidences destroyed under the leadership of Archbishop Menesis.

It is legend that Apostle Thomas baptized Brahmin families and established seven and a half churches. These are at Kodungallor, Palayoor, Kottakav, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Kollam, Nilakkal and Chayal. However, there are no records in the books of Acts about anointing priest or erecting building for worship. Therefore it cannot be believed that Apostle Thomas did anything like this.

Though there is no evidence in history that Apostle Thomas ever comes to India. The trade relation between Malabar and Middle East points out the possibility of coming by sea. The presence of Jews in Malabar is another indication. It is because wherever Apostles went, they first preached the gospel to the Jews. Moreover, this legend was in the folk songs - Margam song, Ramban song and Veeradian songs – of Malabar.

From all these, it is presumed that the Apostle Thomas has actually came to India in the first century. Thus a Christian Church might have formed through his missionary work. In AD 343, some 400 Christians (72 families) from Edessa in Syria under the leadership of one Trade Leader namely Knayi Thoma reached Kodungallur. Bishop Mar Joseph, two priests and two deacons were there along with them. With their efforts, the Christians existed there might have accepted the Syrian tradition. Thus the Syrian language, cathedral and Episcopal priests have become a part of their worship. We must conjointly consider the belief of Jacobite Church that the mortal remains of Apostle Thomas were removed to Edessa Town in the fourth century.

In the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Patriarch anointment, a Supplement was published by Malayala Manorama on 21st September.

2004. In it Bishop Catholica Beselius Thomas I wrote that the Malankara Antioch relation was established in the fourth century.

The Jacobite-Orthodox Separation

The Malankara Syrian Church was split into two in 1889. The reformist group became the Marthoma Syrian Church under the leadership of Bishop Abraham and the other group remained as Jacobite Syrian Church as a part of the Syrian Church of Antioch. The second group again split into two in the twentieth century namely the Jacobite and the Orthodox. The Jacobite Church (Syrian Orthodox) accepts the Patriarch of Antioch as the successor of Peter and believes that they are under the supremacy of the Patriarch. The Orthodox Syrian Church argues that the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch is only over the church of Antioch and not on the Indian Syrian churches. They claim that they are the successors of Apostle Thomas and the Bishop Catholica is the inheritor of the throne of Thomas. They believe that Peter had a throne in Antioch and Apostle Thomas had an official throne in India. Bishop Catholica is known in the title name of Beselius.

The Faith and rituals

1. The Bible and Tradition

The above said churches followed the same faith and rituals except their opinions about the throne. According to them, as the Holy Spirit leads the church till the second coming of the Lord, the history, tradition and the spiritually are the inspired commands of the church. For them relying only on Bible is against the teaching of the Holy Spirit. As they say tradition is important, we must remember that Jesus Christ rebuked even the undefiled traditions of Jews.

2. Prayers for the dead and intercession of the saints

They teach that the link between the departed (dead) is the prayer and through remembrance and mediation of the dead we keep the relation with the dead. They teach that the prayer without remembering the dead is not complete. For them the leaders that entered into heaven are named as the most holy and praying before their tomb (usually within the Church building) is a significant thing. All these are unbiblical.

3. Infant Baptism

We have already studied infant Baptism in the previous classes. The godfather of the child abandons Satan and receives the Messiah as proxy. Anointing of the spirit by blowing on the face of the child,

drawing of cross on the forehead of the child, blessing of water and anointing of oil are part of infant baptism.

4. *Qurbana*

Out of the seven sacraments, fullness of all is vested in qurbana (sacrifice). The intercession of the dead saints, prayer to Mary and transubstantiation are part of the qurbana.

5. *Confession*

The Jacobite-Orthodox faith considers sin as a disease. The church listens to the confession and gives the remedy. Their teaching is that the priest hears the confession as a representative of the church. They rely on the verse in Matthew 18:18 that whatsoever you bind on the earth will be bound in Heaven. We must remember that the disciples never forgave anybody's sin. Only the God has the authority for remission of the sin.

6. *Position of Mary*

Mary is called as mother of God. The mother was purified at the time of her conception. They teach that calling 'full of goodness' (as called by Catholics) is wrong and she should be called 'full of grace'. They believe that Mary, immaculate (perpetual) virgin, will resurrect at the second coming of the Lord. Prayer to Mary is compulsory.

7. *Significance of the East*

The Eden garden is in the East. The son of God will come from east (Matthew 24:27). Their prayers are facing towards east. But when God has made it clear that pray facing towards east is worship of Sun (Ezekiel 8:16), He will not accept any of the justification for such a worship. There is no significance to any particular side. Moreover, the work of church building, raiment of priests and worship of cross are very important teachings for them. But none of them are supported by the Word.

Questions:

1. Give detailed description of the origin of Jacobite church.
2. Can we prove that Apostle Thomas ever came to India?
3. Where did Indian Churches establish the relation with Church of Antioch?
4. How was Orthodox Church formed?
5. Explain the faith and rituals of Jacobite-Orthodox Churches?

LESSON - 35

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

Memory verse : Philippians 3:18-19

Introduction : The Mar Thoma Church does not have regional beginning. This is because the Mar Thoma Church is the fruit of the revival in the then existing Malankara Church. Though they have eradicated many rituals which were against the Word, many are still continuing

The background of the revival

The nineteenth century had been a stage for changes in the Christian church history. The revival begun in England resulted in the formation of many missionary societies. Based on divine vision, they proceeded to non-Christian countries. In 1816, Rev. Thomas Norton, the Missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) reached Alapuzha. Thereafter missionaries Benjamin Bailey, Josephine and Henry Baker started their work in Kottayam. Their spiritual work and the translation of Bible into Malayalam opened the eyes of many.

Contributions of the Missionaries

1. They helped to free the church from bad practices and unbiblical teachings established by the Roman Catholics and followed by the Jacobites.
2. They conducted worship in regional language so that everybody could participate.
3. They made awareness of missionary work among other gentiles.

Bishop Abraham (Abraham Malpan)

Rev. Abraham (Abraham Malpan, known as the Martin Luther of Malankara Church (churches of Kerala), grasped the truth in the

Word of God and desired to propagate it among the church members. Another man of God Rev. Kaithayil Gheevarghese Malpan supported him. However the Bishop of the Malankara, Mar Divannasios IV saw it with the eye of suspicions and tried to nip it in the bud. Therefore those who tried to purify the church were compelled to form a new one.

In 1836, seventeen priests submitted a representation to the Resident. It included some allegations against the Bishop and 23 wrong practices followed by the church. The reformists fought against prayers to the dead, Feast for the dead, intercession (prayer) of the dead, idol worship, foreign liturgy, prayers to Mary and transubstantiation. They gave more importance to Family prayers, witnessing and morality. They stopped festivals and emphasized preaching of the Word on Sundays.

In 1837, Abraham Malpan conducted the qurbana (Mass) in his own local parish in Maramon in modified liturgy (qurbana). Those who followed his reformist views increased day by day. Finally, after conducting many cases in the court with the Malankara church, the Mar Thoma church came into existence.

The Faith and Rituals

1. Worship

The Mar Thoma church gives significance to worship. For them, it is the worship that keeps the life and testimony of the church and unites the believers. Bishop Titus III played a major role in publishing the 'liturgy' in accordance with the reformist thinking of Abraham Malpan and other leaders. The worships generally start with praising God, the Lord's Prayer and confession of sins. As the second part, there was qurbana after the preaching. Lightning of candles, burning incense, making sings of the cross and special garments for priests were the same as followed before reforms.

The practice of the lightning of candles was conducted in remembrance of the former Christians, during the period of persecution, who worshipped in caves and underground tunnels. They got light of the candles, as they were worshipping God in secret. The former part of the concept is right. As there was darkness in the caves and tombs they lighted the candles. They used frankincense to get rid of the foul smells in tombs. But why should we use frankincense where there is no foul smell. Is it vain traditions of their fathers?

2. *Salvation*

The Mar Thoma Church has clear biblical concept about salvation of the souls. However, as it is not taught in the church at large the members go astray. The Lord added the saved to the Church daily (Acts 2:47). The basic requirement to enter into the Church is the salvation. Infant baptism lessens the significance of it.

3. *Baptism*

The Mar Thoma Church follows infant baptism which is an unbiblical activity. However by the denying qurbana (Lord's supper) to those who below 16 years, the Marthomite church proves the meaninglessness of infant baptism.

4. *'Muron' anointment*

'Muron' is a Greek word meaning perfumed oil or anointing oil. This is done in lieu of anointing with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, anointing was done with pouring oil. But on the day of Pentecost each individual got baptized in the Holy Spirit. Thereafter, the pouring of anointing oil is not seen anywhere in the Bible. In spite of the Holy Spirit descended on earth literally, still holding its shadow is folly.

5. *The importance of East*

Standing devoutly and worshipping facing towards the altar located at the eastern part of church building is one of methods of the Mar Thoma Church. They consider God as the sun of righteousness. Besides, the traditional belief that Eden garden which is the shadow of God's presence enforced them to do so.

In Ezekiel 8:16, the prophet sees people worshipping facing towards the east in the inner courts of the temple of Jehovah. Twenty five men stood facing towards the east and their back towards the temple of Jehovah is clearly mentioned as worshipping of sun. Here, they were worshipping showing their back to the Ark of the Covenant and the most holy place. Worshipping of Thammus and Sun were the rituals existing in Syria right from the ancient period. The history says that worshipping facing towards the east is the ritual of worshipping god 'mitre' (sun) was brought along by those who become Christian during the period of emperor Constantine. God's presence is where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:20), not in the east.

6. The Cross

The cross is a thing for worship for the Mar Thoma Church. It is common to draw the sign of cross during worship. The Scripture does not mention anything about the cross on which Jesus Christ died. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18). Here, who is the enemy of the cross? The Pentecost Churches who prohibits worship of the cross. The cross worshippers give interesting interpretations. If this were correct, then we would have to say that Romans are the friends of cross for they are people who made the cross for killing the criminals. If we read the third chapter of Philippians, we can see people who argue that salvation is incomplete without circumcision.

Besides, the priesthood of the Mar Thoma is unbiblical.

Conclusion

The most miserable thing is that marriages of the members of the Mar Thoma with the Jacobite - Orthodox Church churches spoiled their reforms. With this whatever reformation took place is lost and they became like what they were earlier.

Questions:

1. What is the significance of the church history of 19th century?
2. How was the Malankara Mar Thoma Church formed?
3. What is the explanation given for using candles in worship?
4. What does the 'muron' anointment indicate?
5. What are the reasons given for worship facing towards the east?

LESSON - 36

CSI AND CNI

Memory verse : 1 Peter 1:18-19

Introduction : CSI and CNI are united churches. The formation of Mar Thoma church was due to reformation. In this lesson we will study the history of the unity of different churches in order to make collective witnessing of Christ.

The Church of Southern India (CSI)

The Church Missionary Society reached India in 1814 played a major role in the formation and growth of CSI. When the efforts of the Missionaries to reform the Syrian Church in India could not succeed, they joined the Anglican Church. By 1900, the protestant Christian churches wanted a joint venture to witness effectively. In 1908, a part of Presbyterian Church and Congregational Churches joined together to form the South India United Church (SIUC).

In 1919, a meeting of 33 church leaders gathered together at Tharangampadi in the eastern cost of Tamilnadu. The objective was to unite all churches that were practiced the same rituals and faith. As a result of long thinking and waiting the Church of South India (SIUC) was formed on 27th September, 1947. The SIUC is the amalgamation of Methodist and Anglican churches. The believers from states like Madras, Mysore, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and from Jaffna and other places in Srilanka became members of this Church.

The SIUC started with one million members was grown to 1.5 million by 1977. According to latest information, this church has some three million members. The CSI church is under the headship of (governed by) the Archbishop of Canterbury, England.

The Church of Northern India (CNI)

Similar to the CSI there formed Church of North India as a result of the union of the like mined churches in the northern part of India. Certain British Baptist Churches, Brethren Churches, The Disciples of Christ, The Anglican Churches of India, The British Australian Conference Methodist Church and United Church of North India united together on 29th November, 1970 in the Anglican Cathedral, Nagpur and there Church of Northern India came into existence. The motto of the CNI is: Union, witness and service.

Communion of CSI-CNI-Mar Thoma Churches

At the inaugural service of the CNI, Bishop P. Solomon the moderator of CSI, and Alexander Mar Thoma Metrapolita of Thoma Church were participated. A joint council was formed out of such participation. While CSI and CNI churches were formed by amalgamating many churches together, the union relation was developed to work jointly wherever possible keeping the identity of the individual churches.

Rituals and Beliefs

Episcopacy

Out of the four churches joined in the formation of the CSI, only one church was Episcopal namely the Anglican Church. In the CNI too, most of the churches were non -Episcopal. However during the unification, everybody had to accept the episcopacy.

We have already seen that episcopacy is not according to the word. Neither Jesus Christ taught nor did the apostles practice it. Those who did evangelization baptized the saved ones and formed local churches. They had fellowship on the first day of every week and broke the Bread. Episcopacy was entered into the church during the period of Constantine. Like the Roman government system, different levels of authority prevailed in the church administration. Peter who addressed himself as the fellow elder was given the title of Father and given a throne. But all these happened after Peter went into eternal rest. The miserable part is that in order to support the false rituals, they had to insert more mistakes. The Episcopal churches are still misleading those who are not familiar with the Word.

Liturgy

The CSI church formulated its new liturgy in 1950. It was revised in 1954. These churches use a formulary of worship comprising some

parts from the liturgy of the Eastern and Western churches. This is an Indian version.

Baptism

Though they accept both infant baptism and faith baptism, more credence is given to infant baptism. Certain practices like, drawing the sign of cross on the forehead after baptism, the adults wearing white dress and holding candles in the hands are common among this church.

Conformation

A baptized person is led to the full membership of the church by conformation. It is conducted by the bishop. The membership card is given after calling the names, reading some passages concerning the Holy Spirit from the Bible and answering certain questions.

The Lord's Supper

These churches consider the Lord's Supper as a sacrament of remembrance. This sacrament is viewed as a means to receive spiritual life and power. It is called Breaking of Bread or Eucharist too. Eucharist finishes by blessing of bread and vine.

The Feasts

They celebrate Easter, Pentecost, Feast of ascension, and the great lent (40 days immediately past to the Easter), Ash Wednesday too is celebrated.

Conclusion

While the CSI and CNI churches are standing as modals of the unification of churches, it is still considered what was behind the unity. They united for bring India for Christ but forgot their mission. This reformist groups abandoned many things of the Syrian Church but many wrong practices are still left with them. It is appreciated While bishops or the church leaders can get married is an appreciable matter but why they are wearing a crocodile faced cap is still to be answered.

Questions:

1. Explain about the genesis of CSI Church.
2. How did CNI church form?
3. Examine the sacraments and sacred rituals of CNI and CSI churches.

LESSON - 37

ST. THOMAS EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF INDIA

Memory verse : 2 Corinthians 3:6

Introduction : While the Mar Thoma church was formed out of the Jacobite Church, the Evangelical Church was formed from the Mar Thoma. The efforts of certain people to guide the (Mar Thoma) church to its straight path which had lost its vision had led to formation of the Evangelical Church.

History

The beginning of Evangelical Church is from the Mar Thoma Church. The reformation brought out with the sacrifice of Abraham Malpan was carried forward till the period of Abraham Mar Thoma. Even at his time, seeing the reformation going worse, some youth started question it. They could not see this as a reformation except that it is a venture came out of the influence of the western missionaries.

When the Yoohanon Mar Timothios became the bishop (1947-1976), the reformation of the Mar Thoma Church showed the sign of diminishing. He ignored the importance of the scriptures. He publicly stated that praying for the dead and interceding with saints are not wrong. This Bishop opined that the way to eternity is to follow the sacraments and the church should give more significance to worship than the missionary work.

Certain pro-evangelism people who were disturbed with the anti-reformist way of Mar Thoma Church submitted a representation to the Bishop under the leadership of Shri K.N. Daniel. But the Bishop

did not accede to the request for a discussion. All the efforts made thereafter at various levels were failed. The situation became worse when appointing of only those who were the close to the bishop as Episcopas. The mediation of many including Dr. Stanley Jones was also failed.

The priests and believers of Mar Thoma church who were keen on evangelism formed an Advisory Committee and thereafter the Indian Evangelical Alliance. With the inauguration of the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India on 26th January, 1961, those who made efforts to sustain the reformation in the Mar Thoma Church for a long time were become independent.

The importance of the name

From its name it is clear that the St. Thomas Evangelical Church has been formed with the following four main factors.

1. Based on History (St. Thomas)

The name St. Thomas shows the paternity of Apostle Thomas who brought the mantle of gospel to India.

2. Based on Gospel (Evangelical)

While many churches give importance to traditions, the Evangelical Church is based on Evangelism. They emphasized that only the Gospel can relieve people from the sinful life.

3. Based on Church plantation (Church)

Establishing local churches is the responsibility of Church. The word Church is therefore indicates about the mission.

4. It is Indian (of India)

India which was divided with class system according caste or creed and also due to the reigning of regional rulers became united and federal after its independence in 1947. Likewise the Evangelical Church of India desired to stand united for the reconstruction of India.

The teachings

The Evangelical Church which was formed with reformed ideas and by separating from the Mar Thoma Church just ignored the traditional rituals prevalent in other Episcopal churches. They consider the Holy Bible as the basis for divine matters. The salvation is only through faith by grace and only the saved one can become member of the Church. Those who publicly confess the faith in Jesus Christ should be baptized and added to the church. The children of the

members of church can also be baptized. They deny the doctrine that re-birth takes place with baptism. Those who baptized in younger age should be dedicated at the age of 14 years. Those who were dedicated in younger should be baptized before 14 years.

The Lord's Supper is to remember the crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ and for the communion of the saints. The church approves three levels of ministers such as Bishop (Episcopa), Presbyter and Deacon.

The Rituals

Being a reformist church, Evangelical Church made many changes in the rituals. When Church constructs its worship place, there will be neither altar nor any court. No separation is made with curtains. No particular side is specified for building churches. They deny the uses of candles and censor in the worship.

Unlike Mar Thoma church this ECI do not bend and kiss the Bible during reading of gospel (evangelion). There is no practice of washing the hands by the priest at the time of Lord's Supper (qurbana). There are no practices like making sign of cross, putting cross in the church building or outside or stitching sign of cross on the cap of the bishops.

Difference

In 1965 itself difference of opinion cropped up in the Evangelical Church and it was divided into two in 1968. One group in the name of St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India based at Manjadi and another group in the name of St. Thomas Evangelical Fellowship of India based at Kadapra was established.

Conclusion

Compared to other Episcopal churches, the Evangelical Church is much closer to the Holy Scriptures. However it stands on episcopacy (priesthood). They could not avoid infant baptism. The pre-written liturgy for worship results in a mechanical type worship than the spontaneous worship. For spiritual worship and immersion baptism, believers have to go to other places. As they encourage infant baptism, many believers get baptized at other churches and remain members of this church. We may expect some reformation to take place in the near future.

Questions

1. How did the Evangelical Church of India form?

2. What is the significance in the name of St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India?
3. What are the differences between the Evangelical Church of India and the Mar Thoma Church?
4. What was the result of the division of the Evangelical Church?

LESSON - 38

BRETHREN AND BAPTIST CHURCHES

Memory verse : Ephesians 1:13-14

Introduction : We have learned about the Episcopal churches. There are Brethren and Baptist Churches founded on the Word of God. These churches totally disregard traditions and give due importance to the scripture

The history of Brethren

The Brethren organization was established in Dublin, the capital of Ireland in 1825. A thought came in the minds of certain people that they should go back to the former system of worship giving importance to Breaking of Bread according to the New Testament. They read the Bible and understood that all those redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ are royal priesthood and therefore there are no separate priests with special powers or does any priestly authority exist in the church.

In 1825, in Dublin, Dr. Edward Crown and Edward Wilson gathered at the former's house, worshipped and broke the Bread. In 1827, F. Hutchinson joined them and Breaking of the Bread was done at his house. Thereafter, J.N. Darby, J.G. Ballet, John V. Charnel, W. Stakes and Antony Norris Groves too joined this fellowship.

In the beginning, they assembled for Breaking of Bread without absenting from the fellowship of their respective churches. Soon they realized that carrying both the practice together is not according to the Word. According to the decision taken in 1830 at the house of Hutchinson, the relationship with the then existing church was ended.

Instead of secret meetings, they gathered for breaking of Bread on the next Sunday. In the opinion of J.N. Darby, this was the official beginning of Brethren Church. In 1830, their worship was shifted to a public place.

The Brethren Assemblies were formed in Arab, London in England, Plymouth and Bristol. Out of which the work at Plymouth became very strong. Thereafter, the missionary work was spread over to various parts of the world and churches were established.

Brethren Church in Kerala

Due to the reformation work of J. Gelson Gregson, certain believers in the Mid-Travancore Mar Thoma church decided to gather and worship in the New Testament model. In the morning of March 19, 1899 four persons namely Kuttiyil Mathai (Kumbanattachan), P.C. John, Kuttiyil Mathai and P.C. Chacko gathered at the residence of Kuttiyil Mathai in Kumbanadu and broke the Bread in the New Testament style. This was the beginning of Brethren church in Kerala.

From 1905, the Missionary named Noel led the work at Kumbanadu. In 1928, Mahakavi K.V. Simon and the organization namely Malankara Separatist group under his leadership joined with Brethren Church. With the work of the V. Nagel, the church expanded in Trichur and Kunnankulam.

The Baptist Church

During the sixteenth century, people who became conscious of the Word in Europe started teaching the foolishness of infant baptism. Accordingly many were baptized. They were mocked by calling anabaptists. The Greek word 'ana' means 'again'. It means those who baptize again. One of the catholic academicians writes: Till thirteenth century, people were baptized normally and systematically by immersing in the water. It is in the Ravenna council in AD 1311 in spite of strong objections it was decided to baptize by sprinkling or immersing at the convenience of the priest ignoring such objections.

It is these Ana-Baptists were subsequently shaped as Baptist church. The Baptist church was led by John Smith of Amsterdam in 1609. The followers of Smith arrived at England in 1612 and established the first church there. From England Baptist Missionaries were sent to various parts of the world. The well known John Banyan was a Baptist. William Carey was the first missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society. The world renowned Dr. Billy Graham is also a Baptist. In 1905 different Baptists Churches were gathered together

in MacLean of Virginia in United States of America and formed the Baptist World alliance.

The Baptist Church in Kerala

William Carey's missionary works are noteworthy in relation to the social, cultural, educational and spiritual matters in India. Today there are some 16 Baptists Societies in India. In Kerala, Dr. K.C. Thomas begun the Baptists work based at Chattannur in 1968. Various groups of this church are being led by people like Dr. Charles John (Trivandurm), Rev. Thakadiel S. Simon (Kangazha, Kottiyam) and Rev. Moses Swamidas (Parashu Vaikkal, Trivandrum).

The Faith

The teachings of Pentecostal and other Separatist churches are same in matters of Salvation, Baptism, Separation and the Lord's Table. There are certain differences too.

1. Freedom of local churches

The reason for studying Brethren-Baptist church together is due to their similarity in teachings. However one difference is in respect of freedom to local church. The Brethren church highlights the independence of local church. They emphasizes that nobody has the right to interfere in the matters of a local church. However, it is very clear that the apostles who toiled in the first century to established churches interfered for resolving the issues arisen therein and also visited them frequently. Nurturing the newly formed believers in Word is essential.

2. Elders and not Pastors

While the Baptists Churches has a person ministering as Pastor, the Brethren churches do not believe in such a position. The ministry is done by the elder of the church. However it is essential to note that appointing Timothy of Lystra as bishop of Ephesus (Acts 16:1), Titus was given the responsibility of the Church of Crete (Titus 1:5) and writing about the representatives (Pastors) of the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

3. Speaking in other tongues and Prophecy ended

The Baptists and Brethren churches argue together that speaking in other tongues and prophesying came to an end. The church administration is not so important. The gifts given along with the descending of Holy Spirit will come to an end only when it goes along

with the church. There is no single verse in the Scripture to support the spiritual gifts shall be seized.

4. The Baptism of Holy Spirit is not required

While the Pentecost Churches gives too much significance to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Brethren-Baptist churches argues that there is no need of it. They say that a person is saved in the Holy Spirit so that baptism in the Holy Spirit is not required.

5. The Silence of women

These churches do not give women the opportunity to pray or give testimony. This has also been studied earlier.

These churches function in strict accordance to the Word but they are very adamant in certain issues. However they are much closer to the Pentecostal churches concerning the word of God compared to other Christian churches.

Questions:

1. Explain the origin of Brethren church.
2. How did the Baptist church form?
3. What is the teaching of Brethren church in respect of independence to local church?
4. How did the Brethren church establish in Kerala?

LESSON - 39

THE PENTECOST CHURCH

Memory verse : Acts 2:44-47

Introduction : The beginning of the modern Pentecostal revival is an epoch in Church history. It was the repetition of the events in the Books of the Acts of the Apostles. The birth of twentieth century was with the declaration of the German Visionary Professor Fredrik that God is dead. However, thereafter the world has seen the work of the Holy Spirit proving that God is alive.

When did the Pentecostal Church start?

Certain Christians think that Pentecostal church is established recently. In fact the modern Pentecostal Churches simply continue the work of the Holy Spirit, evangelization and church establishment as existed in the first century.

In the Books of Acts, we see a church which gives importance to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Evangelism was their main objective. The identity of the former church was lost with the conversion of emperor Constantinople without the transformation of his heart. With the Pentecostal movement, the experience of the first century has been restored in the church.

The work of Holy Spirit in the History

Though some people argue that the gifts of the Holy Spirit existed for a short period, the church history gives different records. In the opinion of Bernard Branson, over 20 charismatic groups have emerged between the second century and nineteenth century.

The continuity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is evident from the writings of Church Elders. Justin Martyr writes (AD 100-165): Men and women with gifts of the Holy Spirit are seen even these days too. Bishop Irenius (130-200): Many brethren with the gifts of prophecy and speaking in other tongues are seen these days in the church.

The Monteinism which formed in the middle of the second century in Firgia took strong stand against the moral down gradation in the Church. They gave more importance to holy life, fasting and speaking in other tongue. Tertullian was the church father who joined them. This reformist organization was declared as schism by the council of Iconia in 230 AD.

Jerome (342-400) mentions a person namely Hilarian who did healing ministry in Alexandria. Ambros (339-397) of Milan wrote that healing and gift of speaking in other tongues still persists. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by laying of hands.

Gregory of Turse (538-594) mentions wonderful works and events like freeing men from demon spirit. In the medieval period, Ignatius of Layola (1491-1556) wrote about charismatic gifts. The French Calvinists in sixteenth century, Jonathan Edward of 18th century and Edward Irving of England of nineteenth century were used by God for out pouring of the Holy Spirit.

The background of Pentecostal Churches

By the middle of nineteenth century the work and fellowship in the orthodox churches were spiritually dead. The people had the awareness to return to the original bases of the Word of God. Accordingly Holiness Movements were formed. With this, speaking in other tongues and healings were started. In 1873 when D.L. Moodi was preaching in YMCA in Britain, some youngsters started speaking in other tongues and prophesying.

The beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement

Charles Fox Perham, who conducted Bethel Bible School in Kansas, USA, inspired the students to study the baptism in the Holy Spirit. From the study of the teachers and students, it was noted the need of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Subsequently they started praying. In a prayer conducted on January 1, 1901 a girl student namely Agnus Osman asked Perham to lay his hand on her head and pray. When he did it, she began to speak in other tongues. Subsequently others followed.

William J. Seymour, one of the students of this college conducted revival meetings for three years in Assusa Street in Los Angeles. The gifts of Spirit were seen in those who participated in these meetings. From there many were set on with the fire of Spirit to different parts of the world.

In India

A.G. Gar, who took the decision to witness Christ in the revival meetings of Assusa was the first Pentecostal missionary to India reached in Calcutta in 1907. In 1908, George Berg from Germany reached Bangalore. In 1913, Robert Cook and family reached Dosbellapur. In 1915, Mary Chapman arrived in Madras.

In 1909 George Burg arrived at Thrukkannamangal as a speaker in the Brethren Convention. However, after observing the difference in his teachings, the organizers did not give him a second chance in the next year. Thereafter he started working in Kottarakara and Adoor. In 1914, Robert Cook started works in Adoor and Thuvayoor. In 1921, Mary Chapman reached in Trivandrum and started missionary work. As a result of these works, many local people became Pentecostal and began to preach so that churches increased.

The teachings

The Pentecost churches give utmost importance to the Bible and teach the fundamental doctrines in its purity. As this has been discussed from the beginning of this book, the same is not repeated here. Today, the Pentecostal church continues in the true Word and also teaches the same rather than any other Christian denomination.

Questions:

1. Does the Pentecostal church begin recently? Explain.
2. Did the work of the Holy Spirit come to an end in the first century itself? Prove.
3. Who was the church elder joined with Monteinism?
4. Explain the background and beginning of the modern Pentecostal Churches.
5. How was the beginning of Pentecostal churches in India?



For Sundry School Text Books
Sharon Fellowship Sundry School Association
PO Box 924, Thiruvalla-689 101
Kerala, India
Email: ssschivalla@gmail.com
www.sharon-sunday-school.org