



SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXT BOOK

CLASS

7

Published by
**SHARON FELLOWSHIP
SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

SHARON FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXT BOOK
CLASS - 7



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SHARON FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Sharon, Tiruvalla, Kerala, India- 689 101

PREFACE

Sunday school has a great impact in the growth of the church. Because majority of believers accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour through Sunday School. Along with believers the servants of the Lord in any generation received their basic bible knowledge through Sunday School. Also it is noteworthy to mention that many of churches were begun through Sunday School.

I am so delighted as the Sunday School activities in Sharon Fellowship churches are striving forward in an active and well-organized method. This is a commendable service as it relates our kids with Lord. Because Sunday School can develop powerful warriors for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

I am so happy as our Sunday School's syllabus is revising by including the contemporary elements to get a quality Christian education for our children. I am so grateful to those who worked hard for including this book of 7th class under our new revised syllabus. I pray that this book may become a great blessing to our kids around the world.

May the God who has revealed Himself be pleased to use this work to lead many into knowledge of Himself.

In Christ,

Tiruvalla
25-06-2017

Rev. John Thomas
(General President)

CURRICULAM COMMITTEE

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Pastor Abraham Mannamaruthi

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INTRODUCTION

Sunday school is doing the great ministry of relating children with Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore there is no wrong in saying that today's Sunday school is tomorrow's church. From this it is clear that the future of church is depending upon Sunday school. It is from this perspective that every church should see Sunday school and encourage its activities.

Sunday School Teaching is neither a trivial task nor simple mission. Rather it is very important like any other service of the Church. It is a mission that God entrusted upon us by considering us as Faithful. Therefore teaching ministry of Sunday school should be done with enough prayer and prayer.

Sunday school studies may enable our children to receive Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. It may also help them to grow in Christ and also to become the witnesses of Gospel where ever they are. This new curriculum of Sunday school is helpful to attain the above mentioned aims. Teachers should study it well and teach students with this aim.

Sharon Sunday School Association decided to revise the old curriculum by including the contemporary elements to get a quality Christian education for our children. As a part of it, this text book of 7th class is reaching in your hands. I pray that its learner may be blessed by this text book.

Pastor Abraham Mannamaruthy
*Director, Sharon Fellowship
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STATEMENT

Sunday School is a necessary aspect of the Church. The growth and existence of a church is depended upon the ministries among the youngsters and the kids of it. If our youngsters and kids get good – quality Christian education surely they will become a great asset to our church and the kingdom of God.

Text books had been published from Sharon Bible College-Tiruvalla and Faith Theological Seminary-Manakala for the Sunday school studies of our children. Since all those books were distributed before few years there was a shortage for the textbooks in these years. Therefore there was a constant search for the text books from our Sunday school ministers.

God enabled us to publish the text books from 1 to 10 standard of Sunday school in 1998 through the leadership of Dr. T. P. Abraham (Acting President of S.F.C.). These text books got a very good response from Sunday school students and teachers of our own churches as well as from other denominations. Since the published text books were distributed completely we were able to publish several prints of text books of all classes.

We taught the 11th and 12th Standards of our Sunday School by depending on some other text books. Later in 2003 Sunday School Committee decided to publish the text books of 11th and 12th standards of our own. As a result God enabled us to publish the text book of 11th standard on 2004 and the text book of 12th standard

on 2008. Also in 2013 God enabled us to publish new text book for Nursery kids and text book with activity portion for 1st standard. After realising the rapid changes of the educational sector and of the contemporary generation we are re-publishing this text book with revised curriculum.

Through the syllabus that we published, a Sunday school student will get a good study of the Word of God from its beginning to end. Along with this student will get a basic knowledge about the Bible, Bible Survey, other religions, life of missionaries etc. A student who covers this text book will get a thorough knowledge about the fundamental theological elements and an introduction to the heretical cults in this century.

The author of this text book is **Pastor Koshy Oommen**.

English Translation of this book is done by **some volunteers from Sharon Fellowship Church, Gujarat Centre**. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the precious work behind it timely.

I pray that this text book may become a great blessing to lots of children and to churches. May the name of the Lord be glorified through this text book. May the God who has revealed Himself be pleased to use this work to lead many into knowledge of Himself.

For Sunday School Association

Pastor. Jacob George
(Coordinator, Curriculum Committee)

Brother T. Thankachan
(General Secretary)

Tiruvalla
25-06-2017

CHAPTER 1

The Bondage of Israelites

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 2-3

Memory Verse : Psalms 145:19

Purpose : To learn that God hears the cry of His people and redeem them from the afflictions.

Introduction : One of the core subjects in the Bible particularly in the Old Testament is about the Israelites. God chose them to bless others through them. But they often forgot God's purpose. God miraculously redeemed them from their bondage in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. Today we are going to learn about their bondage.

Israel goes to Egypt

The history of Israelites, who are also known as God's own people, is recorded in the Old Testament. In order to survive the famine during the end of the middle of Bronze Age, Jacob along with 70 members of his family went to Egypt. They later became a strong community there.

Egypt

Egypt is one of the ancient civilisations of the world. This place is known as the gift of Nile River. The ancient Egypt comprised two regions namely, the Lower Egypt and the Upper Egypt. Pharaoh is the common name for the kings of Egypt. It means 'big house'. The history of ancient Egypt is divided into 3 parts.

1. The Ancient Kingdom : The Pyramids constructed during this period still stand as monuments.

2. The Middle Kingdom : During this period, the kings known as 'shepherd kings' ruled Egypt. They belonged to the Semitic tribe. The Israelites also belongs to the same tribe. Israel migrated to Egypt during their time. The Israelites had no problems during their ruling period.

3. The Modern kingdom : In BC 1558, the Pharaoh of 18th monastery of Egypt defeated the Hyksos monastery and came to power in Egypt. They conquered Averys, their capital and started ruling there and established a modern kingdom. Thereafter, the kings from the 18th, 19th and 20th tribes ruled Egypt.

Israelites under bondage

Israelites who were in high esteem during the period of the middle kingdom became slaves consequent to change of that kingdom. Egyptians hated them because of their clan and occupation (Genesis 43:32-34). Israel lived in Goshen, the eastern bank of River Nile.

Slavery was very common in that period. The mighty conquered the weak kings and tribes and held them as slaves. They were used as labourers for the development work in those periods as no modern technology or machines were available. Construction of canals, roads, forts, making brick in kilns, cutting of stones, construction of buildings and roads in the cities, building of graves, etc. were some of the works that was done by the Israelites as slaves.

As the kings found it profitable to get work done from slaves, they never wanted to free them. They also designed ways and means so that the slaves would never revolt.

The Ramses city and the city of storage called Pithom which were built during the period of Ramses to perpetuate his name are very famous. Ramses was built and renamed by renovating Averys, the capital of kings from Hyksos tribe. Israelites were used to construct these works. This city was later known as Sovan (Isaiah 9:11; 13:30) and now known as San El Hagar.

Persecution increases

The Israelites kept on multiplying even under severe bondage. Pharaoh explored many methods to control their population. He feared that the Israelites would grow mightier and would not continue to work as slaves or they may join with enemy nations to defeat Egypt, in case of a war. In those days, a practice of fighting with other nations and making them slaves was in vogue.

The Pharaoh found two solutions to deal with this issue. The first effort was to control the population of Israelites. For this, all the male children born to Israelites were to be killed. The second plan was to make them toil continuously without rest so that the matter of freedom never comes to their mind. He commanded two Hebrew midwives namely Shiphrah and Puah to kill any male child born to the Israelites. However, they feared God and did not do according to the order of King. Moreover, they made excuses before the king when he enquired about. Thereafter the king ordered to throw all male children in to the river.

This broke the will power of the Israelites. We can see from the scripts that their persecution continued to increase thereafter. During this period they grievously cried to God. God heard their groaning and desired to deliver them.

Practical lessons

The solution to any problem comes when we rely on God. Prayer is the most important medium for us to come closer to God. We should pray and trust in God in all our difficult times. If we do so, God will deliver us from troubles like He did to Israelites.

Questions

1. What is the common name for Egyptians kings? Write its meaning.
2. In to how many parts, we can divide the Egyptian history? What are they?
3. What are the reasons that led to the Israelites become slaves?
4. Why do we say that the bondage of Israelites were very severe?
5. What were the measures that Pharaoh took to make the Israelites continue as slaves?

CHAPTER 2

The Birth and Selection of Moses

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 2-3

Memory Verse : Hebrews 11:24.

Purpose : To understand that God delivers His people from afflictions and in order to confound the mighty, He uses the weak.

Introduction : The pilgrimage of Israelites was of 430 years. The later part of 215 years was the period of bondage. Moses was born during this period. Today we will study about the leader whom God chose to deliver them.

The birth and growth of Moses

Moses was born to Abram and Jochebed from the house of Levi sometime in 1580 BC. He was 3 years younger to his elder brother, Aaron. During his birth, a command of the king was in vogue that all male children of Israelites should be thrown into the river and killed. His parents saw the divine goodness in Moses and therefore hid him for 3 months. As they could not hide him longer, they made an ark of bulrushes available along the Nile River, daubed it with slime and pitch. They laid the child inside it and put the ark by the river's brink. When the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river, she saw the ark. She sent her maidens to fetch it. She accepted him as her son and named him Moses meaning 'because I drew him out of water'. As per God's plan, his own mother fed and nursed him for which she received wages as per the instruction of Pharaoh's daughter.

As he was adopted as the legitimate son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses had to undergo training in all areas of Egyptian knowledge and wisdoms. Thus, he excelled in words, deeds and knowledge. He became the heir to everything in Egypt including the esteemed high positions.

Moses in Midian

The first phase of his life ended in the palace when he was 40 years old. Moses started his mission by resolving a fight between an Egyptian and a Hebrew; he could not continue there as the news of killing the Egyptian spread all over and he had to flee the country. In fact, he abandoned the high position and palatial life for the welfare of Israelites.

Moses fled from Egypt and reached Midian. Midianites are the sons of Midian who was born to Abraham from his second wife Keturah (Genesis 25.2) and the place they lived was known as Midian. It was situated in Arabia to the north eastern side of the salt sea. Moses stayed with Jethro, the priest of Midian and married his daughter Zipporah.

God chooses Moses

Moses spent around 40 years with his father-in-law rearing his herd. At the end of this period he was chosen miraculously. The scene of the burning bush that he saw while rearing the sheep at mount Horeb (Sinai), the mount of God (Exodus 18:5) had become the cause for his selection. Moses who was familiar with wild fire wondered seeing that though the bush was burning but it was not being consumed. He approached closer to the scene. He heard his name being called out and told to remove the shoes from his feet as the ground where he stood was holy (Exodus 3:5-6).

Through this scene, God wanted to teach Moses certain aspects. God was teaching him that the Israelites living in afflictions will not perish when he would be chosen as their redeemer. Thereafter God told Moses that He had heard the groaning of Israelites and that His desire was to redeem them from Egypt and take them to the good and vast Promised Land. Moreover, Moses was appointed to lead them. As a token of these promises, God told Moses that while bringing forth the people out of Egypt, they shall worship God upon that mountain.

Moses asked God, what should be the answer to the Israelites if they ask him as to who has sent him to them. Moses was aware that

he was going to the same people who earlier asked him as to who had made him their prince and judge. God entrusted him to tell them that "I AM THAT I AM" has sent you. God wanted to remind and reveal them that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Jews seldom say the word 'Jehovah'. This word has been used 6828 times in the Bible. This word has been explained in this portion.

'The cause of creation' (The Creator), self existent, Aseitic, tc. are the meaning of this word. Though it was existing from eternity, this name and its meaning was revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:13-16, 6:2-8). The word 'Hovah' means 'to be'.

Some signs as assurance of selection

God commanded Moses to gather the elders of the Israelites and to tell all these things. He was also told to perform three signs to make them believe and assure them about his selection.

God told him to put his rod on the ground. When Moses did that, it became a serpent. Moses fled out of fear. God commanded him to catch it by the tail. When he put his hand it became a rod in his hand. God again asked Moses to put his hand in to his bosom. And when Moses obeyed it, his hands became white as snow and leprous. When Moses repeated the same thing upon the command of God, it was turned normal again. Thirdly, the water changes into blood. These signs were done as a token of his selection for himself and for the Israelites. God sent Moses with the command that these signs have to be performed before the elders of the Israelites.

Moses tried to make many excuses and showed his inability so as to escape from this mission (Exodus 6:10). Dissatisfied with his unwarranted arguments, God agreed to send Aaron along with Moses as his helper. Moses met Jethro, his father-in-law to say good-bye and started the journey to Egypt with his wife and children for fulfilling the mission. He courageously submitted himself to God and started the journey to accomplish the will of God.

Practical Lessons

Our reaction to the calling of God is very significant in our life. When we submit to God's plans, He shall execute His Will through us. It is better to obey and get blessed instead of making excuses and escape from the mission.

Questions

1. Who were the parents of Moses? What were their efforts to keep Moses alive?

2. Why did Moses flee from Egypt?
3. How did the fire of bush transform Moses?
4. Who made assurances about Moses' selection? How?
5. What were the excuses told by Moses? What was the remedy that God found to overcome it?

CHAPTER 3

Moses Reaches Egypt

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 4:27 to 7:13

Memory Verse : 1 Peter 4:13

Purpose : To make us understand that God desires to use any person and He acts with the chosen one and therefore we must submit more to His Will.

Introduction : The last 40 years of Moses' life was spent for the deliverance of the Israelites. It is not wrong to say that the two initial phases were the period of training for the accomplishment in last phase.

Moses goes to Egypt

Moses left Jethro, his father-in-law and set off to Egypt along with his family to find out if his brethren were still alive. The time when Moses started his journey from Midian, God prompted Aaron simultaneously to go and welcome Moses. At Mount Horeb, Aaron received Moses and hugged him. Moses informed Aaron all that God spoke to him. They gathered the elders of Israelites and made them understand about the purpose and performed three signs before the people to convince that God has sent them. The people trusted Moses. They believed and worshipped God for He has seen their afflictions and will deliver them.

Moses stand before Pharaoh

Moses and Aaron reached the palace of Pharaoh. They conveyed the command of their God Jehovah to send Israelites to

the wilderness to make feast for Him. "Who is the God that commands to send Israelites? I do not recognise him. I will not send out the Israelites". They got this depressing reply. They again put their need before Pharaoh (5:3). But Pharaoh thought that this is a tactic to dissuade Israelites from their work and therefore he made the work harder. The taskmasters conveyed Pharaoh's command to the people (5:6-9). They were not given straw to make bricks. The order was that no straw will be supplied but the output should not be reduced. Therefore they went about in search of straw. Those who could not complete the task were persecuted severely.

The Israelites were totally dejected. Their officers approached, complained and cried to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh made the rule more severe (5:15-19). Knowing that they are in deep trouble, the officers returned to their camp in despair. They met Moses and Aaron on the way and squabbled with them (5:20-21).

This was the time for Moses to doubt about his calling. He returned to God, prayed and cried (5:22-23). God talked to him (6:1). God assured Moses that Pharaoh will drive them out after seeing God's deeds.

God again talked to Moses and made His objectives clear to him. The time for sending them to Canaan was near. He assured Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He reminded his promises to the forefathers and made Moses understand that He will fulfil it.

In the book of Genesis Chapter 15, it is mentioned that God called Abraham to make a covenant and when Abraham made it by dividing the goat and ram, he was told that his seeds shall be a stranger in a foreign country for 400 years.

Moses and the sorcerers

God again sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh with courage and renewed empowerment of leadership. As Pharaoh viewed their need with a doubtful mind, Moses put his rod before Pharaoh on the ground as per the directions of God. It became a serpent. Pharaoh called his sorcerers and they also did the same thing. However, Moses rod swallowed them all. We can differentiate here the fight between the right and the wrong. This sign made it clear that the power of Jehovah is much more than the power of the deities of Egypt. This was the first sign to indicate the forthcoming success. In spite of seeing God's work, Pharaoh's heart hardened and he refused to send the Israelites.

Moses to the Leadership

Moses is the greatest leader that the history has even seen. He delivered the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt both politically and religiously. He is the great national leader who made the Israelites to become an independent nation. Moses had earlier tried to excuse himself saying that he is not eloquent but God sent him with the great commission as the leader of Israelites. Moses led the Israelites powerfully for 40 years. Moses, the leader of Israelites, stood before Pharaoh and the Egyptian authorities courageously and with God's power. Therefore, he was considered as great personality even by Pharaoh and his people.

Practical Lessons

Our inabilities or ineligibility are not a barrier to God's calling. We have been called for the mission by a God who can overcome all adversities.

Questions

1. How did the Israelites understand that God has seen their afflictions?
2. How did the demand of Moses and Aaron to send out the Israelites affect the Egyptians adversely?
3. In what ways did God assure Moses about his calling?
4. It is Moses who laid the political foundation of Israelites. What do you say about this statement?

CHAPTER 4

The Ten Plagues

- Reading Portion** : Exodus Chapters 7: 14 -8:32
- Memory Verse** : Psalms 50:10
- Purpose** : To grasp that God is the mighty and the supreme authority. He does justice and punishes also.
- Introduction** : In the last lesson we have learnt about Moses and Aaron demanding Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to go for worshipping and Pharaoh refusing it. Today we will learn about the plagues that God sent upon Egypt.

The plagues

God sent ten plagues to Israel. The first nine plagues were related to nature (other than directly relating to man) and the last plague was related to man. Each of the plague was to prove that God had ultimate control over the nature and He is the Supreme Authority over everything. Moreover, these plagues were sent upon the Pharaoh and Egyptians to make them understand about the powerlessness of their religion and that there is no reality in their belief. For these reasons, each of the plague demonstrated the powerlessness of the Egyptian deities.

1. The water turns to blood (Exodus 7:14-25)

God sent Moses to Pharaoh with the demand to send out His people for worshipping in the wilderness. Pharaoh did not accept it. Therefore God commanded Moses to stretch his rod into the river, pond, etc. so that the water turns to blood. The water turned in to

blood when Aaron did accordingly. He smote the river in front of Pharaoh and his officers. It turned to blood. As the entire water turned into blood, the fishes in it died and the river started smelling. No one could drink water. The magicians of Pharaoh also did the same act with their magic. This had affected the Israelites too (the entire Egypt). Pharaoh hardened his heart, as foretold by God. They were not allowed to go.

Egypt is known as the gift of Nile. This is because of the high fertility of land in Egypt due to gathering of alluvial soil of Nile. Therefore Egyptians considered Nile as a Holy River. In addition to the above, these plagues were a punishment to the Egyptian deities Hapi (the spirit of Nile) and Osiris (the guardian of water resources). Egyptians believed in polytheism.

2. Frogs (Exodus 8:1-15)

After 7 days, Moses again met Pharaoh and asked him to send out the Israelites for worship failing which he will have to suffer with the second plague of frogs. When Aaron stretched the rod on the river, the entire Egypt was filled with frogs. Though the magicians of the Egypt did the same act but they could not find a solution to it.

This plague that occurred in Egypt was another judgement on the Egyptians deities like Hapi, Heqt, etc. These were known to be the gods of fertility and prosperity. The head of the deity 'Heqt' resembled with frog's head. Therefore Egyptians never kill a frog.

Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and requested them to pray to Jehovah for removing this plague. He promised that he will send allow people to go if this is done. On this, Moses prayed and all the frogs were killed on the next day. When the problem was resolved, Pharaoh hardened his heart and changed his words. He did not send out the people.

3. Lice (Exodus 8:16-17)

As Pharaoh hardened his heart, God sent another punishment. As said by God, Moses stretched the rod and smote the ground. The entire Egypt was affected with lice (8:17). All were affected by lice irrespective of men or animals. The magicians tried to imitate it but failed. They opined that this is the hand of God. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not allow the people to go.

The plague of lice was very severe and terrible. The challenge was not between Moses and the magicians of Egypt but the fight was

between Lord God Jehovah and the Egyptian deities. This plague was the punishment to Egyptian god 'Seb'.

4. Flies (Exodus 8:20-32)

God had been communicating His demands to Pharaoh through Moses. He warned Pharaoh to send out His people to worship or else he will be affected with flies (8:21). The first 3 plagues affected every person in Egypt. However, the plague of flies didn't affect the Israelites indicating that Jehovah is the only God for all. While Egypt was filled with flies, it did not affect the Israelites. As commanded by God, entire Egypt was afflicted with flies from the next day.

This plague was a judgement on Egyptian god Sehub' (meaning Uatchit i.e. the fly god of Egypt).

The changes on Pharaoh

With this plague some changes took place in Pharaoh. He called Moses and Aaron and told them to offer sacrifice to God in Egypt itself. But Moses refused to accept this proposal. He informed that if they offer a sacrifice which is an abomination for the Egyptians, the Israelites will be stoned. He made it clear that God's commandment is to go to the wilderness to offer the sacrifice after a 3 days journey. Pharaoh told them that he will allow the people to go for worship but not to go very far. He also asked to be prayed for. Moses agreed to pray. He warned Pharaoh not to change his mind inviting further sufferings. Though he understood the inabilities of Egyptians gods, he could not assess the power of God Jehovah and again changed his mind and hardened his heart.

The plagues are historically true

Some false teachers do not consider that the plagues are demonstration of God's power. They consider it to be due to the effect of changes in nature. They opine that the water in the blue river became red because of mud resulting in the mass death of fishes and due to which the water got putrefied. But the plagues like frogs, lice and flies were true plagues as per records then available. The records discovered by the Archaeology department have already endorsed this truth.

Practical Lessons

God is responsible about His people. We too have responsibility towards Him. Our duties are to love, serve, witness and worship our Lord. When we do all these, we become entitled to be called as God's child.

Questions

1. What was the medium used for bringing the first 3 plagues?
2. The plagues were to destroy the Egyptian beliefs and thoughts. Why?
3. The strength of Egyptian magicians was limited. Why?
4. What was God's purpose about each plague?
5. God is righteous and merciful. Prove that this is true in respect of Pharaoh.

CHAPTER 5

The Ten plagues (Contd...)

- Reading Portion** : Exodus Chapters 9:1-11:10
- Memory Verse** : Deuteronomy 6:4-5
- Purpose** : To learn that Jehovah is Almighty; that everyone has to obey Him; that the disobedient will be punished and He will bless the obedient.
- Introduction** : In the last lesson we have learnt about the first four plagues. Though Pharaoh had earlier hardened his heart, his thoughts started weakening. The magicians could not help Pharaoh much. In this lesson, we will learn about the subsequent works of God.

5. Plague on animals (Exodus 9:1-7)

God again sent Moses to Pharaoh's palace to warn Pharaoh about the fifth plague. God warned Pharaoh so that he would send His people to worship. God allowed a day's time for this. When this plague occurred in Egypt, God kept a partition so that it did no damage to the Israelites. The destruction of animals was a heavy loss. When he came to know that the damages done to the Egyptian did not occur to the Israelites, Pharaoh hardened his heart again. He did not take God's warnings seriously.

This plague was, in fact, a punishment to their deities also. The ox was their main deity. The name of the deity was 'Apis'. Moreover, the gods like Ptah, Hathor, Amon, etc. were deities related to oxen and cows.

6. Boils (Exodus 9:8-12)

God's aim was the deliverance of His people. Therefore, He continued with the matter. He sent the 6th plague. God commanded Moses to throw ash towards the sky in front of Pharaoh. When Moses did accordingly, all the people and the animals left over after the 5th plague were affected with boils. Due to this, the magicians could not stand before Moses. It was so disastrous (Deut 28:27) that it was later known as the 'boils of Egypt'. However, Pharaoh again started to harden his heart.

This plague too was sent by God to humiliate the Egyptian deities. Ash is offered to deities in their worship. Moreover, 'shu' was their environment god and 'sekmet' was the god of contagious diseases. 'Serapis' was the healing god. This 6th plague was to highlight their inability and unworthiness.

7. Hail (Exodus 9:13-35)

The seventh plague was the hail. God has sent hail later also but it was to favour the Israelites. Moses informed that God wanted to show His might to Pharaoh which would be a lesson for others too. God wanted Pharaoh to continue to live and therefore He did not send any harsh punishment upon Egyptians. Moreover, the Lord advised him gently to gather the animals and his people from the field. Those who feared the Lord did accordingly. The next day Moses stretched his hands towards the sky when thunder and hail storm started. It caused heavy destruction. As they did not heed to the caring advice of God, they had to bear the brunt. This plague also gives a warning about the fate of those who do not receive and accept the salvation through Jesus Christ that they have to face the forthcoming judgement.

When the hail caused destruction, Pharaoh repented and called back Moses. He confessed that he did sin and Jehovah is the righteous God. He also confessed that he and his house are sinners. Moreover he told them to pray for him so that he could allow the people to go. Thus the hail stopped. When there was respite, Pharaoh again hardened his heart and did not allow the people to go for worship.

8. Locust (Exodus 10:1-20)

Again a call was made to send out the people for worshipping or else the plague of locusts will be sent. The council and ministers suggested and insisted Pharaoh to allow the people to go. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and agreed to send only the men.

Moses stretched his hand over the land as per the Will of God. As a result, locusts filled all over Egypt. It ate every vegetation without leaving any green leaf. Pharaoh immediately requested for prayer. As a result of the prayer, the locusts were destroyed. But Pharaoh's heart hardened again. God hardened it.

Egypt is a very fertile nation. All the nations had their own gods. Therefore, in those days, there was strong belief that the god of the most prosperous nation is the mighty one. As Egypt was always prominent in prosperity, their god guarding agriculture namely 'Serapia' was popular as prosperity god. Showering the hail storm and locusts was the judgement not only on this god but also to 'Nut', the sky god, 'Isis' and 'Seth', the agriculture deities. This has proved that all the gods are nothing before Jehovah the only Mighty God.

9. Darkness (10:21-29)

God spoke to Moses to stretch his hands to create heavy and touching darkness. The darkness which existed for three days was spread everywhere and was felt like sand storms. It would be right to say that it was chained with darkness. No one could see each other nor could they arise up from their seat. The Israelites did not feel the darkness.

This plague of darkness was the forewarning towards a forthcoming bigger judgement. It was also a judgement on the sun god 'Re' and moon god 'Thoth'. All the plagues except the 10th plague were connected with nature. Moreover it was related to the Egyptian gods and their beliefs. It was also an indication to the Egyptians to concede to the weakness and unworthiness of their gods and to understand that God Jehovah is the only true God and to prompt them to turn to Him. While it was a warning for Egyptians, these plagues made the Israelites understand how great is the power of Jehovah and hence He deserves to be glorified.

At the end, Pharaoh allowed them to go without taking their flock. But Moses was not ready to leave anything behind. Pharaoh hardened his heart again. It turned to be the last meeting for Pharaoh with Moses and Aaron. For God, it was the right time to implement his plans.

Practical Lessons

We have understood the power of our God and therefore we should worship Him, submit ourselves and serve Him with fear and faithfulness. We have to be submissive before God's love and power.

Questions

1. Explain the horrors of darkness.
2. The plagues given in this lesson shows the weakness of Egyptian's religious beliefs. Explain.
3. What was God's objective for continuously sending plagues without harming Pharaoh? Explain.
4. List down the Egyptian deities and write their roles against each.
5. What was the message given to Egyptians and the Israelites through various plagues?

CHAPTER 6

The Ten Plagues (Contd....)

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 11 & 12

Memory Verse : 1 Cor 5:7

Purpose : To grasp about the greatness of God's plan for the redemption of mankind and that the Old Testament events are given to guide us to follow the right path.

Introduction : In the last lesson we have studied about Pharaoh with a hardened heart inspite of sending 9 plagues. Today we will learn about the 10th plague - smiting of the first born and the subsequent deliverance of Israelites.

10. The killing of the first born

God planned to send the 10th plague to smite the first born. God assured Moses that this time Pharaoh will let the Israelites go. They got the relief on the midnight of 14th day of Abib month. On this day the killing of the first born also happened. This plague was also a judgement on their god's power. They considered their deity 'Ptah' as the god of life. Israel was ready for their redemption as promised by their God. Abib was the first month of their calendar. They used to observe two types of calendars, one for political purpose and another for the religious observances. The month Abib was also known as Nisan (Esther 3:7). In the political calendar Abib was the 7th month. This month falls during March-April in our calendar.

The Lamb is being killed

On the 14th day of Abib, all the first born right from the first born of Pharaoh to the maid servant and also of the cattle were killed as

per the plan of God. According to God's commandment, the Israelites had to take one lamb for one family. It had to be one year old and without any blemish. On the 14th day it had to be killed and its blood had to be struck on the lintels and side posts of the doors. Moreover, the flesh had to be roasted in fire and eaten with bitter herbs. Nothing had to be left over. Any leftover had to be destroyed in fire. It had to be eaten in haste with loins girded; shoes on feet and staff in the hand. While this plague was a destruction to the Egyptians, it did not affect the Israelites who had struck the blood of lamb on their lintels.

The Passover

The Passover was ordained to be a perpetual covenant for the Israelites. It was celebrated as a feast to commemorate the deliverance of their forefathers by God. This feast is also called as the feast of unleavened bread for the reason that Israelites did not use leaven during the 7 days of the Passover feast. 'Passover' means to 'pass through' or 'leave aside'. The commemoration of this day of being saved from the destroyer and resultant deliverance of Israelites from Egyptian bondage has helped the subsequent generations to understand and grasp the depth of God's deliverance.

The Passover – the New Testament feast

In the New Testament, Paul says that our Passover Lamb is killed. He further says that it is the Christ. We read that the house that struck the blood of lamb on their lintel was saved from the destroyer. Since the Israelite houses were struck with blood of lamb, all of them were saved. This is the symbol of the redemption possible through Jesus Christ. Here we should remember the truth that the precious blood of Jesus Christ shall clean us from all our sins. The Passover Lamb is the symbol of Christ (1 Cor 5:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19). The Passover Lamb was to be without any blemish and spotless. Like this, Christ was also sinless. Christ was dead for the forgiveness of sins of the entire mankind. This was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

The first Passover of the Israelites was conducted in Egypt. As the destroyer had killed all the first born of Egyptians, they persuaded Israelites to leave the country that same night. Moreover they also gave them jewels of gold and silver as demanded by Israelites. A big crowd comprising some 6 lakh men, their wives and children started the journey by walking. They left Egypt on the same night.

The deliverance of Israel

This Passover was their day of deliverance. It was the deliverance of all those under bondage at different levels.

a) Financial deliverance : There was no advantage to Israel even though they toiled hard every day as the slaves were not paid wages. Therefore, this deliverance was financial gain for Israel while it was a loss for those who were exploiting them. It was an opportunity for the Israelites to enjoy the pleasure of their efforts.

b) Social deliverance : Out of the male children born in a day in the same country, the Israelite child was not allowed to survive. This was a great deliverance from the place where their social rights were denied.

c) Cultural deliverance : Even though they were capable of developing excellent cities, they had no right to maintain or carry on with their traditional ideas. Therefore, this was a cultural deliverance for the Israelites.

d) Religious deliverance : They did not have the freedom to worship their God. Egyptians hated sacrifice and worship. God was demanding through Moses the freedom for Israelites to worship Him. God desired the Israelites to lead a religious life that controlled their socio-political life. The religion and social life had inseparable relationship among them.

e) Political deliverance : In those days, there was a practice of using people of another country as slaves in construction work prevailed. Therefore they could not even imagine a deliverance from such bondage. However, God had planned to make the Israelite a separate group, to make a strong political foundation and to make a strong power. Therefore, it was also a political deliverance for them. The Passover, which was conducted on the 14th day of the month Abib, was deliverance for the Israelites from all the bondages in all spheres of their life. It was a day of formation of the nation of Israel.

Date of Exodus

There is a lot of debate about the date of the exodus. According to the calculation as per Bible, it must have occurred sometime in BC 1441. Going with the calculation according to 1 King 6:1, Solomon initiated the construction of Temple in the 4th year of his reign. Israel started from Egypt about 480 years prior to that. The starting of the construction of the Temple was in 961 BC. Thus, we can consider that exodus occurred in 1441 BC. Moreover, the destruction of Jericho

was happened around 1440, as per evidence gathered from the Archaeological excavation report.

Thus, it is the great evidence that Jehovah not only controls the history, keep the promises to the forefathers but also loves His children the Israel.

Practical Lessons

Obedience leads to blessings and disobedience to the destruction. We must be completely independent and at the same time make efforts to make others independent. By calling someone *raca* (foolish), we belittle their individuality. We can get independence only through Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. When did the event of exodus occur?
2. In what ways did exodus give deliverance to the Israelites?
3. Describe the Passover.
4. What is the meaning of Passover according to New Testament? Describe in detail.

CHAPTER 7

The Journey of Israel in Wilderness

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 13:17 to 18:27

Memory Verse : Isaiah 43:1

Purpose : To grasp that though we are weak, our God cares for us and we should be grateful to Him.

Introduction : It was really adventurous to lead by walking a community who had been living in the midst of Egyptians for many years and practising their lifestyle, religious customs and social justice system to another country which they have never seen or heard. Let us study about a little of them today.

Introduction:

The Journey of Israelites – the beginning

A large community, where men above 20 years alone numbered 6 lacs, left Egypt and started their journey to Canaan. Their family members and cattle were also with them. The route by which they walked was not a highway so as to proceed comfortably. God felt that if they pass through the nations where strong kings were reigning, they will be attacked and there is a possibility that people may want to return to Egypt. Therefore they were led through the wilderness along the Red Sea (Exodus 14:17).

They were carrying the bones of Joseph in their journey to the promised land of Canaan. They were under the divine care throughout their journey. The pillar of cloud in the day and the pillar of fire in the

night went before them. As commanded by God, the Israelites encamped before Pihahiroth between Migdol and the sea.

The Israelites cross the Red sea

Allowing Israel to leave the nation was a heavy loss to Pharaoh. He followed them along with his army in order to bring them back as slaves, when he knew that they are entangled in the land.

The Israelites got frightened. The Red Sea was before them, huge mountains were along the sides and Pharaoh along with his force behind them. They murmured against Moses and cried to God. They murmured that it was better to be in slavery in Egypt than dying in the wilderness. Those who were crying earlier for 'freedom or death' are now saying that 'slavery is better than death'. Moses cried to God. God scolded Moses and told him to divide the Red sea by stretching out his rod to demonstrate that God is active. Moses encouraged the people. Moses made them recall that 'I AM THAT I AM' (Jehovah) is with us, He will fight for us and He will avenge the cruelty done to us.

Moses stretched forth his hands as told by God. The waters separated sideways due to a strong eastern wind. The dry land appeared and the Israelites walked over it and reached the other shore. The Angel who walked before the Israelites while they crossed stood behind them so that the Egyptian army does not come close to them. It is not possible to pin point the exact place through which the Israelites crossed the sea. However, scholars consider that it may be the western part of the Red sea.

The God who used nature to judge the Egyptians had again done a miracle by using the nature (Red Sea) to protect the Israelites and punish the Egyptians.

The New Testament teaches us that crossing the Red sea is symbolic to Baptism (1 Cor 10:1-3). As the Israelites were completely delivered when they crossed the Red sea, we are advised that we should accept Baptism - the command of God.

The judgement of Egypt

Though Egyptians tried to catch hold of the Israelites who had crossed the Red sea, they could not do so. When Moses stretched his hands again, the Red sea returned to its original position. Those who found pleasure in killing the male children of Israelites by throwing them in the Blue Nile River were drowned in the Red sea, reaping what they had sown in the flesh.

The Victory Song of Miriam

We see a victory song in Chapter 15. This is a song sung by Moses and the people together. We see that Miriam, the sister of Moses, celebrates the victory by taking a timbrel in her hand, dancing and singing along with other women. We can also see in this song the God's concern for them.

Israel in Elim

Freedom is associated with discipline. Freedom without discipline will lead to irresponsibility. Therefore God chastened them in the wilderness. After crossing the Red sea, He led them to the wilderness of Shur towards the south. They did not get water for 3 days in Shur and reached Mara. The water available there was bitter and so they could not drink it. The people started murmuring. The wilderness of Shur is also known as Etham (Numbers 33:8). This was the occasion when the real attitude of the people was revealed. When they obeyed God, the water became potable (Exodus 15:23-25). Thereafter they reached Elim. The meaning of that word is 'deities'. There were so many palm trees there.

Israel in the wilderness of Sin

They started from Elim and reached the wilderness of Sin. We observe another side of their attitude here. When they murmured for food, they were given Manna. The meaning of this word is 'what is this'. The word Manna was derived from the Greek word 'Manhu'. They ate Manna for 40 years until they reached Canaan.

Meribah and Massah

As commanded by God, they started the journey from Sin and encamped in Rephidim. They again chided for water. Due to their chiding, that place was named Meribah (chiding) and Massa (Tempt). They tested whether God is still with them. As they chided, the rock was smitten to get water. This is the shadow of Jesus being bruised for mankind. In the Epistle of Corinthians we can see that this rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

The Attack of Amalek

The first war of Israelites happened in Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-16). Israelites won the war. During this war, Joshua was in the forefront. Amalek, the warriors withdrew after the defeat. They were the nomadic tribe that wandered in the wilderness between south of Canaan and east of Egypt right from the ancient period (Genesis 14:7). They always envied the Israelites.

This event reminds us about the power of prayer. While Moses prayed lifting his hands, fighting went on in the valley under the leadership of Joshua. Aaron and Hur stood along with Moses as helpers. Moses was fighting in prayer lifting his hands. Joshua was fighting with enemies. Aaron and Hur helped Moses to keep his hands up without tiring. The Amalek were completely annihilated out before dusk. They constructed an altar and worshipped Jehovah as a token of their gratitude. They named the altar as 'Jehovah Nissi' meaning Jehovah is my flag.

Practical Lessons

This lesson teaches us that we should not only pray but also be thankful to the God who answers our prayers. It was because of God's help that the Israelites could be victorious in all their encounters. We too can triumph only with the help of our God.

Questions

1. What was the difficulty that Israelites first encountered in their journey?
2. Though Israel had left Egypt but they did not forget their past. Explain the occasion.
3. How did the Israelites win the war at Rephidim?
4. What do you understand from the verse that Christ is the stricken rock?
5. Why did God choose to travel through wilderness?
6. Red sea is the place where God showed his love and power. Explain.

CHAPTER 8

The Ten Commandments

- Reading Portion** : Exodus Chapters 19 and 20
- Memory Verse** : 1 John 2:3-4
- Purpose** : To understand God's grace being showered on us in the present days whereas the Old Testament law was to take a tooth for a tooth.
- Introduction** : The Israelites who started their journey from Egypt reached and camped near Mount Sinai on the first day of the third month. This was the fiftieth day after the Passover. The commandments were given to them at this place. The Pentecost feast is celebrated to commemorate this occasion.

The Commandments and the Covenants

Commandments are part of the covenants of relationship between God and the people. The covenant is that Jehovah shall be their God and they shall be His people as long as they obey the commandments. The people accepted this altogether in one voice (Exodus 19:8, 24:3). These commandments which they received at Mount Sinai increased their relationship with God and provided an assurance that they are His people. They acknowledged that Jehovah is their king and the people are His subjects (Numbers 10:35; Exodus 15:8). In another words, the 10 commands are the gist and substance of the entire Laws.

The Names

The name given to the 10 commandments by Greek forefathers was 'Decalogue'. (Dec means Ten and logos means word).

These commandments are also called as 'Tables of Testimony' (Exodus 34:29), 'Tables of Covenant' (Deutro 9:9) and 'covenant' (Deutro 4:13). In New Testament it is known as Commandments.

The Authenticity

- i) The 10 commandments are the statement of covenants that God made to His chosen people. These are everlasting covenants.
- ii) The other covenants (i.e. Mosaic laws) were spoken by Moses while the 10 commandments were written by God's own hands and given to Moses.
- iii) Moreover, it was kept on the most holy place in the universe i.e. the sanctum sanctorum (the place of the holy of holies) of the Tabernacle of Witness.
- iv) The entire commandments were followed by Jesus Christ. He publicly told that He came not to remove the commandments but to fulfil it.
- v) The Apostles also paid prime importance to the 10 commandments (Romans 13:8-10).

The laws through Moses is divided into 3 types

1. The Decalogue
2. Civil and Religious ordinances
3. Ceremonial regulations (rituals)

Moses in the presence of God

In order to receive God, who was coming to give the commandments, the people sanctified themselves. Nobody had the permission to even touch the mount. The ordinance was to stone the one that touches the mount. God appeared burning with fire, blackness, darkness, tempest and sound of trumpet (Hebrews 12:18-19). The people trembled with fear. The appearance of God was very great and frightful. Moses went to the top of the mount. Through this appearance God wanted to give people the fear for not committing sin.

Moses was the mediator between God and the people. God gave two stone tablets with the commandments written on both sides. The tablets were God's work and the writing was also His own (Exodus 32:15-16).

These commandments are to be followed forever. They are to be kept not because of external force but because of our relationship with the God.

The Ten Commandments and its meaning

The Ten Commandments can be divided into two keeping in view of the relationship with God. The first 4 commandments are in respect of our relationship with God and the balance is with man. The commandments comprises of 'dos' and "don'ts". These have been given by the God Jehovah who brought out the people from Egypt (Exodus 20:2). These 10 commands are with regard to the deeds, talk, thoughts, etc. of man. For example do not kill, do not steal are about deeds. Do not bear false witness is about talk and do not covet is thought.

- i) There shall be no God other than I is the first commandment. This commandment manifests God's divine marvellous virtues like singularity and eternity. This is a calling to rely on a God who controls the universe and also acts on its history. But Israelites broke this commandment many times.
- ii) The second commandment i.e. do not make an idol reveals the spiritual likeness of God (John 4:24). Moreover, this depicts the matchless supremacy of God. Idol worship is a sin that God hates sternly.
- iii) Do not take your God's name in vein. It prohibits taking the name of God to do wickedness. The gentiles used to use their god's name to curse or kill their enemies.
- iv) Remember to make the Sabbath day holy. Observing Sabbath is the 4th commandment. After completing all the creation work in 6 days, God rested on the 7th day. Therefore Jehovah blessed and hallowed the Sabbath day. Sabbath is not only for the Jews but also applicable to all those dwelled among them. Sabbath has been linked to the life under bondage in Egypt (Duet 5:12-15).
- v) Respect your parents. The New Testament states that this is the commandment with a promise (Ephesians 5:17). It is the duty of children to obey their parents. This commandment assures protection that would be provided in old age.
- vi) Do not kill. This commandment reveals the significance of the life of man. Man has no right to take away the life of others. Life is God's gift and is a right that cannot be transferred. Murder ruins the likeness of God in man.
- vii) Do not commit adultery. This commandment is given to maintain the holiness of marriage and family life. The punishment for adultery is death.

- viii) Do not steal. This commandment was to restrict the desire towards material things and to be contempt with what one has.
- ix) Do not give false witness. Nothing to be spoken that causes bad name to others. God not only hates false witness but also the spreading of shame against the brethren to destroy their good name (Deut 19:19). The punishment to this was death according to the code of conduct of Hammurabi.
- x) Do not covet. This commandment prohibits coveting that is not one's own. The Hebrew word 'hemud' indicates about coveting and its after effects.

The Ten Commandments in the New Testament.

Out of ten, nine commandments are quoted and interpreted in the New Testament. The commandment about observing Sabbath is not quoted. As far as the New Testament believer, the day of resurrection which commemorates the newness of life or the fulfilment of redemption is more significant. Some commandments have been explained to the disciples by Jesus Himself (Mathew 5:22, 29, 30, 33, 34). These commandments have been reiterated in the New Testament many times. Christ taught that all the commandments and prophets are contained in the two commandments.

The observance of 5th commandment for mere namesake was rebuked by Christ. Christ did not forget his duty towards His mother even while on the cross.

Practical Lessons

'All the Ten Commandments are to be kept by us. Are we obeying the commandments? We can sustain the divine relation only through observing the commandments.

Questions

1. State the Ten Commandments.
2. Write about the authenticity of 10 commandments.
3. How did Moses get the commandments?
4. What are the laws of Moses? How does it differ from the 10 Commandments?
5. How did Jesus Christ divide the commandments in the New Testament?

End notes : *Code of Hammurabi – This is the Babylonian code of laws that prevailed in the ancient Mesopotamia. Hammurabi, the Babylonian king who lived during BC 1754 had framed this code. It contained 282 rules. This was the first code of rules ever made.*

CHAPTER 9

The Priesthood of Aaron

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 28, 29 and 39

Memory Verse : 1 Peter 2:9

Purpose : To understand the truth that though the priesthood of Aaron was instituted by God yet it was the shadow and the same had paved way for the great mission of Christ, the Chief Priest.

Introduction : There are priests in almost all religions. This is the supreme position in a religion. The Israelites also had priests in the Old Testament period. God had given clear directions to select them. Let us study about the priesthood of Aaron today.

The Priesthood

The word Priest has been derived from Hebrew verb 'Cohen' meaning 'to stand'. It means the one who stands before God. There were two types of people serving the Lord namely Priests and Prophets. Priest is the person who stands on behalf of man in between man and God. Prophet is the person who stands on behalf of God between God and man. The English word Priest was derived from the Latin word 'Pontifex', meaning the one that builds great bridges. Priest conducts the religious rites.

The situation before Levite Priesthood

The priesthood that was established by God through Moses is called the Levite priesthood. In the beginning, the Father of the family

or the head of the tribe used to perform the priesthood for the family or for the tribe. Melchizedek who lived in the times of Abraham was a priest and the king of Salem simultaneously. Scholars opine that Jethro was a priest and the governor of Midian. We see that the priest of On gave his daughter as wife to Joseph. Briefly speaking, there was priests and priesthood even before the Levite priesthood.

The choosing of Levite tribe

When the entire Israel had indulged in idolatry and when there was a call for distancing from them, only the Levite tribe separated from others. They demonstrated their love towards God by raising their sword against idolatry. (Deut 10:8; 32:25-27).

The Levites had many rights and positions different from other tribes. The duties and responsibilities relating to the tabernacle were entrusted to them. But they were not given any inheritance in Canaan. God made a permanent covenant with them that He Himself is their inheritance. The tithe by rest of the tribes was given to them as reward for their work.

The Priesthood of Aaron

Aaron, the first born of Amram the son of Kohath who is the son of Levi was chosen as the first priest of Israel. This is a very high position (1 Chronicles 28:13; Malachi 2:4-6). The other Levites were appointed as helpers to perform the priesthood of Aaron. Thus, the work of priesthood was given to the family of Aaron permanently. However, any handicapped, leper or any unholy person did not have the right to perform priesthood.

Consecration

Moses performed the rites for dedication of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. This service of dedication was named as consecration. This dedicating ceremony involved 7 steps. It was conducted standing at the door of the tabernacle in front of the Israelites.

1. **Cleaning of the body** : The first step was to clean the body. The priests come near to the laver of brass in the court and make themselves completely clean with the water kept there (Exodus 29:4; Lev 8:6).
2. **Wearing of the priestly raiment (garments)** : The coat of fine cotton fibre is put on the Chief Priest and girded with the girdle. Then he is girded with the curious girdle of the girdle of

ephod and binds it therewith. Thereafter the Urim and Thummim are put in the breast plate. Upon his head and also upon the mitre and even upon his forefront a golden plate is put on the holy crown (Lev 8:7-9; Exod 29:5-6).

3. **Anointment with oil** : The tabernacle and all that is kept there are sanctified with the anointing oil. Thereafter the anointing oil is poured on Aaron's head and sanctified. The anointing oil is stricken on the forehead of other priests (Exod 29:7; Lev 8:7-9)..
4. **Sacrifice** : It means the consecration sacrifice (dedication offering) offered after the sin offering and burnt offering. It is to be offered by both Chief Priest and other priests (Lev 8:14-18).
5. **Body parts are cleaned with the blood** : The blood of the ram is put on the tip of right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand and upon the great toe of right foot (Lev 8:23-24).
6. **Cleaning of the holy garments**: The garments are cleaned with the blood and anointing oil.
7. **Having food at the door of tabernacle of congregation** : They stayed at the door of the tabernacle for 7 days without leaving it eating the flesh of the ram and the bread. The consecration is done for 7 days. These are the steps followed in the dedication ceremony.

The incompleteness in the priesthood of Aaron

The Levite priesthood could not bring wholeness to the consciousness of the worshipper. Therefore, another priest in the line of Melchizedek had to come. The priesthood of Aaron (Levite) could not bring the people near to the Mercy Seat nor could it remove the curtain, the impediment towards the Mercy Seat. The priesthood based on the Law was incomplete. These were the sacrifices and laws that could not bring complete peace to the consciousness of the worshipper. Those offerings were to be repeated frequently. Every year they had to perform those sacrifices. All the priests who were chosen from man were incomplete.

The greatness

Even though it had many deficiencies, the Levite priesthood was the greatest priesthood among all the religions of the universe. For this reason, people like Korah and Dathan had rebelled to obtain this position and authority. They were different from others in the matters

of food, clothes, aim and many such matters. The garments of the Chief Priest were designed in heaven, very costly and extremely beautiful.

Practical Lessons

We all are priests chosen by God. Therefore, we must dedicate ourselves for the same. Are we prepared to stand before the Lord and ready to do the service that is entrusted to us?

Questions

1. When and under what conditions the Levite tribe was chosen for the priesthood?
2. Describe the steps involved in the dedication of priests.
3. Explain the greatness and the deficiencies of the priesthood of Aaron.
4. What is your view about the priesthood that prevailed before the priesthood of Aaron?

End Note : *To affirm the covenants, salt was used as the mark of honesty and assurances. Such covenants where salt was used for assurance of the law is called salt covenant.*

CHAPTER 10

The priesthood of Christ

- Reading Portion** : Hebrews 4:15- to 5:10, 7 to 10 Chapters
- Memory Verse** : Hebrews 7:26
- Purpose** : To grasp that Christ is our Chief Priest; to match with His likeness and to understand about the greatness of His service.
- Introduction** : Bible teaches us two types of priesthood i.e. the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Christ in line with Melchizedek. We have already learnt about the deficiencies of the priesthood of Aaron. Now we will learn about the priesthood of Christ.

The Priesthood of Aaron and Melchizedek

The priesthood of Aaron was the inheritance given to the sons of Aaron in the Levite tribe. The qualification to this right was given on the basis of physical birth a particular tribe. In other words, the Levite priesthood was established as a tradition (Hebrews 7:15) and not based on the spiritual foundation.

Melchizedek was the king of Salem and also the priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:18). Abraham gave him tithe. He was the king and the priest simultaneously. There is no mention about his parents. Nothing is mentioned about his lineage also. Therefore the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews has portrayed him as the shadow to Jesus Christ. Both of them had no relation with the Levite tribe.

The priesthood of Christ

The lineage of Melchizedek has been mentioned in order to reveal the lineage of Christ's priesthood. The priests of the Old Testament

and the sacrificial material used therein were incomplete alike. Moreover, these were only the shadow of the things that was yet to come. Priest is the person who stands before the righteous God on behalf of the sinned man for his reconciliation. 'Pre' means 'before'. They performed many sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sin. The chief priests kept on changing. But they could not come fully closer to the God. However, Jesus Christ proclaimed that the Law and Prophets are only up to John the Baptist (Matthew 11:13) and that on the day of His death i.e. the day of atonement he entered the heaven courageously, the most holy place with His own flesh and made the redemption possible.

The Levite priests performed animal sacrifice but failed to bring men closer to God. But the one born as the lion of the Judah without any laying of hands but a priest in the lineage of Melchizedek could make everything possible which the law could not do. The curtain of the Jerusalem Temple was torn into two parts from top to bottom at the time of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Due to the priesthood on the lineage of Melchizedek the enmity between man and God was put to an end and this made it possible for man to come closer to God.

The greatness of the priesthood of Christ

The priesthood of Christ is a type that astounds the priesthood of Aaron.

- 1) It is based on the pledge of God (Hebrews 7:20)
- 2) It is everlasting and unchanging (Hebrews 7:20-22). The Old Testament priests die and another person comes in his lieu. Here, Christ is alive for ever and therefore no one else comes in his place. Inheritance is required where something is transferred with death.
- 3) Unlike the priesthood of Aaron, there is no need of any sacrifice for himself and therefore everything is complete in Christ (Hebrews 7:26-28).
- 4) The service (offerings) is not in the Tabernacle but in the heaven, the real tabernacle (Hebrews 8:1-7).
- 5) It is the fulfilment of the promise of God (Hebrews 8:8-13).
- 6) The rituals or rites of sacrifice are not required to be repeated. The one already done is complete.
- 7) It is the consecration of the body of Jesus Christ that could bring complete atonement.

- 8) Through this sacrifice anybody can courageously enter the Mercy seat.
- 9) By His second coming, its promises and blessings are assured.
- 10) The complete atonement gives fillip to do righteous actions and loving efforts.

The priesthood in the lineage of Melchizedek make us possible to enter the Mercy seat. This gives the greatness to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. While the Chief Priest goes to the Mercy seat with the blood in the plate with fear and doubt once in a year, the priesthood of Christ says that he made the path clear by tearing the curtain i.e. His body so that we can come closer to God boldly.

While we see in the Old Testament a well adorned and great chief priest by the appearance of his external garments, we can see a different chief priest in the New Testament about whom it is said that we want such chief priest *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. The Scripture does not give any indication about Melchizedek doing any sacrifice. Therefore, the priesthood of Aaron is the shadow of Christ's priesthood.

We wanted such a Chief Priest.

- a) The one who entered in to the most holy place (Hebrew 4:1-16)
- b) The one who was not taken from man but from God (Hebrews 5:1)
- c) The one without sin (Hebrews 5:2-6)
- d) The eternal priest (Hebrews 5:6)
- e) Became chief priest by his death and resurrection (Hebrews 5:7-10)
- f) The one who changed/replaced the first law (Hebrew 5:11, 6:12)
- g) The one who is not dead but lives forever (Hebrews 7:23-28)
- h) The one who serve in the great tabernacle (Hebrews 8:1-16)

For these reasons, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron.

The priesthood of believers

Ever since the Chief Priest Caiaphas tore his raiment, the curtain of the temple was torn into two and the Holy Spirit came in the upper house of Mark, all the believers have the opportunity now to enter into the tabernacle courageously and receive the grace. Christ is the Chief Priest and believers are the priests.

The Church, the body has been anointed as the priests. The main duties are to preach the Word and praises of the Lord who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9), to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5), etc. Moreover, as the interceding prayers are for each other, all the believers have become the priests. Yes, we are the royal priesthood.

Practical Lessons

Being the royal priests, are we fulfilling our duties? The Old Testament priest, wearing adorable garments had to perform at a highest degree. Likewise, we the believers who have worn Jesus Christ have to be different.

Questions

1. What is the thing which we should get by virtue of our priesthood?
2. What are two priesthods that the Bible suggests?
3. When did the enmity between God and man reconcile?
4. What are the priestly greatness of Christ?
5. Who are the priests now? What are their duties?

CHAPTER 11

The Sacrifices (Offering) of Israelites

Reading Portion : Leviticus Chapters 1-7

Memory Verse : Galatians 6:14

Purpose : The Israelite sacrifices were the shadow of the ultimate and supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Those who performed these sacrifices could not recompense. Therefore we should rely on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Introduction : Sacrifice (or offerings) are mentioned as a very significant aspect both in Old and New Testaments. It has been in practice from before history of man. In this lesson, we will learn about different sacrifices and how such sacrifices have been the shadow of the ultimate supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

What is sacrifice?

The word 'sacrifice' means worship of/offering to deity. All the ancient religions had an important place for sacrifice. Different religions performed sacrifice with different objectives.

Man, who lost the relationship with God due to his sin, used sacrifice to restore the relationship. It was used to show devotion and gratefulness to God and also as a means to receive His mercy and kindness. Some considered that it pleased their deities or it was a duty towards them.

Man submits to God through prayers. Sacrifice is the visible and clear demonstration of such internal submission. Therefore

sacrifice is called the corporeal form of prayer. Sacrifice is the sign of submission to God with our heart.

The Sacrifices of Israelites

The details on the sacrifices have been recorded in Chapters 1-7 in the book of Leviticus. Therefore these are called Levite sacrifices. There are about 5 main sacrifices. They are burnt offering, Meal offering, Peace offering, sin offering and trespass offering. We can also see a few more offerings but they are related to the above 5 sacrifices.

The divisions of sacrifices

Offerings are mainly divided in to two types :

1) Offerings with a sweet savour and (2) Offerings without a sweet savour. When a sinner comes to the presence of God for fellowship, he first had to offer sacrifices for the atonement of sins. These were without any sweet savour. Once he was in fellowship with God, he offered the sacrifices with sweet savours. The sacrificial material was of two types i.e. one with shedding of blood and one without shedding of blood (meat offerings, drink offering). In certain sacrifices, frankincense was mixed with sacrificial material hence these were called as the sweet savour sacrifices. There are 3 such types of sweet savour sacrifices. There are two other sacrifices. The sweet savour sacrifices are related to worship and others sacrifices are related to the atonement of sins.

The burnt offering

In the book of Leviticus, out of 5 main sacrifices, the burnt offering is the first. It is called so because the sacrificial animal was fully burnt on the altar and its smoke ascended up to the heaven. Everything except the skin was fully burnt. The Hebrew word for this sacrifice is 'Olah'. The objective of burnt offering was to bring atonement for the sin. As this offering was offered in the morning and evening. It was also called as the continual burnt offering.

a) Sacrificial offerings (material):

It could be a bullock, ram, male goat or a male lamb. For burnt offerings, only the male was offered. The poor could also offer turtledoves or young pigeons. The sacrificial cattle had to be without blemish.

b) Method of sacrifice

The Bible also describes the method of sacrificing. The person offering sacrifice had to bring the sacrificial animal to the altar, lay

Material offered

Male or female cattle from the herd or flock without any blemish could be offered in thanksgiving offering. Fowls cannot be offered in thanksgiving offering as done in burnt offering.

Method of offering

The person offering the sacrifice had to bring the cattle to the door of the tabernacle and lay hands on it. Then it was to be killed and the priest had to sprinkle its blood around the altar. The fat and internals were to be burnt on the altar. Thereafter the breast of the sacrificial animal is waved before the Lord (squeezing front and back). The right shoulder had to be offered as heave offering (to lift or haul up and down). This part was the share of priests. The rest can be eaten by the person along with his family in front of the door of the tabernacle. But no unclean person could eat it.

Peace offering was offered during the period when people were happy and joyful (1 Sam 11:15). Peace offering was offered during the time of the beginning of feasts, selection of kings, the cordial end of important events, etc. Peace offering was specially mandated on the feast of Pentecost. God loves this offering too (Levi 3:5).

Practical Lessons

The Old Testament offerings were done for the forgiving of sins and also as thanksgiving to God. In the New Testament, instead of animal sacrifice, God desires us to offer ourselves as sacrifice. Therefore, we are bound to worship Him by offering our body, life and everything we have as sacrifice. Let us examine if we are faithful in this regard.

Questions

1. What do you mean by sacrifice?
2. What are the main offerings of Israelites? How are they divided?
3. Why was the burnt offering done? What material was used for this sacrifice?
4. What is the benefit of burnt offering?
5. Explain the method of the sacrifice of peace offering and its context.

hands on its head and kill it. The priest then had to take its blood and sprinkle it around upon the altar. Then it is flayed. The skin was for the priest. The flesh was then cut in to pieces and its legs and inwards washed in water and the entire portion had to be burnt on the altar. If the sacrificial material was a dove, the priest had to kill it. Its blood had to be wrung out at the side of the altar. It was also burnt to ashes on the altar.

c) The result of offering: When such an offering was done, there were multiple benefit to it.

- i. It would be a sweet savour to Jehovah. This meant that God accepted it (Levi 1:9).
- ii. Their sins would be forgiven. The offering will be accepted as atonement for the person offering it (Levi 1:4).
- iii. It shall clean the person (Levi 14:20).

Meat Offering

For Meat Offering, the word 'Minchah' is used in Hebrew language. Bloodless material was used in the meat offerings such as fine flour, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, green ears of corn dried by the fire, etc. Oil and frankincense were required to be put on the material used for meat offering. If the offering was of cakes or wafers, it had to be parted in to pieces and oil and frankincense added on to it. When it is burnt in fire, a sweet savour would spread. Unleavened material had to be used in this offering. Salt was also a must for meat offerings.

The material for meat offering was taken from the hard work of men. Only one part was offered. The other part was for the priest.

Peace offering

'Shelem' is the Hebrew word for peace offering. This oblation was offered to have a fellowship with God. It is of 3 types.

- (1) Thanksgiving offering (Levi 7:2)
- (2) Vow (Num 6:14; 15:3,8)
- (3) Voluntary offering (Levi 7:16; 22:18)

Thanksgiving offering was the sacrifice offered before God to demonstrate one's successes and prosperity. Vow is the oblation to get a blessing not received so far. Voluntary offering is done as thanksgiving offering to continue the blessings.

CHAPTER 12

The Sacrifices of Israelites (Contd.....)

Reading Portion : Leviticus Chapters 2-7

Memory Verse : Hebrews 13:15

Purpose : To understand the divine blessings hidden in the death of Lord Jesus Christ who is the ultimate and supreme sacrifice and to receive those blessings in our life.

Introduction : Due to sin, man kept on distancing himself from God. God desires that each one of us restores peace with him. Sacrifices are offered for this purpose. Today we will learn about two offerings without sweet savour. Both of them were offered in relation to sins.

The Sin Offering (Haphat)

This is one of the two offerings without sweet savour. Sin offering is offered against sin. This offering was the first sacrifice offered when somebody came into the presence of God. Sin offering was offered by those who commit sin by ignorance and without intention.

Sin offering is meant for 4 groups of persons

(1) The anointed priest (2) The congregation (3) the ruler (4) any individual. The sacrificial thing is decided on the basis of the status of the sinner and the nature of sin.

Things offered

If the offering was from a priest, the sacrificial animal had to be a bullock without blemish and if he was a ruler, it had to be a spotless

ram. If the Sin offering was from a common man he could offer a lamb or she goat and if he was poor then it would be enough to offer a turtledove or a young pigeon. If he was not able to offer even this, he could offer at least one tenth of an ephah of flour for normal sins (Lev 5:11).

The method of offering

The animal that was to be sacrificed for the congregation had to be brought to the door of the tabernacle. The priest or the representative of the congregation was to lay hand on its head and kill it before the Lord. The priest had to take the blood of the cattle and sprinkle it seven times before the veil of sanctuary. Then the priest had to put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord and rest of the blood had to be poured at the bottom of the altar. All the internals and fat were separated out and burnt on the altar. The rest of the parts had to be taken outside the camp and burnt (Levi 4:8-12).

If the sacrifice was to be done for a ruler or a common man, they were to lay the hand on the sacrificial cattle and kill it. But its blood is not taken to the sanctuary. The priest takes some blood with his fingers and put it on the horns of the altar and the rest of the blood was poured at the bottom of the altar. The flesh of the animal was also burnt as mentioned above. The priest was given a share from this flesh (Lev 6:24-30). The skin of the animal was to be the share of the priest who performed the sacrifice. They believed that the sin offering covered their sins (Lev 4:26). However, wilful sins were not covered (Levi 5:1-6; 12:6-8).

Trespass Offering (Asham)

Sin offering is offered for the redemption of the guilty. Trespass offering is offered towards the atonement from the guilt (Levi 5:1 to 6:7).

Things offered

The one who offered this sacrifice could offer a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goat (5:6), two turtledoves or two young pigeons (5:7) or tenth part of an ephah of fine flour, according to one's capability. If the sin was about the holy things, the trespass offering had to be a ram without blemish.

The occasions for this offering

Trespass offering is offered for (a) trespassing about holy things through ignorance (b) sins against the law of the Lord through

ignorance (c) dealing falsely or deceitfully with the neighbour (d) Defiling the law of Nazrite, etc. (e) and cleansing of the lepers (Levi 19:20-22; Num 6:12; Levi 14:12).

The sacrificial animal is killed on the north side of the altar. The blood is then sprinkled round about upon the altar and the flesh is burnt on it. The priest had to eat the flesh at the holy place. The skin was the share of the priest. If the trespass was about the holy things or dealing with the neighbour, he had to add one fifth part there to in the form of silver coins.

Sacrifices and its meaning

In the Old Testament, no worship without a sacrifice was deemed to be complete. The methods of sacrifices were framed in order to get oneself convinced about sin and the need for holiness. These were given so that the sinner could get atonement through the sacrifices and become righteous. God needed the submission of the heart of the sinner. The sacrificial animal without any blemish gives the message that one should be as clean as his God Jehovah. The animal is killed in place of the worshipper. These sacrifices points out to Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption offered to us by Him. The sweet savours points out to what Jesus meant to God and the other offerings point out to what he meant to the mankind. His incarnation in the bodily form was for the expiation for the sins of the entire mankind. His crucifixion brought glory and honour to the name of God. The blood that was shed by Jesus Christ was adequate for the atonement of the entire world.

The sacrifice of Jesus was different from the one in Old Testament. In Old Testament, the priest offered the sacrificial animal brought to him whereas in New Testament Jesus Himself was the sacrificial animal, the priest and the altar. In Christ, all these things were accomplished together.

Jesus was sacrificed for us. Our punishment was laid on Him as death. He was numbered with the trespassers in spite of being righteous. The sacrifice of Jesus was accepted by God as the ultimate and supreme sacrifice. He was resurrected on the third day and became heir of the name which is above every name.

God want to see all of us submit ourselves before Him and lead a life on the power of the resurrected Jesus. Jesus has already been sacrificed for our victory over sin.

Jesus took the form of a servant to free us from sins. He was consecrated for us in Calvary through the veil, that is His flesh, to

open for us a new and living way. He has fully paid the debt of our sins. Therefore we should lead the journey after grasping and understanding its value and meaning and meditate about the afflictions that were born by Jesus outside the camp.

Practical Lessons

We should present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Moreover, we should offer the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. We are bound to do it continually. We should not forget to do good and to be in fellowship with Him.

Questions

1. Name the Hebrew words for all the 5 sacrifices.
2. Explain about the sin offering.
3. What is the occasion when trespass offering is offered?
4. What is objective behind God's framing of the method of sacrifices?
5. All the sacrifices were fulfilled in Jesus. Explain.

CHAPTER 13

The Tabernacle

Reading Portion : Exodus Chapters 25-31

Memory Verse : Exodus 25:8

Purpose : To understand about the set up of the Old Testament Tabernacle which is the shadow of the New Testament truths and to carry out all our affairs of life in accordance with the laws prescribed by God.

Introduction : The Israelites were brought out of Egypt to worship Jehovah (Exodus 7:16). God said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them". Accordingly, they made a movable holy temple known as the 'Tabernacle'. This was made according to the pattern shown by God to Moses at the Mount of Sinai. The Tabernacle stands as the shadow of many spiritual truths.

The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle means 'the Tent of Meetings'. Congregation means to meet, to find out or to receive, etc. This name was called as this is the place for man to meet God. If somebody wants to come to God, he has to come to the door of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:21-22). From this, we should understand the truth that we cannot see the Father except through Jesus Christ.

The other names of Tabernacle

1. The Tabernacle of Congregation (Exodus 33:7)

2. The Tabernacle (Exodus 26:9)
3. The Tabernacle of Lord (1 Kings 2:28)
4. The House of the Lord (1 Chronicle 9:23)
5. The Tabernacle of Witness (Num 9:15)
6. The Holy Temple (Exodus 28:8)

These names point out the significance of the relationship between man and God.

The external appearance

The Tabernacle of Congregation is 150 ft long and 75 ft. wide. It is pitched on a neat and tidy place. It is a temporary building for worship. After 480 years, Solomon built a permanent temple in Canaan (1 Kings 6:1).

The Tabernacle is divided into three parts viz. the Court, the Holy Place and the Sanctuary. The Tent comprising the Holy Place and Sanctuary is situated in the middle of the west end side. The rest of the place in the Tent is the Court. The Tabernacle was 45 ft. length, 15 ft. width and 15 ft height.

The workers

God who showed the dimensions and pattern of the Tabernacle of the Congregation also separated Bazaleel of the Judah Tribe and Oholiab of the Dan Tribe by name as its builders. They were filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship (Exodus 35:20-25). Even today God uses few people as instruments to get the Church ready.

The tools and other temples

None of the vessels of the Tabernacle of the Congregation were made of iron. Material like shittim wood, gold, silver and brass have been used in building it. In addition to these, different types of threads have also been used. Many temples have been named in the Bible. The Tabernacle of Congregation (the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness – Acts 7:44), The Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:37), the Temple of Herod (John 2:20), The Temple of His body (John 2:19-21; Hebrew 10:5, Colos 2:9), Church the House of God (1 Thim 3:5), the temple of the great tribulation (Rev 11:13), etc. Out of these the first one is the Tabernacle of the Congregation.

The external view of the tent was not very pleasant but the internal beauty of it was extremely amiable and precious. The expenses

towards this were met by the free-willing offering of Israelites. This tent is symbolic to the present times (Hebrew 9:9).

The likeness/resemblance of the Tabernacle of Congregation

1. To Christ (John 2:19-21; Col 1:19-20)
2. To the Church of God (Exo 25:8; Acts 7:48; Eph 2:19-22; Acts 7:24).
3. To each of the believer (2 Cor 6:19; 1 Cor 3:16-17)
4. To the images in heaven (Hebrews 4:14; Rev 4:7-8; Ezek 1:5-10)
5. To the tabernacle in heaven (Hebrew 8:5; 9:23).

Practical Lessons

God desires to dwell in the midst of His people. He also wants us to become a holy temple so that he can dwell in us. Let us submit ourselves.

Questions

1. What are the other names of the Tabernacle of Congregation?
2. The Tabernacle of Congregation is a very important institution for the Israelites. Why?
3. Who were assigned the work of building the Tabernacle of Congregation?
4. What are the main materials used for building the Tabernacle of Congregation? How were they obtained?
5. To what all has the tabernacle been equated with?
6. Name the temples that are mentioned in the Bible?

CHAPTER 14

The Main Parts of the Tabernacle

- Reading Portion** : Exodus Chapters 27, 30 & 38
- Memory Verse** : Hebrews 10:1
- Purpose** : To understand as to how the Tabernacle of Congregation and its vessels are shadow of the New Testament truths.
- Introduction** : In the last lesson we learnt about the external and symbolic aspects of the Tabernacle of Congregation. Today we are going to learn in short the divisions of the tabernacle and its vessels (The teachers can try to give more interpretations relating to New Testament).

The Tabernacle of the Congregation has 3 main parts. They are the Court, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Sanctuary).

1. The Court

The tent comprising the holy place and the most holy place is situated at the middle of the western end. The open space other than the tent is called the court. It is 100 cubits (150 feet) long, 50 cubits (75 feet) wide and 5 cubits high. The Courtyard had only 1 entrance. It indicates that there is only one way for salvation that is the Christ. The courtyard is very significant as the place of atonement from sin.

The main areas and vessels of the court yard.

a) The altar

The first sight is the altar as one enters the courtyard. Altar is basic factor with respect to the Levite priesthood. It is hollow made

with shittim wood covered in brass. Its dimension is 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide and 3 cubits high. This is also called the brasen altar (Exod 28:30) or the altar of burnt offering (Exod 30:28). Each corner has one horn. The horns could be held as a shelter and refuge by any guilty or transgressor judged to death. They could be saved howsoever severe the guilt was (Exodus 21:14-16; 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28). Our only refuge is Jesus Christ to whom we can flee and have shelter (1John 1:7-9; Rom 5:12; 6:23).

The fire on the altar was to be kept burning always. The altar is the resemblance of Jesus Christ and His death.

b) Laver of brass (Exodus 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:30-32)

The Laver of brass is kept in the courtyard between the altar and tent for the purpose of keeping water. When the ministers enter the tabernacle, they were to clean themselves with this water. In the Solomon's temple, there were brass seas instead of brass lavers. They could contain 3000 baths (6000 gallons) of water (2 Chro 4:5). These were kept upon 12 oxen. When water was required, it would flow from the sea through the stomach of the oxen and would come out through the mouth. Keeping this in view, Jesus said "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). The Laver of brass and the water in it represents the Holy Spirit and its anointing. A life filled in Holy Spirit is essential for all.

2. The Holy Place and its vessels

After removing the veil of the tent door, the priest enters into the Holy Place. The Holy Place has length of 20 cubits and width of 10 cubits. Only the priest could enter into this place.

Vessels

a) The Candlestick (Exod 25:31-40; 27:20-22)

The candlestick of pure gold is kept at the southern side of the Holy Place behind the veil. The priest lights the lamp every day with beaten pure olive oil to burn from evening to the next morning. It is also known as the golden lamp, candlestick, etc. This lamp is the shadow of Jesus Christ who said that 'I am the light of world'. It is also the shadow of the Church and the Word of God. Let this be a call to all of us to brighten with Jesus Christ, the real light of the world and go forward in this dark world.

b) Table for the Showbread (Exod 25:23-30; Levi 24:5-9)

This is made of shittim wood and covered with gold. Twelve baked breads of fine flour are set on the table on a row of six. This

represents the 12 tribes of Israel (Lev 24:5). New bread is made on every Sabbath and replaced with the old one. The old bread is then eaten by the priests in the holy place.

The bread with fine flour represents Jesus, the bread of life.

c) The Golden Incense Altar (Exod 31:1-10; 37:25-29; Rev 8:3-5; 5-8)

The Incense Altar of 1 cubit long, 1 cubit wide and 2 cubits high is made of shittim wood covered with gold. The priest is required to burn incense on this altar every day.

The kind of sacrifices made on the altar was not allowed to be sacrificed on the Golden Incense altar. God had commanded that no strange fire except the fire from altar was allowed to be brought to the golden altar for offering to God. Only the fire from the altar was allowed in the golden incense altar. Brass laver and golden incense altar had close relationship. The altar cleanses us from all our sins.

The incense altar makes us true worshippers. Both the altars are the shadow of Christ. Christ is the cleansing altar and also the living incense altar to interceding for us before God the Father (Roman 3:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). The smoke offered in the incense altar is the prayer and thanksgiving of the saints. It reveals the truth that our prayers and praises should be through Christ, the incense altar, and in His name.

3. The Most Holy Place and its vessels

The Most Holy Place (sanctuary) is located towards the west of the holy place and at the western end of the tabernacle of the congregation. It is 10 cubits long, 10 cubits wide and 10 cubits high. Its eastern side was covered with a veil with skilful work and other sides by shittim wood plates covered in gold. The ceiling was covered with a veil of fine twisted linen with skilful work of cherubim on it.

The Most Holy Place is always filled with the incense from the incense altar. This place where God descends and dwells is very pleasant. Once in a year in the day of great atonement day, the Israelite priest was allowed to enter into this place.

Vessels

1. The Ark of Testimony

This ark is made of shittim wood and fully covered with pure gold from inside and outside. When the ark is taken out of the camp, Kohathites should bear it by the rings. As per the command of God, three things are kept in this ark.

- a) The stone tablets of commandments given by God
- b) The golden pot in which the Israelites kept the manna
- c) Aaron's rod that bloomed.

This ark too is symbolic to Christ. God asked to keep the stone tablets of commandments as a token of His punishing the Israelite who broke His law immediately upon its receipt. The other two things also represent a judgement - one against murmuring for food and the other for raising voice against the priesthood.

2. The mercy seat

The mercy seat is placed above upon the ark. Its dimension is two and half cubits length and one and half cubits width. It is made of gold. It is the seat of grace. The mercy seat and the ark of covenant were joined together. Two cherubim of gold are made at the two ends of the mercy seat. They stretched forth their wings on high covering the mercy seat and their faces looked one to another towards the mercy seat.

In the Septuagint translation, the word 'propitiatory' has been used meaning atonement, expiation, etc. It teaches us a lesson that the three things which represents the judgement are covered by grace. It also points out the fact that as our punishment has been born by Christ, we have got the grace. God used to commune with Moses from this place. Christ has consecrated for us through the veil that is to say His flesh and made it possible for us enter into the holiest place (Hebrew 10:19-20; Matt 27:51). The ark of covenant and the mercy seat points out that redemption by grace is possible through Jesus Christ. Mercy seat is the place of fellowship with God and those who come closer to seek His grace. The mercy seat above the ark was full of God's presence. Likewise, in Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9). A careful study of the tabernacle of congregation gives us a deep feeling of the great blessing that is poured on whosoever comes closer to the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.

Practical Lessons

Through the study of the tabernacle we can grasp that God is desirous of dwelling in the midst of His people. The Tabernacle of Congregation and its detailed study is the treasure of many spiritual truths. The Tabernacle of Congregation and its vessels reveals many spiritual truths, most of which represents Jesus Christ. Let us experience the greatness of the graceful redemption that we got

through Jesus and be a light to the world which is under the clutches of darkness. It is a matter of great comfort that our Lord Jesus Christ would be with us till the end of this world like the constant presence of God with the Israelites. Let us examine whether Lord Jesus Christ occupies the central place of our life like the tabernacle of congregation, the shadow for Jesus Christ, was dwelling among the Israelites.

Questions

1. Name the main parts of the tabernacle of congregation?
2. Name the vessels of the courtyard?
3. What are the other names for candlestick?
4. What are vessels of the Most Holy Place?
5. What do you about the mercy seat?

CHAPTER 15

The Feasts of Almighty Jehovah

- Reading Portion** : Leviticus – Chapter : 23
- Memory Verse** : Psalms 118:15
- Purpose** : The objective of this lesson is to have a general understanding about various Feasts commanded by the Almighty God Jehovah to the Israelites. It also emphasises as to how these Feasts are significant to the New Testament believers.
- Introduction** : We know that Feasts are joyous occasions. Many festivals are celebrated in our country. Some of them are Onam, Diwali, Holi, etc. Feasts were also being celebrated in the ancient East Asian countries. Feasts could be religious or cultural. However, the Feasts of Israelites were quite different from the Feasts of Gentiles.

Feasts of Israelites

The Feasts of Israelites are called Jehovah's Feasts because these are His statutes (Lev 23:2). Feast is the opportunity fixed by God to get all the people together in the holy fellowship. By celebrating these Feasts, the Israelites not only accept and acknowledge that Lord Jehovah is their provider and keeper but also glorify Him for His loving kindness of choosing and redeeming them as His own people. To celebrate the above feasts, all Israelite men and women were required to gather in Jerusalem (in the first, third and seventh month). According to Lord's commandment, the Israelites who did not

celebrate Feasts were to be cut off from among the people (Num 9:13).

The names of the Feasts and the date on which it is to be celebrated

1. Feast of Lord's Passover	:	First month, 14 th day
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread	:	First month, 15 th – 21 st Day
3. Feast of First Fruits	:	First month, 16 th day
4. Feast of Pentecost	:	Third month, 6 th day
5. Feast of Blowing of Trumpet	:	Seventh month, 1 st day
6. Feast of Atonement	:	Seventh month, 10 th day
7. Feast of Tabernacle	:	Seventh month, 15 th – 22 nd day

The 3 feasts of the first month are called Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The 3 feasts of the seventh month are called Feast of Tabernacle. The feast of Weeks is celebrated after 50 days from Feast of First fruit. Therefore it is named as Feast of Pentecost.

Other two feasts

In addition to the above 7 feasts, later on two other feasts were added for the Israelites. These were Feast of Dedication and Feast of Purim (John 10:22).

a) The Feast of Dedication : Antiochus Epiphanies, the then king of Syria made the Holy Temple unholy by sacrificing a swine. Later on, the Jews with the leadership of Maccabeans cleansed the temple and re-dedicated it. It is in this context they celebrate the 25th day of 8th month every year as Feast of Dedication. This feast started in 164 BC is also known as the Feast of Lights.

b) The Purim : (Esther 9:20-25). Haman, the minister of King Xerxes devised plans against the Jews to consume and destroy them and had cast 'lots' to set a day for it. However, the day that was chosen to destroy them turned victorious and joyful for the Jews. To commemorate this victorious and joyful day, every year, the Jews celebrate the Feast of Purim on the 14th and 15th day of the month Adar. The word Purim is derived from the word 'Pur' meaning 'lot'.

The purpose of Feasts:

1. The Feasts served as a special occasion to recall and remember the various goodness and mercy that Jehovah the Almighty

showered upon the newly formed group of Israelites (Deut – 16:15, 10:11; Isaiah 33:20). It was essential to celebrate feasts in order to sustain the joy in the Lord. This also reminds us to remember the verse “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil – 4:4).

2. It gave an opportunity to repent from sin, to offer sacrifices before the Lord, to seek forgiveness and to reconcile with the Lord (Lev-17:11, Num – 28:22).
3. It is an occasion to bring offerings, tithes, free-willing offerings, etc. before the Lord. God loves the cheerful giver. (2 Cor – 9:6-7).
4. These Feasts helped Israelites from different tribes living in various parts of the world to gather at one place, rejoice, know each other and to share the joy of fellowship. It provided an opportunity to stand together and renew the bond.
5. When the scattered Israelites assemble to celebrate Feasts, the Gentiles would notice their strength and refrain from attacking them. God wants the New Testament believers to live in fellowship and unity.
6. When the Israelites gather for Feasts, they read the Law of God (Word of God) and concentrate on it (Nehemiah – 8:1-12). It is rightly said that “*but his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night* (Psalms – 1:1-2).
7. Since Israelites were chosen by the Almighty Jehovah, He wanted that they should be holy like their God and Lord. Therefore, the Lord gave them the Feasts so that they do not walk in the ordinances of the Gentiles (Lev-19:2; Lev-18:3).

The Hebrew (Israelite) month

Time or dates were fixed for observing feasts. The month in which the Israelites were delivered from Egypt was the First month. Following are the Jewish months.

Months of Jewish Calendar

Relative months in Gregorian Calendar

Abib (Nisan) (Esther 3:7)	:	March-April
Zif (1 King 6:1)	:	April-May
Sivan (Esther 8:9)	:	May-June
Tammuz (Ezek 8:14)	:	June-July

Ob (Ezra 7:9)	:	July-August
Elun (Nehemiah 6:15)	:	August-September
Ethanim (1 King 8:2)	:	September-October
Bul (1 King 6:38)	:	October-November
Chisleu (Nehemiah 1:1)	:	November-December
Tebeth (Esther 2:16)	:	December-January
Shebat (Zech 1:7)	:	January-February
Adar (Esther 8:11)	:	February-March

Israelites use 2 calendars. One for religious and the other for political purpose. The political calendar starts with the month Tishri (October) and the religious year starts with Nisan.

Practical Lessons

The fruit of the Spirit plays significant role in Christian life. It is very important to be joyful in the presence of God. We have already learnt about God's purpose of commanding the feasts. Thus, we should be the holy people, giving thanks at all times, to rejoice in the Law of the Lord always and to be in the holy fellowship at all times.

Questions

1. In which part of the Bible, is it authoritatively written about the feasts?
2. Name the Feasts of Israelites.
3. Write the dates when Israelites were supposed to celebrate the feasts?
4. Explain the objectives of celebrating feasts.
5. Name the Jewish months in its correct sequence.

CHAPTER 16

The Feasts of Jehovah (Contd...)

Reading Portion : Exodus – Chapter : 12; Deut 16:1-8.

Memory Verse : 1 Cor 5:7-8

Purpose : To understand the background as to why and how the Feast of Passover was celebrated by Israelites and also how the New Testament believers will get redemption, remission and deliverance from bondage of sin through the death and resurrection of the Passover Lamb Jesus Christ.

Introduction : In the previous lesson we learnt about various Feasts of the Lord, the month in which it is observed and its purpose. Today we will learn about some of them in detail.

Feast of Passover

Beginning : Passover means “to pass through” or “leave aside” (Exodus 12:23). Passover is the most important feast among 3 yearly feasts of Israelites. It has religious as well as historical significance. The Lord appointed Moses to deliver Israelites from the bondage in Egypt. Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go to the wilderness to a distance of 3 days journey to hold a feast (worship) unto the Lord. But Pharaoh did not agree to it. We have already learnt about the 10 plagues. The first Passover was ordained by the Lord so that the Israelites could be saved from the 10th plague and also for their deliverance from Egypt.

While all the first born of the Egyptians were smitten including the first born of King Pharaoh, only the Israelite houses that held Passover and had a sign of the blood of Lamb on the lintel were not touched by the Lord. That very night, the Egyptians persuaded the Israelites to leave the country. They were a large number of people comprising of about 6 lac men and their women and children. In order to commemorate this Passover, Israelites celebrate the Feast of Passover on the 14th day of the first month every year (Lev 23:5). Even during Lord Jesus' life in this world, this feast was celebrated (John 2:13-25, 6:4, 13:1). We see in New Testament that Jesus Christ was crucified during the period of the Passover feast.

The method for celebrating Passover Feast

A one year old lamb (sheep or a goat) was to be killed in the evening on the 14th day of the first month. Its blood was to be struck on the lintel and both the side posts of the door. The flesh of the lamb roasted with fire was to be eaten along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It had to be eaten with loins girded, with shoes on the feet, staff in the hand and to be eaten it in haste. This was the process of the first Passover.

The Passover in the later period

Till the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, this was a feast of pilgrimage. Lakhs of pilgrims used to come to Jerusalem for this feast. As per the ritual, the lamb is killed in the temple; its blood is sprinkled on the altar. One lamb is taken for 10 people. The sacrifice would start around 3' O clock in the afternoon. Hymns would be sung at this time. All the people wear white clothes. The flesh of the sacrificed lamb would be taken home, roasted and eaten with bitter herbs and a sauce made of lentils and fruits. When the new generations would ask about the difference of the day with the other days, the elders would explain in detail about the events of the original Passover. This was the procedure of observing the Passover in the early days.

Meaning of the Passover

The Passover lamb represents Jesus Christ. His blood saves us from the punishment of sin. Jesus Christ, who was burnt in the wrath of God, was without blemish. Leaven resembles uncleanness and sin. We should be careful to be holy in our life and doctrine. We should always be ready for preaching the word of God and for the

second coming of Jesus. Passover cannot be eaten by gentiles. Thus, only the redeemed children of God can have fellowship with God.

2. The feast of unleavened bread

After the Passover, it is the feast of unleavened bread. This is observed from 15th day of Abib month and continues till 21st day of the month. During 7 days of the feast, unleavened bread had to be eaten. Burnt offerings had to be done for Jehovah every day. There has to be holy convocation for the God Jehovah on the first and 7th day. On these days no normal work can be done.

The spiritual lessons

1. In the Scripts, leaven represents sin and wickedness. Seven symbolizes fullness (Hebrew 12:14; 1 Cor 5:7-8).
2. Leaven indicates to false doctrine (Matt 16:5-12).
3. It also points out hypocrisy (John 12:1).
4. Burnt offering to be done continually.

In brief, the redeemed children of God should leave sin, false doctrine, and hypocrisy and deny the old man and lead a separated life. Moreover, it also teaches us that they have to continually submit themselves as sacrifice. This feast is also a resemblance to the holiness of Christ.

3. The Feast of First fruit (Lev 23:9-14)

The feast of first fruit falls on the first Sunday (the next day of Sabbath) after the Passover. On this feast, the Israelites bring the sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest to the priest. The priest shall wave it before the Lord (by lifting his hands and wiping towards all the four directions). Then a lamb of one year is to be sacrificed as burnt offering along with meat offering of two tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil and fourth part of a *hin* of wine as drink offering.

The spiritual meaning

This feast represent the resurrection of Jesus (1Cor 15:23). The priest waving the first fruit in the temple is a shadow of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the first fruit from the dead. The greatness of the way of Christianity is that our Lord is resurrected and still living. The one who is redeemed not only unites with the death of Christ but also unite with His resurrection.

The waving of the first fruit reminds us about the sheaf which are yet to be harvested. The resurrection of Jesus gives us the assurances of our resurrection. We also read that the first fruit is Jesus and thereafter His people would be resurrected at His second coming (1 Cor 15:52-58; 1 Thes 4:14-17; Rom 8:11).

The Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21, 1Cor 12:13; Acts 2)

Other names

The Feast of Pentecost was celebrated on the next day after 7th Sabbath from the feast of first fruit for a wave offering of sheaf. It is also called the feast of harvest or the feast of weeks. As it falls on the 50th day after the feast of first fruit (for wave offering of sheaf) it is also known as the feast of Pentecost which means fifty. As it falls after the harvesting, it is also called the feast of harvest. (Exo 23:16). As it is the day of bringing first fruits from the tree, this is also known as feast of first fruits (Num 28:26).

Method of celebration

This feast lasts for one day. On this day, new meat offering has to be sacrificed. This offering comprises of two loaves made of two tenths deals of freshly ground flour. Besides these offerings, burnt offering, meat offering, sin offering and other freewill offering, etc. are to be sacrificed before the Lord. There would be holy convocation. No routine work is done on this day.

Its Fulfilment

The feast of the first fruits indicates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Feast of Pentecost occurs on the 50th day after this feast. On the 10th after Jesus' ascension to heaven which was the Pentecost day, the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples who were tarrying (Acts 2:2-4). Everyone was filled with Holy Spirit and started speaking in diverse tongues. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel (Joel 2:28-29).

While other offerings prohibit sacrifice of leavened things, the Pentecost offerings permits baking of 2 leaven loaves. By sin the Jews and the gentile have become leavened but with the righteousness bestowed through faith in Jesus Christ, both have found acceptance as children of God. The 2 loaves represents them both.

Practical Lessons

Are we filled with Holy Spirit?

Do we have an inspiration and dedication to live holy? What is our hope?

Questions

1. Write the method of observing the Passover feast.
2. How was the Passover observed in the early period?
3. What are the spiritual lessons learnt through the feast of unleavened loaves?
4. How is the feast of Pentecost fulfilled in the New Testament?
5. What is the spiritual meaning of the feast of the first fruits?

CHAPTER 17

The Feasts of Jehovah (Contd....)

Reading Portion : Leviticus 23:23-44; Deut 16:13-16

Memory Verse : 1 Thess. 4 : 16-17

Purpose : To know that Feasts are associated with history and at the same time it relates to the events that will happen in the future. It also enables the believer to understand that the truths of the prophecy inspires us to lead a life full of hope.

Introduction : Out of the three feasts of first month, the Passover represents Christ's death; Unleavened Bread represents His flawlessness and the feast of the First Fruits indicates His resurrection. Feast of the Pentecost is the feast of third month indicates to pouring of Holy Spirit. In this lesson we will study the feasts of the seventh month.

The Feast of Trumpet (Lev 23:23-25, Numbers 10:1-10)

Time of celebration and objective

The feast of the Trumpet occurs 4 months after the feast of Pentecost. It is to be celebrated on the first day of the seventh month. In the journey through the wilderness, trumpet was blown to assemble the congregation and blowing with loud sound was to resume the journey.

Meaning and its fulfilment

The feast of the Trumpet is in memorial of the union of Jews. After the pouring of Holy Spirit during Pentecost, next important event

is the second coming of Jesus Christ. The period between Pentecost and second coming is the dispensation of grace or the dispensation of the Church. This is the time for addition of individuals to Church. It is the period of harvesting souls. Then the trumpet will be blown. At that time the saints who died in Christ will resurrect and then the living saints will transform and both of them together will ascend to the middle of heaven to receive Christ. By this time, the Jews scattered in the world will return to their homeland. The union of Jews is to be completed by the coming of Jesus in great glory.

The Feast of Atonement (Levi 16; 23:26-32)

Time of observance : This feast is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month. For Israelites, the Day of Atonement is the day of afflicting of souls. They cleanse themselves and later the High priest propitiates for them.

The service of the chief priest

On this day, the High Priest of Israel removes the holy garments and puts on a linen cloth. Then he makes atonement for himself and his family by offering two oxen as sin offering. Thereafter two male goats are brought to the tabernacle for sacrifice as atonement for the sins of Israel.

A lot is cast to choose one goat for Jehovah as a sacrificial goat. The other is chosen as a scapegoat. The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell is offered as sin sacrifice. The High Priest takes some blood of the goat and enters the Most Holy Place and sprinkles on the mercy seat and in front of it. Then the High Priest places his hands on the head of scapegoat and puts all the sins of Israel on it and releases it in to the wilderness. Thereafter the High Priest washes his body with water, wears his own clothes and comes out of the Most Holy Place. He then offers burnt offering for himself and for all the Israelites.

Spiritual meaning

As detailed in Hebrew Chapter 9, Christ presented himself with his own blood before the throne of the Holy Father and made the atonement and deliverance of all mankind possible forever. The goat which was offered as sacrifice resembles Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross and the goat which was released in the wilderness stands for the Christ who resurrected after victory over death and is living today for us.

Like the high priest removes his glorious holy garments and wears the linen garments, Jesus Christ denied his heavenly glory and came

to this world. After completing his mission in the world, he is now gloriously living for us beside the heavenly Father.

The Feast of Atonement also indicates another truth about the Israelites. After their union they will look towards the Christ whom they had pierced (Zech 12:10). They will also repent of their sin. Their iniquities will be forgiven and they will be accepted by the Lord.

Feast of the Tabernacle (Lev 23:23-34; Deu 16:13-15)

The name and time of observance

The Hebrews call this feast as Great Feast or the Succoth. This is the last feast that was commanded through Moses. It begins on the 15th day of the seventh month of Nissi (Ethanim) and lasts for 7 days. This is also called the feast of first fruit (Exo 23:14-17).

Method of celebration

Holy rest (Sabbath) is observed on the first and 8th day of the feast of Tabernacle. They carry branches and leaves, etc. of beautiful trees and rejoice in the presence of the Lord during these 7 days. They stay in tents for 7 days. This is to commemorate that they had stayed in booths before they entered in to Canaan. This feast reminds them about the fatherly care and protection they received from Jehovah. This feast helps in the deliverance of Israelites from pride and reliance on self.

Those who stay in tents also offer sacrifices. In the earlier times many new rituals were incorporated in the feast of tabernacle. To have a procession around the altar, to do this 7 times on the 7th day, saying hymns, on the last day the high priest escorted by priests goes to the Siloam pond and fetches water in golden pot and fills it in the brass laver, etc. During the feast of tabernacle all the priest served according to lots. (The priests were divided in to 24 groups and each group was numbered in lots).

Spiritual meaning

1. They dwelled in the wilderness for 40 years. This feast reminds them about the truth that the blessings they possess now are God's mercy.
2. The dwelling in this world is not eternal. We are all booth dwellers. Our body i.e. the earthly house will be dissolved. We have to surely leave all that we feel belongs to us.
3. The Church of God will rejoice as His bride. "The tabernacle of Lord is with men". God Himself shall be with them and be their God. We will delight in this joy in eternity.

Practical Lessons

All these feasts were to renew the relationship with God and to continue as holy people. Only the saints will be taken along with the Lord in His second coming. Are we ready for the same? What all arrangements are being made for it?

Questions

1. Which are the feasts celebrated in the 7th month. Mention their dates.
2. Which future event does the feast of Trumpet foreshadows?
3. Describe the service of the feast of Atonement.
4. What are the other names of the feast of Tabernacle?
5. What is the message that this lesson gives to the New Testament Church?

*End Notes : * 'Scapegoat' has many interpretations. Some opine that it is for the head of the demons. But a Rabbi named Rashi said that it is a special place in the wilderness to where the goat is sent. It represents to the fact that the sins of the people are thrown from the populated place to inhabited place. This assumes to be more correct for it is written that 'I will not give my glory to anyone else'.*

*** This name has come because Israelites first encamped at Succoth.*

CHAPTER 18

The spying of Canaan

- Reading Portion** : Numbers 13:1-14: 45
- Memory Verse** : Hebrews 11:1,2
- Purpose** : To know that God is faithful in his promises and we should receive it by faith.
- Introduction** : The Israelites received the commandments and statutes and also instructions about the tabernacle of congregation at Mount Sinai. Most of the statutes and directions given by God was not suitable while dwelling in the wilderness but were appropriate to practice after reaching Canaan. God's plan for Israelites was to reach in Canaan. In order to achieve this, they were sent to Canaan to spy the land. Today we will learn about the same.

Background

Canaan was God's Promised Land to Israelites. They were delivered from Egypt's bondage to reach Canaan - the land of milk and honey. While on the journey to Canaan and being encamped in the wilderness of Paraan and Kadesh, the anointed Moses got commandment from God to send certain people to search out or spy the land. Accordingly Moses made arrangements for the same.

The selection of the rulers and its objective

Each tribe had to send one of their heads and rulers to search the land of Canaan. Their names were : Shammua the son of Zaccur of the tribe of Reuben, Shaphat the son of Hori of the tribe of Simeon,

Caleb the son of Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah, Igal the son of Joseph of the tribe of Issachar, Oshea the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim, Palti the son of Raphu of the tribe of Benjamin, Gaddiel the son of Sodi of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddi the son of Susi, of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, of Ammiel the son of Gemalli the tribe of Dan, Sethur the son of Michael of the tribe of Asher, Nahbi the son of Vophsi of the tribe of Naphtali, Geuel the son of Machi of the tribe of Gad. Moses sent these 12 rulers to spy the land of Canaan. Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

The search of the land

As per the order of God, they went to spy the land. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, which lies to west of the Hermon. They came up to Hebron. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. Zoan was built as a capital by the kings who reigned in Egypt during the period of BC 1720-1550. They ascended through the land of Anak (also called the children of Neck). They were giants and men of great stature (Num 13:33, Deut 1:28).

They came unto the brook of Eshcol (also called the brook of clusters) and cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff. They also brought pomegranates and the figs.

The report of the rulers and the reaction of people

The people who had gone to spy out the land returned. They explained before Moses and the people who were anxiously waiting for the news. We can see two types of reports here. 10 people told a discouraging report whereas the other two exchanged hope. The ten rulers told the congregation that the people dwelling in Canaan are giants and their cities are strong. The Anaks, Amaleks and other gentiles are staying there. It is difficult to possess the land and they felt like grasshoppers before them. This made the people mentally weary and dejected and wished to return to Egypt (Ex 1:10-12; 16 & 17 chapters). God had prohibited them of returning to Egypt (Deu 17:16) which they forgot and wanted to choose a leader and wanted to go back.

But Caleb and Jehoshua stilled the people and the other rulers. They rebuked the opinion of the rulers. They encouraged the people and told them that the land can be possessed. They reminded them of the great things that God had done in the past. They pointed out the

promise of God. As they found God greater than the problem, God was pleased with them.

God talked to Moses. When God told him how long can He bear these disbelieving people; how He is going to destroy them and He will make Moses a great nation, Moses did not agree with it and interceded for the Israelites against the death and destruction. We see Moses here as a spiritually burdened leader.

Moses prayed to God to forgive them and help them reach Canaan. It is because Moses did not want to defame the name of the God as the gentiles around them would say that because the Lord was not able to bring His people in to the land of Canaan which he swore to them and therefore he has destroyed the people in the wilderness.

Out of the total people who started their journey from Egypt and who were above 20 years, only Caleb and Jehoshua reached Canaan. The rest of the people could not enter Canaan because of constant murmuring against God and disbelieving Him. They all met their end in the wilderness.

Practical Lessons

God is faithful in His promises. He swore to them that He would make the Israelites inherit the land of milk and honey. However, instead of believing God, they disbelieved God when adverse situations came upon. Therefore they could not enter the Canaan. Let us be rich in trust and submit ourselves like Caleb and Jehoshua who did not disbelieve God's promises in adverse situations encouraged people. Let us understand that murmuring and distrust in God is a hindrance to God's work. Let us fully trust and have faith in God and march ahead.

Questions

1. Who all were sent to spy out the land of Canaan?
2. What report did they give after returning from Canaan?
3. What was the reaction of the people?
4. What was the reaction of Caleb and Jehoshua?

CHAPTER 19

The leadership of Joshua

- Reading Portion** : Deuteronomy Chapters 32 to 34; Joshua Chapters 1 to 4.
- Memory Verse** : Joshua 1:5
- Purpose** : To know that God will never abandon His people as orphan but will arrange for a suitable leadership at the right time and will guide them to their destinations.
- Introduction** : Today we will study about the death of Moses who led the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years and about Joshua taking over the leadership thereafter.

The death of Moses

The life of Moses was full of multifarious events. He was the most powerful leader known in the world history. He possessed all leadership qualities and he led the Israelites for 40 years.

When Israelites reached Kadesh, there was shortage of water. People chided with Moses and Aaron (Num 20:2-3). Due to the chiding and criticism of people, Moses fell down before the Lord and cried. God said to him to gather the people and command the rock in front of them and it will give water (Num 20:7). Moses and Aaron assembled the people and said :hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? Moses smote the rock twice (Num 20:11-13). The water came out abundantly. God had told them to command the rock. But instead of obeying this, they smote the rock and therefore God told them that they would not enter the promised land of Canaan.

As they did not sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel, God warned them that they would die. God also made the reason very clear (Num 27:12-14). We read in Psalms 106:32 that due to the rebellious people it went ill with Moses.

As per God's plan, Aaron died at the mount of Hor (Num 20:28). When Moses felt that his end is nearing, he prayed to God to appoint a leader for the people so that they are not without a shepherd. God commanded him to lay hands on Joshua, the son of Nun and bring him before Eleazar, the priest and the entire congregation and to give charge in their sight (Num 27:15-19).

According to God's, Moses was taken to Pisgah on the mount of Nebo in the plains of Moab and viewed the land of Canaan and died there. Moses who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God than the pleasures of Egypt was given a good burial by God Himself (Deut 34:6).

The background of Joshua

After the death of Moses, Joshua took over the leadership. The name Joshua means Jehovah is the redeemer (Jehovah is the Saviour). Joshua was known as the helper of Moses. We see Joshua for the first time in relation to the war with Amelek (Exo 17:8). Joshua won that war (Exo 17:13). When Moses went to Mount Sinai for receiving the commandments, Joshua was also with him (Exo 24:13; 32:17). When Moses returned to the camp, Joshua did not leave the tabernacle (Exo 33:11). Joshua was also part of the team that went to spying the land of Canaan. We have already studied in the last lesson about the trust of Caleb and Joshua in God's promises and how they encouraged the people. Therefore only they entered into Canaan (Num 26:65).

The leadership of Joshua

Joshua, who was chosen as the leader as per the will of God before the entire congregation, took over the responsibility and the people also obeyed him (Num 27:18-23; Deut 1:38; 3:28; Deut 34:9; Josh 1:9). The people moved ahead from Shittim under the leadership of Joshua. Thereafter, those who were born after leaving Egypt were circumcised (Joshua 5:7).

Subsequent to this, in Joshua's life, we see the events of wars and possessing the land. They conquered Jericho (Josh 6). During the war with Amorites, Joshua sought the Lord to still the sun and the moon in order to win over them. This hall of fame is also inherited by Joshua (Josh 10:12-14). Joshua defeated 31 powerful kings and

conquered 6 lands in 6 years. Joshua conquered the lands from Mount Seir in the south to mount Hermon in the north.

According to the commandment of God, Joshua divided the land of Canaan to the Israelites (Josh 18:1-10). He separated six special cities of refuge. The old Joshua gathered Israelites in Shechem and told the words of God to them. He was 110 years old when he died (Josh 24:29).

As a leader, Joshua encountered many problems. He was a contended leader. As he obeyed God's commandments without turning to the right or left.

He led the people with strength and courage even in adverse situations. He lifted his eyes towards God when he had to take decisions. The secret of his success was the assurance of God's continuous presence. At the end of his life he stated his testimony boldly saying "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15).

Practical Lessons

We must follow the leadership qualities of leaders like Moses and Joshua who have demonstrated unmatched personalities in the history of Israel. A simple disobedience in the life of Moses denied him entry to the Promised Land of Canaan. Knowing this, Joshua was fully diligent in obeying God in everything. The complete obedience will lead us to blessing and success.

Questions

1. What is the reason that denied Moses entry into Canaan?
2. What are the leadership qualities of Moses?
3. What are the leadership qualities of Joshua?
4. How was the end of Moses?
5. How old was Joshua when he died?

CHAPTER 20

The calling and selection of Paul

- Reading Portion** : Acts 9:1-18; 21:39 to 22:21; 26:4-23; Gal 1:11-24; Phil 3:4-7.
- Memory Verse** : Acts 9:15
- Purpose** : God has a special purpose for each of His child. For this He calls His servants personally. This lesson is to know as to how Paul reacted to such a call.
- Introduction** : God's calling is different. He uses the abilities, education, talents, circumstances, dedication, etc. of the one who submits to His will for His work. Paul who was very zealous in Jewish religion was totally hostile to Christianity. Today we will study how Paul who was determined to totally destroy Christianity but became the disciple and the messenger of Christianity.

Background of Paul

Paul's native is Tarsus, the famous capital city of Cilicia Province falling in the Asia Minor. He was proficient in Greek and Hebrew languages. He practiced the Law under Gamaliel, the renowned Jewish teacher in Jerusalem. Paul might have learnt the rules, administration, etc. of the Roman government. It is revealed in his epistles. An example for this is that when the soldiers were planning to scourge and interrogate him, he warned them saying he is a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25).

The way to many commercial centres passed through Tarsus. In view of a famous university situated there, Tarsus was also known as a prestigious knowledge city. Tarsus was the freeland for the Stoicism and Greek civilisation. The main occupation in this city was construction.

The background of Paul and the trainings he got were a great help later during his missionary work.

The journey to Damascus

The details in the book of Acts of the Apostles about the repentance of Paul are a very important part of the New Testament. This incident bears witness that Christ's gospel that saves mankind is God's power. The clothes of those who stoned Stephen were kept by a young man Saul (Paul) (Acts 7:58). Therefore, it is clear that Saul was an eye witness to the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen's peaceful conscience and the last prayer even during the time of his painful death might have deeply touched Paul's heart.

With the death of Stephen - first martyr of the New Testament church, the persecution against the church increased. Therefore, the early church scattered to many other regions outside Jerusalem. Wherever they went, new churches emerged due to their testimony. Thus followers of Christ surfaced in Damascus also, one of the important cities of Syria in those days. Knowing this fact, Paul madly in rage, immediately took letters of authority from the High Priest and went to Damascus to slaughter or completely destroy the disciples of the Lord. When the believers of Damascus came to know of this, they continued in their prayers for the repentance of Paul. The prayer of God's children can move Him. The vision that was seen by Paul teaches us that prayer of God's people has the power to melt anybody's hardened heart.

The calling and selection of Paul

When Paul and his team were approaching Damascus suddenly there shined round about him a powerful light. They fell down. Due to the glory of the light, Paul lost his vision. He heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me"? The people who were with him could hear some noise. Only Paul, the chosen one, could recognise the voice of the person talking to him directly. Lying there astonished, he asked "Who are you, Lord"? The answer was quite enough to change the target of his life, thought process and beliefs. "I am Jesus whom you persecute". This answer was a

heavy punch to Paul who was moving ahead thinking that whatever he was doing with the zeal and devotion towards the Jewish religion is according to the will of God. When he heard from heaven that persecuting the disciples of Jesus is similar to persecuting Jesus himself, his inner eyes were opened. He received Jesus, the Nazerite with whom he was hostile, as his Lord and Saviour. His life was fully dedicated. It is worthy to note the reaction of Paul after he clearly recognised God's calling "Lord, what will you have me to do"? He was asked to go to Damascus.

His companions led Paul, who lost his vision, by hand to Damascus. He stayed there 3 days without sight and neither did eat nor drink. Thereafter, when Ananias, a disciple from Damascus deputed by the Lord prayed, Paul got the vision back. Then he took baptism, received power and straightaway started witnessing Jesus in Damascus. The divine calling and selection of Paul was one of the most important events in the history of God's Church.

Practical Lessons

Our future depends on our reaction to God's calling. God's calling is individual. If we submit ourselves completely before God, He will use us in the fulfilment of the mission as done in case of Paul.

Questions

1. How did the life and testimony of Stephen influence Paul's repentance?
2. How did the background of the birth and growth of Paul help him in his future mission?
3. Write a short note on the calling and selection of Paul?
4. How was the reaction of Paul to God's calling?

CHAPTER 21

The First Missionary Journey of Paul (AD 48-49)

Reading Portion : Acts Chapters 13 and 14

Memory Verse : Acts 1:8

Purpose : To grasp that by studying the missionary journey of Paul who was appointed by God, each of us has to understand that we are also called to be His messengers.

Introduction : God chose Paul mainly to spread the gospel to the gentiles. In order to do so among those who did not know about Christianity, Paul made three missionary journeys according to the Will of the Holy Spirit. Let us study about the first missionary journey today.

We get the details of God's calling of Paul, his selection for the mission and subsequent mission journey from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. While Paul and Barnabas were staying in Antioch in Syria and doing the work of the Lord, the Holy Spirit commanded the Church in Antioch to separate Barnabas and Paul for the work for which they have been called by the Lord. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Accordingly, the church fasted and prayed and laid hands on them and sent them away. Thus Paul and Barnabas started their first mission journey (Act 13:2-4). Mark also accompanied them as their helper in this journey (Acts 13:5).

The missionary journeys – targets and results

We can see the details of the fruitful and powerful mission journey of Paul in the chapters from 13 to 28 in the books of Acts. These journeys not only helped to spread Christianity over to distant places but also formed new churches there which were otherwise confined to Jerusalem and surrounding areas only. Paul could carry the torch of gospel from Jerusalem to the mega city of Rome through these journeys. He could use the favourable and unfavourable situations as medium for evangelism which further motivated the journey. The market place, synagogues, places of idolatry, etc. were his workplace. People of different strata like the illiterates, philosophers, sorcerers, rulers, etc. could listen to the gospel. To strengthen those who believed in gospel was also one of the purposes of these journeys. The journeys helped mainly to evangelise continents like Asia, Europe, etc. These journeys could further help all to receive the gospel messages breaking the barriers of caste, creed, colour, class, language or region. Moreover, most of the epistles were written during these journeys.

The place visited during the first missionary journey

1. Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

They sailed some 80 miles from the fort city of Seleucia in Antioch and reached the island of Cyprus, the birth place of Barnabas and dwelled there first. As Barnabas was a native of this place, his knowledge about Cyprus could have influenced the work in this place. The work in this place also covers places like Salamis, Paphos, etc.

Salamis was a big fort city located at the east end of Cyprus. Lot of people were settled in this city for trade. Most of them were Jews. They had a Synagogue there. Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in this Synagogue. Further details of the work in this place are not available.

From Salamis, they reached Paphos, another city in Cyprus. Here also lots of Jews and Jewish followers were settled like in Salamis. During his mission work, Paul had to face a problem here which may be read in Acts 13:6-12.

We see that the Roman name 'Paul' has been used for the first time in Paphos. Thereafter Saul has been known as the apostle of the gentiles. Moreover, from this phase, Paul was known as the leader of evangelism (Acts 13).

Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country has been recorded as the first person saved through Paul's work. This has enabled to spread the gospel more in that place.

2. Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13)

Paul and Barnabas along with John also called as Mark started sailing through ship from Paphos and reached Perga in Pamphylia which is situated at some 170 miles to northwest side. In those days, Pamphylia was a Roman state of which Perga was the capital city. John who was also known as Mark left them in Perga and returned to Jerusalem. He might have left them and returned to Jerusalem due to the difficulties of travelling and also the adversaries in evangelism.

3. Antioch in Psidia (Acts 13:14-52)

From Perga, Paul and Barnabas reached in Antioch of Psidia. This is not the same Antioch of Syria. Antioch the capital city of Psidia which was a Roman state was a renowned trade centre too. The Romans and Jews were the main dwellers in this city.

Here also, Paul preached the gospel as usual (Acts 13:13-44). They listened to the preaching of Paul and Barnabas and majority of them were attracted to it. They requested them to come and preach on the next Sabbath. Those who believed in the words followed Paul and Barnabas.

A great multitude gathered there on the next Sabbath. Angered with this, the Jews stirred up the crowd and expelled them out of their court. By the time a strong church was already formed there.

4. Iconium (Act.14:1-7)

Here too Paul and Barnabas went to their synagogues and preached them the word to the Jews and Greek present there. A great multitude believed them and was saved. The unbelieving Jews stirred up the people here also and created a brawl and made the situation difficult. But the missionaries relied on the grace of God and continued their work by staying there for a long time.

5. Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)

During the time of preaching the word in Lystra, Paul healed a man who was a cripple from his mother's womb. Those who witnessed this event lifted up their voices saying that gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter temple, which was in front of their city tried to sacrifice along with the people before Paul and Barnabas. With great effort Paul and Barnabas prevented them from it.

However, certain Jews from Anitoch and Iconium persuaded the people to stone Paul. Supposing him dead, the people dragged him out of the city. The next day he rose up and went to the city in front of all and went to Derba along with Barnabas.

6. Derba (Acts 14:20-21)

Here also he preached, taught and made many disciples. Thereafter he returned to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, etc., confirmed and strengthened the believers. They ordained them elders in every church, and prayed for them with fasting. Then they sailed back to Syria and detailed the brethren about work which they fulfilled and together they glorified the God.

Practical Lessons

This mission journey helped a lot in the growth of the first church. God has called us also to witness Him. Let us dedicate ourselves to share the gospel in the schools and the surrounding places.

Questions

1. Mark on the map the important places visited in the first missionary journey.
2. Which are the places that were visited by Paul in his first mission journey?
3. What was the main target of Paul's first missionary journey?
4. How did the missionary journey help the growth of first church?
5. What was the reason of Mark's return to Jerusalem?
6. How can we make the missionary journey of Paul as an example to churches?

CHAPTER 22

The Second Missionary Journey of Paul (A.D 50-53)

- Reading Portion** : Acts Chapters 15 and 16
- Memory Verse** : Acts.16:31.
- Purpose** : To grasp the greatness of the attitude of Paul who was fully devoted to the Lord's work restlessly even in the midst of tribulations and persecution.
- Introduction** : Paul started his second missionary journey after the Church Council meetings in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-34). The second missionary journey enabled Paul to preach the word in Europe. He wrote some of the epistles during these times.

The significance and speciality of the second missionary journey (AD 50-53)

The main purpose of the missionaries in their second journey was to visit the churches planted in Cyprus and Galatia during the first journey (Acts 15:35). They also had the mission to convey to these churches the decisions of the Jerusalem council (Acts 16:4).

Barnabas, who accompanied Paul in the first missionary journey did not go with him in the second journey (Acts 15:35-38). They had sharp contention between them whether to take John, whose surname was Mark, who left in the middle of the first journey, along with them. Barnabas wanted to take along Mark who was his sister's son (Col 4:10) but Paul did not think it right to take him as he had left earlier from Pamphylia. For this reason, Paul and Barnabas separated. By taking Mark for the work, Barnabas motivated and supported one

person. Paul gave significance to the work and chose Silas along with him and went through Syria, Cilicia confirming the churches. In this case, we must analyse whether the strong view of Paul or the leniency of Barnabas to support others in the work is better. When the disciples were reluctant to accept Paul as the disciple of Christ, it was Barnabas who took him to the apostles and supported his work.

Timothy becomes fellow traveller

Paul met Timothy in Lystra (Acts 16:1-2). He was one of the persons who repented during Paul's first missionary journey. Paul chose Timothy as his fellow traveller as he held a good testimony in his native place and showed keen interest in evangelism. Though his father was a Greek yet his mother and grandmother were devout Jewish women. Paul circumcised Timothy. The reason could be that non circumcision must have come in the way of evangelism. We see that Timothy has been the close companion in Paul's further journeys.

The calling from Macedonia (Acts.16:9-10)

After visiting Galatian churches, Paul wanted to go to places west to Mysia. But the Spirit suffered them not to preach the word there. Therefore they travelled 900 miles by road to Troas, a historically important city situated on the north west of Asian continent. When Paul was tarrying for God's will, a vision appeared to him in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and spoke to him saying "Come over into Macedonia, and help us". Paul understood God's will and started towards Europe. At this juncture, Luke joined Paul for the first time. See the usage of the word 'we' here (Acts 16:11).

The Evangelism in Philippi

Philippi was a part of Macedonia. It was named after the father of Alexander the Great. As there were few Jews in the city, there was no synagogue and they used to gather on a river side out of the city on every Sabbath day to worship.

The repentance of Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)

While Paul was speaking to the gatherings at the river side, a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard him. The Lord opened her heart. She and her household accepted the Word and baptized. Thus Lydia became the first Christian in Europe. A fellowship started in the house of Lydia. This church may be the first one in Europe.

The spirit of divination in the damsel is cured (Acts 16:16-18)

While Paul and companion missionaries were going for worship, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying met them. The same followed Paul and others and cried saying, "these men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation". Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her". And he came out the same hour. Seeing that their gain is gone, her masters led a confrontation against Paul and Silas. The crowd caught Paul and Silas and drew to the magistrates in to the market place. They put the allegation on them saying these men being Jews cause trouble in the city and teach customs which are not lawful for the Romans to receive or observe. The magistrates, without any investigation ordered them to be beaten cast into the prison.

The repentance of the jailor (Acts 16:23-34)

As per order of the magistrates they were striped and cast in to prison. Their feet were fastened into the stocks. In spite of being tired of the stripes and unable to move the feet due to fastening into stocks, they sang and praised the Lord in the midnight. The prisoners were listening to this unusual thing. Suddenly there was great earthquake. The foundations of the prison were shaken. All the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. But none of the prisoners moved from their place. Supposing that all the prisoners had been fled, the keeper of the prison tried to kill himself. But Paul cried with a loud voice saying, "do thyself no harm: for we are all here". The jail keeper, trembling with this unusual event, fell down before Paul and Silas. Paul spoke to him the Word of God in the very same hour of the night. The Jail keeper (Superintendent) was saved. Thereafter he and his family took baptism. He brought them into his house, set food for them, and the entire house rejoiced for believing in God.

When the sergeants heard about these unusual happenings, they hurried to let the missionaries go in the early morning itself. But Paul brought to their notice the advantages of Roman citizenship. The sergeants requested them to depart. They then went to the house of Lidia and comforted the brethren and departed the city. Timothy stayed back in Phillipi and taught and strengthened the church formed there. This church concentrated a lot in evangelism and shown fellowship with Paul financially.

Practical Lessons

Let us follow the dedication and enthusiasm (thishnatha) of Paul in fulfilment of the mission according to the will and control of God.

Questions

1. Explain the significance and specialities of the second missionary journey.
2. What were the causes that made the Phillip church to grow?
3. What were the reasons for the adversaries faced by Paul in Philippi?
4. What was the reason for the separation of Paul and Barnabas?
5. The missionary journey of Paul and his companions were fully under the guidance of Holy Spirit. Explain.

CHAPTER 23

The Second Missionary Journey of Paul (Contd..)

Reading Portion : Acts Chapters 17 and 18

Memory Verse : Acts 17:30

Purpose : God desires to save all men and that they live with Him. Therefore He sent His servant Paul into the midst of the gentiles who were idolaters, worldly wise and disputers for the fulfilment of His objectives.

Introduction : We have learnt about some of the places Paul visited during his second mission journey. Now we will learn about his further journeys and works.

Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

The second place the missionaries reached in Macedonia was Thessalonica. This city is situated 100 miles away from Philippi and was the capital of Macedonia. This city is named after the sister of Alexander the great. There was a Jewish synagogue here. Paul preached there for three Sabbaths. Many people believed Christ and consorted with Paul. But certain Jews filled with envy made uproar in the city. Jason and some other brethren were arrested and taken to the rulers of the city but later released on security. The brethren of Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas to Berea. The Epistle to Thessalonians I and II are written to this church.

Berea

Here also there was a synagogue. The Bereans received the word preached by Paul with all readiness of mind and searched the

Scriptures daily whether those things were so. The church of Berea is fit for an example for us. Here, certain Jews, gentiles and honourable women received the word. But certain other Jews came and tried to stir up the people. Then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to Athens. Silas and Timothy still abode in Berea.

Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

Athens is located at the south of Macedonia and around 250 miles away from Berea. This was the knowledge city for the Greeks. Athens was famous for its wise men, those who spoke proverbs and philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, etc. People used to gather on the ground on the top of the Areopagus mount for conventions. In such conventions, the epicureans and stoics used to teach the people about their philosophy.

Paul who reached Athens alone took a round of the city. The city was full of idols. Seeing this, Paul's heart burned with grief. He debated with the philosophers like epicureans and stoics daily about the gospel. Here, personal evangelism might have played a greater role.

When Paul spoke about a new god, some of them called him a babbler but some others were curious to know more about this new doctrine. They took him to the public place in Areopagus and heard him carefully. Paul's sermon in Athens is the best example as to how gospel should be conveyed to the gentiles (Acts 17:22-31).

The sermon with the introduction of referring to the altar with the inscription 'to the unknown god' of whom they were worshipping had touched them. Here also a group discarded the sermon of Paul. But a small group received the word and were saved. We can conclude that the work here was not fruitful like other places.

Corinth (18:1-17)

While Athens was the knowledge city of Greek, Corinth was the commercial and financial centre. A day's journey through the sea was enough to travel from Athens to Corinth. Though Corinth was very prosperous, it was a morally low standard city. A phrase 'the life in Corinth' was prevailing even in those days. A temple of Aphrodite, a Greek goddess was present there. Thousands of devadasis (or female servants of gods or dancing girls) were lodged there. Paul entered into this filthy city with the torch of gospel.

He met a Jewish man there namely Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who had come from Rome in those days and were engaged in the

craft of tent making. He abode with them and they were helpful in his evangelism. Paul started his work and also engaged in tent making. He went to the synagogue every Sabbath and preached the word to the Jews and followers of Jewish religion and persuaded them to become disciples. By this time, Timothy and Silas also returned from Berea. As usual, the Jews opposed Paul here too. Therefore he turned to the gentiles and worked among them. But a man named Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord. Many Corinthians hearing the word, believed and were baptized. Paul, based on a vision he saw, continued there for a year and six months teaching the word among them. Angry with this, the Jews brought Paul to Gallio, the Roman ruler. However Gallio did not care for their allegations.

Thus, a strong church was established in Corinth. At this place, Paul wrote his first two epistles to the Thessalonians.

The end of the second mission journey

Later, Paul left Corinth along with Aquila and Priscilla. They passed through Ephesus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem and returned to Antioch in Syria.

Practical Lessons

Let us set Paul as an example for his capability of making use of the situation creatively and sharing the gospel without losing its originality.

Questions

1. Which churches were planted during the second mission journey?
2. How significant is the sermon in Athens to the Indian people who come from diverse backgrounds?
3. Write a small note on the work in Corinth.
4. At which place did Paul write the two epistles to the Thessalonians?

End notes :

Epicureans : They are the followers of Epicurus. Epicurus (341-240) was born in Samos. He established a school in Athens in BC 306 for teaching his philosophy. They were atheists. His doctrine of metaphysics was based on materialism. He taught that death is the end of everything. God is far away and He is not interested in the matters of men and therefore pleasing Him is

of no use. Their slogan in life was pleasure. Therefore eat, drink and enjoy as tomorrow all will die. In a nutshell, Epicureans means fully dipped in the worldly pleasures.

Stoics : Stoic religion was established by Sino in Cyprus in BC 336-260. The word stoick was derived from the name of the stage 'stoa-Greek' in Athens where Sino sat and taught. The followers of Sino were the stoics. Their school of believe was in 'universal goodliness'. His main doctrine was to live according to nature. Stoics means 'one who can control emotions'. Their motto in life was to have the apathy that cannot be shaken by the pleasures or sorrows of this world. They believed on values like contentment, self reliance, etc. The city of Tarsus was the centre of stoics.

CHAPTER 24

The Third Missionary Journey of Paul

(A.D 53-57)

Reading Portion : Acts Chapters 18:23 to 21:16

Memory Verse : Acts 20:24

Purpose : To understand the vision of Paul, who was fully engaged in evangelism without disobedience to the heavenly vision even in the midst of adversaries, is an example to us.

Introduction : (Assess how far the study of second missionary journey has been useful for the spiritual life of the students and their enthusiasm towards evangelism). The two missionary journeys of Paul had helped spreading the word and establishing many churches. Paul was always careful in making them strong by giving spiritual teaching who believed Jesus through his work. Some places covered in the second journey were also included in the third missionary journey. However, the main target of the third journey was Ephesus. He resided and worked there for 3 years. In this lesson we will learn about the events that took place there, the epistles wrote and about his return.

The specialities of the third mission journey

While the other two journeys were ended at Antioch, this journey did not end there. The third journey ended in Jerusalem. Only in this

trip did stay at one place continuously for 3 years. The epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, etc. were written during this journey.

Ephesus (Acts 19:1-20)

Though Paul wanted to go to Ephesus and preach the word there during the second journey, the plan of the Holy Spirit was different. Therefore it could not be fulfilled in the second journey. However, in the third journey the Spirit prompted him to go to and Ephesus preach the word for 3 years there. God also used him to plant churches in and around Ephesus.

Ephesus was a port city and the capital of Asia province. The city was much ahead in culture and trade. The temple of the world renowned goddess Artemis (Diana) was in this city. This temple was built on 127 pillars of marble. It was believed that the temple was built on a stone fallen from Jupiter along with the image of their goddess (19:35). There were thousands of workers in Ephesus who made and sold idols of this goddess. There was a theatre in the city wherein 50000 people could be assembled.

Ephesus was a centre of revelling, idolatry, sorcery, etc. and was religiously perverted. Paul reached in such a city to preach the word.

The disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

Paul reached Ephesus after Apollos departed for Corinth. Paul first met a group of 12 disciples there. They might be the result of Apollos' work in Ephesus. They had heard of and taken John's baptism but were not aware of the New Testament baptism. For this reason when Paul asked them "have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed!" they replied that "we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost". Then Paul explained to them about the New Testament baptism given in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and thereafter baptised them accordingly. And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Thereafter, he continued preaching the word in the synagogues of Jews for 3 months. Aquila and his family were helpful to him here too. The school of Tyrannus, a Greek philosopher who taught his philosophy there, was taken on rent and the word was taught there for two years. This was very helpful for the growth of the work in Ephesus.

The stir in Ephesus (19:23-41)

Numerous worshippers used to gather in the temple of Diana during their feast. The main offering was the image of Diana and her

shrine in small shape made in silver. The main centre of its smiths was Ephesus. Due to the preaching of Paul, their gain out of this suffered as people started turning to God. In order to expel the missionaries out of the city, one man named Demetrius influenced the workmen and stirred up the religious emotions of the people. Thus, a big religious riot had started in the city. But the town clerk proactively convinced the people that the uproar was baseless and accordingly dismissed the assembly.

The return journey

After this uproar, Paul exhorted the disciples and strengthened them. Then he left for Macedonia. He wrote the second epistle to Corinthians here (2 Cor 7:4-11). Thereafter he reached Greece (comprise Corinth also). At this time, he wrote the epistles to Galatians, Romans, etc. (Acts 20:23, Romans 16:1, 23).

Again he went to Macedonia. From there Luke joined in the group (20:5). Later, they reached Troas through the sea. There the miracle of raising Eutycus took place.

Paul then reached Miletus where he called and gathered the elders of Ephesus. He gave a heart touching sermon to them. They sent him off weeping (20:17-38).

Paul in the house of evangelist Philip (21:8-14)

On the return journey Paul and his company came into Caesarea and went in to the house of Philip the evangelist. He had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

At this time a prophet named Agabus reached there. He took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said that the owner of this girdle shall be bound in this manner in Jerusalem. Although Paul has been receiving Spirit's warning from town to town about the afflictions that he would suffer, yet he boldly decided to face all persecutions. Their pleadings and requests could not change Paul's bold decisions.

After travelling 64 miles through land, they reached Jerusalem. Here, Paul witnessed the wondrous work done by God through him. Thus the third missionary journey which lasted for 4 years came to an end.

Practical Lessons

How wonderful is the change that occurred in Ephesus through the word of God where blind faith, bad rituals and idolatry, etc. were

in full swing. Let us make Paul as our example to be carriers of the torch of truth which lights the world full of darkness.

Questions

1. What is the speciality of the third mission journey?
2. Write a note on Ephesus city.
3. Ephesus was a city that was prepared for evangelism. Explain.
4. What was the reason for the confusion in Ephesus?
5. Which of the epistles were written during this journey?
6. Who prophesied to Paul about the afflictions that he is going to face in Jerusalem? What was his reaction?

CHAPTER 25

Paul the Prisoner

- Reading Portion** : Acts Chapters 21:17 to 28:16
- Memory Verse** : Philippians 3:7-8
- Purpose** : To get the students ready to dedicate themselves to the Lord who gave His life for us and to work for Him faithfully till death.
- Introduction** : In the last lessons we learnt about the missionary journeys of Paul. The Holy Spirit warned him of his afflictions and persecutions ahead. He knew about the afflictions that he had to face. Today we will learn about further events of his life.

Paul being bound

From Jerusalem Paul travelled to Caesarea. Paul was cheerfully welcomed there by Apostles James and the elders of the Jerusalem Church. However his presence created discontentment among them due to a report that he taught the captive Jews to forsake the Law of Moses. In order to remove this misunderstanding and to make known to all that Paul kept the Law, Apostle James and the elders advised him to bear the expenses in the Temple towards completion of the Nazirite vow of four of the Jewish believers. Paul accepted this advice. He took the four men and purified with them and entered in to the temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. But the reaction was not according to their expectation.

With such a misunderstanding, certain Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple caught hold of him. There was uproar in

Jerusalem. Immediately the Lusianus, the centurion intervened and forcefully took Paul to the fort of Antonia. The reason for this uproar was a rumour that Paul was seen in the city along with Trophimus, an Ephesian, and that he had brought him into the temple and had polluted the holy place. The people tried to manhandle him and followed him crying for his death.

The sermon of Paul (Acts 21:37-22 to 22:29)

Ten sermons of Paul have been recorded in the Book of Acts of the Apostles. We see one of them here. After obtaining permission from the centurion, Paul standing on the stairs silenced the people and spoke in Hebrew. In this sermon he spoke about his life before repentance, the details of repentance and the calling of God in his life. When the people heard about God sending him to the gentiles, those that hearing him calmly got angry and lifted up their voices. To examine the reason for this uproar the centurion wanted to scourge Paul. When they were binding Paul for scourging, the centurion heard that Paul was a Roman citizen, he got frightened of binding Paul, a Roman citizen without examination.

Paul before the Council of priests (Acts 22:30 to 23:10)

In order to evaluate the certainty of the accusation, Paul was taken to the Council of Priests, the highest authority of Jews the next day. In view of the dissention between the Pharisees and Sadducees on their doctrines, a great discussion arose among them on the words of Paul. Fearing that the scene would become worse, the chief captain took Paul to fort.

During that night the Lord stood by him and cheered him on. The Lord said to him that he will testify of Him in Jerusalem as has done in Rome.

The conspiracy of Jews (Acts 23:12-30)

However, some 40 Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. They planned to kill him in the middle of his transfer. Paul came to know about this through his sister's son and informed the same to the centurion. Paul was then taken to the official place of the governor in Caesarea located 64 miles away and about 470 soldiers escorted him. A letter was also written to Felix.

Paul in Caesarea (AD 58-60) (Acts 23:21-36)

Paul arrived in Caesarea. Caesarea was built in twelve years by the great Herod in the honour of Augustus Caesar. During AD 56-

60, Felix was the governor in Judea. Felix, a cruel governor was the husband of Drusilla, the daughter of Herod who had gotten James killed by sword.

After 5 days, as informed by the centurion Claudius Lysias, the chief priest Ananias along with the elders and an orator named Terullus arrived at Caesarea. They laid strong accusation against Paul. Thereafter on the permission of Felix, Paul responded to the accusations. After hearing both the sides, Felix understood the innocence of Paul. However, he deferred the judgement. Felix also got an opportunity to hear the word. Bible gives his reaction.

Paul before Porcius Festus and Agrippa

After two years Porcius Festus came as governor of Judea in place of Felix. Felix, to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound without taking a decision. Festus was better than Felix.

When Festus visited Jerusalem, the Jews tried to influence him but failed. As Paul knew that he would not get justice, he appealed to Caesar in Rome. God also desired that Paul goes to Rome.

Paul also had to stand before the king Agrippa. Whoever examined Paul came to understand his innocence. Since Paul had appealed to Caesar, nobody had the authority to do anything. Paul also shared the gospel with King Agrippa too. His reaction is mentioned in Acts 26:24-28.

The period of two years spent in the prison of Caesarea might be the time Lord had given him for rest. Only God's desire will prevail in our life.

Practical Lessons

Let the life of Paul who was always zealous in the work of the Lord bearing all the afflictions and trials like scourging, bonds and imprisonment, etc. cheerfully be an example to us.

Questions

1. What was the leniency that Paul showed to the Jewish believers and its result?
2. What was reason for the Jews opposing Paul?
3. What was the reaction of Felix when he heard the word from Paul?
4. How many of Paul's sermons are mentioned in the Bible? What is the essence of all these sermons?
5. How many Jews had decided not to eat or drink until Paul was killed?

CHAPTER 26

Paul in Rome

Reading Portion : Acts Chapters 27 and 28

Memory Verse : Acts 27:23-24

Purpose : To grasp that God's presence shall be with us even in the shadow of death and therefore we should march ahead boldly.

Introduction : As Paul had appealed to Caesar, he was escorted to Rome. The distance from Caesarea to Rome was 1870 miles. It took some 7 months for this journey. The journey was started in AD 60 before the winter.

The journey starts from Caesarea (27:1-8)

Paul, the extra-ordinary prisoner and other co-prisoners were sent to Rome under the control of centurion Julius. Luke and Aristarchus were also with him as helpers. Paul got a very warm treatment from Julius. Soldiers, prisoners and other passengers were also with them on this journey. They reached Sidon in the north. From there they reached Myra, a city of Lucia on the south of Asia province. There, they were put on a ship of Alexandria sailing to Italy. It was big ship transporting grains from Egypt to Rome. From there they sailed to Crete which was called the fair havens. Crete was one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean sea. As the wind was not favourable, they reached here with great difficulty.

The fore warning of Paul (27:9-13)

Later on, though Paul admonished that sailing was now dangerous, the centurion believed the captain and the owner of the

ship more than the words of Paul and continued the journey. We can read that the warning given by Paul was fulfilled and all of them had to face many losses and damages. During this voyage, Paul gave them advice on four times (27:10, 22-26, 31, 34).

The Euroclydon and its consequences

The calculation of the captain and shipmen was to reach Phenice and stay there for winter. As the wind blew softly, they supposed that they will attain the purpose. But against the hope of the shipmen, a strong north-eastern tempestuous wind called the Euroclydon arose making the sailing tough for the shipmen. The mast which was used to run the ship according to the wind's direction became uncontrollable. They sailed near to the Claudia island which was 23 miles south to Crete island and tackled the ship a little. As the ship was being tossed in the tempest, they lightened the ship by throwing the materials and tackle of the ship out of it. Neither the sun nor the stars appeared for many days. All the people were starved for days and lost the hope to be saved.

There were some 276 passengers on that ship. The centurion might have been grieved after hearing the opinion of the ship owner and the captain. We can see that while all of them were discouraged seeing death in front of them, Paul who had heard God's word, was cheering them (22-26). He had the assurance that the Lord God of whom he serves shall not leave him. This lesson teaches us that those who rely on the words of men shall be ashamed but those who abide by the word of God shall not be confounded.

From Claudia to Melita

The voyage from Claudia was very tough. On the 14th day, they deemed that they are near to land. When they sounded they found that they were actually drawing near to a land. The shipmen were about to flee out of the ship but on the advice of Paul, they did not do so (Acts 27:28-31). Only a child of God desires the welfare of others.

Again, Paul cheered the passengers. He took bread and gave thanks to God in presence of all of them and began to eat and also encouraged them to eat. After all of them ate enough, they cast the grains out of the ship and lightened it. When it was day, they saw a creek with a shore and started towards it.

They reached in a place where two seas met. Due to strong waves the ship was broken (41). The soldiers thought to kill the prisoners so that none of them could swim and escape but the centurion wanted to save Paul. He commanded that those that could swim should

swim and get to the land. Except the ship nobody was hurt. All of them were saved. Everything happened according to the word of God to Paul. It was the fourth shipwreck in Paul's life (2 Cor 11:25).

In the Island of Melita (Acts 28:1-10)

When they landed on the island, they came to know that it was called Melita. Melita was an island in the Mediterranean Sea with 17 miles length and 8 mile width. Today it is called Malta. The people here showed kindness to Paul and his companions. As it was very cold, they kindled a fire and received all of them. Paul being very active had gathered a bundle of sticks and put into the fire when a viper came out of the heat and fastened on Paul's hand. The reaction of the people witnessing this event is very significant (28:3-6). When they saw that no harm was done to him, they changed their mind and thought that he was a god and honoured him. There were so many adversities occurring during the voyage so that Paul did not reach Rome. But God helped him to overcome all of them.

Publius, the chief man of the island, received and lodged Paul and his companions courteously. Paul also prayed for and healed the father of Publius who was sick of a serious disease. As this news spread over the island, other sick people also came to Paul and got healed. After 3 months, that is, after the winter, the people of the island sent them off cheerfully and with honour and gifts.

To Rome (Acts 28:11-16)

From Melita, they started the voyage to Rome on an Egyptian ship. After landing at Syracuse in Cecily, they proceeded to Puteoli in Italy. From there they travelled 120 miles by land and reached Rome.

When the brethren of Rome heard of Paul's coming, they gave a warm welcome to him. They arranged special facilities for him. Paul was allowed to reside at a hired house and a soldier was kept with him. He had the freedom to preach the gospel to those who visited him (28:16). Thereafter an assembly of the Jews dwelling in Rome was conducted and the gospel preached to them. The reason for his bondage was also explained. We can see that two meetings had been taken place (28:17, 23). Paul could spread the word for 2 years staying under house arrest. By this, he could also spread the word in the palace of Caesar (Phil 1:13).

All those afflictions and bondage suffered during his entire life caused the Word to spread and also allowed the growth of the church.

Practical Lessons

No misery or hardship can come in the way of evangelism. In fact all those things become favourable to it. Let us make Paul's bold

faith, his reliance on God, his endurance and his fearless evangelism inspite of adversities in life as our base.

Questions

1. What were the difficulties faced by Paul and his companions during the voyage by ship?
2. What was the message that God gave to Paul in the adverse situation?
3. Name the 3 phases of the voyage. Also state their starting and ending points.
4. What were the experiences of Paul in the island of Melita?
5. How were the facilities received in Rome helpful in preaching the word?
6. How did the Jews and believers of Rome behave with Paul?

CHAPTER 27

The end of Paul

- Reading Portion** : Philippians Chapter 1 & 2 Timothy Chapter 4
- Memory Verse** : 2 Timo 4:7-8
- Purpose** : To understand that the end of a child of God is very promising.
- Introduction** : Paul stayed as the ambassador of Jesus Christ in the prison of Rome. As the Jews failed to prove the allegations on him, Paul could travel and work freely for some more time. However, he was again put in to rigorous imprisonment wherein he was martyred.

Paul in the prison

The book of Acts of the Apostles ends with details of Paul's stay in prison. Throughout his imprisonment, the word of God through Paul entered in to the palace of Caesar, the centre place of Roman government. Many soldiers of Nero dedicated their life to Lord Jesus. He always tried to share the Word to all those who visited him and also to the soldiers keeping him in prison. Thus, Onesimus, who was under bondage of Philemon also heard the word in prison and was saved (Phile. 10).

As per the prison rules in those days, one hand of the prisoner was tied to the hand of the soldier. Thus, soldiers were changed during the day and night shifts. Paul shared the gospel of truth with them and many of them accepted Jesus as their Lord.

The epistles (also known as prison epistles) to Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, etc. were written by Paul during his prison life.

Paul is being released from prison

According to the Bible scholars, Paul was released from prison sometime after AD 63. During that time, it is believed that he could go to Spain and evangelise there, as per his desire (Romans 15:22-24).

We have many strong evidences that Paul has been released after 2 years imprisonment as mentioned in Acts of Apostles.

If he was killed after 2 years of imprisonment, then Luke would have given some indication to it.

If the events of the shepherd epistles are considered, it indicates about the time that Paul was released from prison.

The facts in 2 Timo 4:16 leads us to interpret that the events therein relate to the freedom obtained from first imprisonment.

The mention to come to Nicopolis as mentioned in Titus 3:12 is an evidence that he was released.

We can assume that Paul was freed in AD 63. Thereafter he travelled and worked in places like Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor, Spain, etc. for 4 years. The two first epistles to Timothy and epistle to Titus were written while in Macedonia.

The second imprisonment in Rome

He was arrested again. This imprisonment was more rigorous than the first one. Visitors were not allowed to meet Paul. The second epistle to Timothy was written during this time. This was his last epistle. We can understand from this epistle that his end was full of hope. However, the brethren in Asia turned away from him (2 Timo 1:14).

His companion Demas left him having loved the world. His afflictions and imprisonment became shameful even for those whom he loved the most. Everyone turned away from him. We can understand the severity of the imprisonment from the verse in 2 Timo 2:9 "I suffer trouble, as an evil *doer*, even unto bonds".

In the second epistle to Timothy, Paul asks him to come to him. However, due to a fire in Rome in those times, Timothy could not go there. It is a known fact that Nero had set Rome on fire due to his devilish desire to see as to how Rome would look like after a severe fire. He also wanted to rebuild Rome again. But he spread a rumour that the Christians were responsible for it and started cruel religious persecution against them.

The end of Paul

The historians opine that Paul was killed in this persecution by Emperor Nero. It is considered that it might be sometime in AD 66 or AD 67. Emperor Nero committed suicide in AD 68. It is considered that Paul was ordered to be killed before this.

As Paul was a Roman citizen, he did not undergo cruel murder. According to history, it is believed that he was beheaded in AD 67 in a manner suitable for a Roman citizen at Austria on the way to Triphonten situated little far away from the city of Rome. Doubt exists about the correct place.

When the shining sword was powerfully swung on his neck, he challenged the death by saying "O death, where is thy victory". He proclaimed the great testimony loudly that "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" and left to be in the presence of his beloved his Lord Jesus Christ. See, how blessed was his end.

Practical Lessons

We are all called to share the torch of the wonderful gospel of redemption to others without allowing it to extinguish. In this process, we may have to face afflictions and persecutions and even death. Let the sacrificial life and martyrship of Paul be an example for us. Christianity does not end with death. Let us also acquire that strength of Paul regarding eternal life which prompted him to face death.

Questions

1. How did the imprisonment of Paul help in spreading the gospel?
2. What are the evidences to prove that Paul was released from the first imprisonment?
3. Write a note about the end of Paul.

CHAPTER 28

The Paradises

Reading Portion : 2 Cor 12:1-4, Ezek 28:11-19

Memory Verse : 2 Cor 12:2-3

Purpose : To learn about divine paradises.

Introduction : Paradise is a word misunderstood a lot. Many people think that this word represents heaven. But what is paradise? In this lesson we are going to learn about the presence of paradises.

What is paradise?

The word paradise is derived from the Greek word 'paradisos'. It means an 'enclosed garden'. In ancient times, the word paradise was used to represent the orchards maintained by kings. In the book of Ecclesiastes 2:5 and Songs of the Songs 4:12 of the Old Testament, this word is used to indicate garden or orchard. The books of Luke 23:43, 2 Cor 12:3 and Rev 2:7 in the New Testament mention about paradise. Altogether, 7 paradises are mentioned in the Scriptures.

1. Heavenly Paradise

The shadows of many heavenly things are there on the earth. For example, there was the Temple on the earth like the one in heaven. Jerusalem on the earth is a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem. The Paradise is also like this. The six paradises on the earth are the images of the real paradise in the heaven.

According to the Bible there are three heavens (2Cor 12:2). They are the firmament, the starry heavens and the third heaven (Isaiah 14:13). Paul says that amongst these the third heaven is the paradise. Though Paul was taken up to the third heaven, he did not mention

about anything seen there. So we do not know much about it. But we can assume that the water of the river of life and the tree of life would be there.

2. The first earthly Paradise

Genesis 1:1,2 mentions about this paradise. In the beginning God made heaven and earth. Isaiah says that the earth was in a good form and not in void (Isaiah 45:18). God created the flora and fauna, fowls and animals on the earth. Human beings were not there at that time. The theologians, based on Ezekiel 28:13 say that the Eden Garden or the paradise existed then. This was the first earthly paradise. It is not clear how long did this golden era exist. Under the influence of Lucifer, the inhabitants of the earth committed sin due to which the earth became void and without form.

3. Adamic Paradise

We see about this paradise in Genesis Chapter 2 and 3. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. There were different kind of trees; some very pleasant to the eyes and some of its fruits were good for food. A river did flow out of Eden, It had four tributaries. God made Adam and Eve dwell in this garden.

When man transgressed and sinned, He evicted them out of this garden. It is unclear as to what happened to this paradise thereafter. This garden might have been destroyed by the flood during Noah's time.

4. The Hades

Hades is a place under the ground. We see that it has 3 layers. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the uppermost layer is called Abraham's bosom and the bottom most layer is known as 'the place of torment'. Abraham says here that there is a great chasm fixed between these two layers so that no one can cross over to the other layers.

The dead saints including Abraham in the Old Testament are said to have descended to the Hades. The Old Testament saints including Abraham have gone to the uppermost layer. The real name of that place is paradise. This is clarified by the statement of Jesus on the cross spoken to the repented thief. The verse Ephesians 4:8-10 further proves that Jesus died and descended to the lower parts of the earth.

The place of torment under the Hades is the temporary place for confining the wicked that die till the final judgment day. But this

is not the real Hell. The real Hell is the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Only after the final Judgement shall the wicked be cast into Hell.

The area between the upper and the lower layer is called 'Tartarus'. This is the place where a group of angels that sinned were cast down and bound in chains of darkness and reserved for the last judgement (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

5. The Church of God

The church is a paradise. In the book of the Song of Songs 4:12, it is mentioned that church is an enclosed garden. God the Father is the gardener. The Holy Spirit, the river of water of life flows through this garden. In a nutshell, we can say that it carries all the characteristics of a paradise.

6. The Millennium (paradise)

After the second coming of Jesus Christ, the antichrist will rule the world for seven years. After that Jesus will appear on the Mount of Olives along with His holy people. After defeating the antichrist and his army (Mathew 25:31), He will judge the nations at the valley of Jehoshaphat. He will keep the nations who treated the Jews well at the right side and the nations who did evil to the Jews to the left side. The people on His right hand will be given the right to enter the Millennium. Certainly His church and the Jews will be there in the millennium.

The earth will turn into a Paradise in the millennial era. Since Satan will be bound, there will be no sin during that period. The earth will produce the best yield. Even the wild animals will become meek. One thousand years will pass or go on like this.

7. New Jerusalem

At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released from his bondage for a short while. He will lure and gather lakhs of unsaved people from the world and declare a war against the Lord. But his group will be defeated in this war and will be thrown into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

After this the final judgement will be done before the White throne. All sinners will be cast into the hell forever. The present heaven and the earth would pass away and there will be a new heaven and earth. A new city from heaven which is the New Jerusalem will descend to the new earth. This would be a Paradise. The river of the water of Life and the tree of Life will be there. No sinner will ever enter it.

Practical Lessons

The paradise into which we can enter today is the church of God. Those who are in this paradise can enjoy spiritual pleasures and divine bliss. Such people will also live in the future paradises. Therefore let us dedicate ourselves to rejoice in this paradise.

Questions

1. What do you mean by Paradise?
2. How many paradises are there? Name them.
3. Explain about the 'Adamic Paradise'.
4. Is the torment place in the Hades the real hell? Explain.
5. Write a note about the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 29

Discipleship

- Reading Portion** : Luke 9:1-27, Mathew 4:18-22; 9:9; Mathew 16:13-20; Mathew 10:1-42; Acts 11:26.
- Memory Verse** : Mark 8:34
- Purpose** : To make the students capable to grow in the experience of Christ's discipleship.
- Introduction** : In the reference verses for this lesson (Act 11:26), we read like this "... And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" Discipleship is the foundation factor in Christianity. Therefore it has to be studied carefully.

Who is a disciple? What is discipleship?

The one who strictly follows the ideas and doctrines of the teacher is called disciple. To accept someone as his teacher and role model is called discipleship. What is the definition of discipleship given in the Oxford dictionary? For the English word 'disciple', the Greek words 'Mathetes' (noun) and 'Manthano' (verb) have been used. 'Mathetes' means 'learner' and 'Manthano' means 'I learn' or 'I discipline'. By these words, we mean that the learning process is the foundation factor for discipleship and through learning we are led to discipline.

The learning process is complete only when we gather the knowledge, accept it and relate them to the facts of life and fruitfully reflect in our practical life.

What is Christian discipleship?

In the light of New Testament too, the process of learning is the foundation of discipleship. We see in the great commandments of

Jesus Christ like this *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you....”* (Mathew 28:19-20). How to make disciple is explained here through the verb “make disciples” (verse 20). Make disciples by “baptizing them, teaching them to observe all thing whatsoever I have commanded you....”. The gist of Lord’s commandment is to teach mankind through a medium of learning and to lead them to Christian discipleship.

For the first time, the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Discipleship is the factor on which Christianity is founded. The first step of Christian discipleship is to follow Jesus. *“..., If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me “* (Luke 9:23). There are 3 things involved in following Jesus.

1. To Deny oneself

The calling for discipleship means a calling of self denial. Self denial means to abandon the desire to gain for self. In Christian discipleship, there is no importance for the desires of self. Lord’s disciples should be ready to deny the desires of the world and flesh. He should be willing to dedicate himself completely towards the will of the Lord.

2. To carry one’s cross

Death on the cross was the worst method punishment among the Romans. The guilty had to bear the ‘cross’ till the place where crucifixion was to be done. In Christian view, the cross is not only the symbol of sorrows but also an image of Christ’s mission. Christian discipleship is therefore a commitment to the fulfilment of this responsibility.

3. To follow

This teaches us that Christian discipleship is a call towards Christian growth. According to the grammar rules in the original language, the words ‘to follow’ mean ‘to continuously follow’. When Jesus was calling the men for discipleship He said “follow me”.

The Christian discipleship is a call to grow up to the Master (Matt 10:24). In a nutshell, this should be the entire life’s learning. The Christian discipleship demands that those who want to follow Jesus have to grow up to Him.

The conditions of Discipleship

1. Love Christ above all : In Luke 14:26 it is said *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"*. A Christian disciple should always be committed to accept this first condition without fail. Christ should occupy the prime and most important place in our life.
2. Deny oneself : (Mathew 16:24; Luke 9:23). We have to deny all of our desires, preferences and priorities, factors which help gains in life, etc. In a nutshell, we have to die.
3. Bear the cross (Mathew 16:24): Cross is inevitable in discipleship. We have to bear all these willingly and cheerfully while following Him.
4. To follow Christ (Luke 14:27): The disciple should be dedicated fully to follow the teacher throughout life. Those who faithfully follow Jesus are the real disciple.
5. To love God's people whole heartedly: All men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love amongst yourselves (John 13:35).
6. To stand firm in the word of Jesus Christ (John 8:31) : The Lord has stipulated that we should continue to submit ourselves to the word of God throughout our life.
7. To witness for the Word is the inevitable mission for discipleship (Acts 1:8): It is worthy to note the words said by Jesus to the people who were ready to follow Him as mentioned in Luke 9:57-62.
 - a) No attractive promise is given on this earth.
 - b) Nothing else has priority than preaching the Word of God.
 - c) Those who look back having put their hands to the plough are not fit for the kingdom of God.

The utmost mission of discipleship

Our Lord and Teacher called His disciples from different fields is to fulfil the most important mission of evangelisation. *"....., that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: ..."* (John 15:16). If one has to give his life for the mission, he has to be ready for it. Due to such dedication, a community of martyrs was

developed from the first century itself. One who is not willing to deny his own life cannot remain as a disciple.

Practical Lessons

These days, many would like to follow without carrying the cross. This is the failure of modern discipleship. The one who really wants to follow Jesus completely has to deny all his desires, likings, his wishes for worldly gains and all other things which prevent him from marching ahead in discipleship. Even his life has to be sacrificed. Then only can we say that our discipleship is complete.

Questions

1. What do you mean by discipleship?
2. Define the word 'discipleship'.
3. What are the conditions for discipleship?
4. Explain the meaning of 'deny oneself' and 'bear one's own cross'.

CHAPTER 30

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church

- Reading Portion** : Acts 2:37-42; 17:30; Mark 1:15; Matt 3:8-14; Luke 15:11-32
- Memory Verse** : Acts 2:38
- Purpose** : To study about the fundamental doctrines given to the Church and to follow the same.
- Introduction** : The Church of God has clear fundamental laws. It cannot be replaced or changed according to the wishes of men. This is a period when false doctrines are increasing. Prima-facie it appears that it would not be harmful but the poisonous seeds hidden in false doctrine can lead to severe damage to the church. Therefore this continuous study of the fundamental doctrines would help us to understand the false doctrines, to counter it and to grasp the purity of the doctrines given to us and to remain in the same.

How many Fundamental Doctrines are there?

The fundamental doctrines of the church are recorded in the 2nd Chapter of the book of Acts which is also the historical record of the first century church (Acts 2:38-47).

The church has been given 7 basic fundamental doctrines. They are (1) Repentance (2) Baptism (3) Gift of Holy Spirit (4) Separation (5) the doctrines of apostles and fellowship (6) Breaking of Bread and (7) Prayer.

The Importance of fundamental doctrines

It is prescribed that a Jew must learn the law and also must teach the same to the next generations (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7; Proverbs 22:6). The New Testament church and also the apostles were zealous in learning and teaching these doctrines. The last commandment of the Lord also stress about the significance of observing and teaching the doctrines (Mathew 28:19-20). Paul instructed Timothy to be engaged in reading, exhortation, teaching of the true doctrines, etc. and to be alert against false doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:1, 13).

The Christian fundamental doctrines are those that Christ spoke; God bearing witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of Holy Spirit according to His own will and which was confirmed by them that heard Him as mentioned in Hebrew 2:3. While false teachings are eager to eat up the church like cancer, we should have a deep knowledge to understand these teachings and to fight against it. Let us continue our studies on the basic doctrines given to the church.

1. Repentance

Repentance is the most important doctrine of New Testament. It is the first step towards obtaining membership in the Church of God and entry into the kingdom of God. It was the most significant subject of sermon by Jesus and his disciples.

What is repentance?

The word repentance has been derived from Hebrew word 'shubh' and the Greek word 'Metanoia'. '*Shubh*' : means turn, turn back, return, etc.

Metanoia means change, transformation, etc. While thinking in terms of Bible, it means turning to God back from sin and the character of sin (2 King 17:13; 2 Chron 6:26; Isaiah 19:22).

In the New Testament way of thinking, repentance means the transformation in the mind. It is a change in the thoughts and attitude which is manifested throughout the life. It is the significant change in an individual that takes place through a process of being born again due to the influence of Holy Spirit (Luke 1:16; Acts 9:35; 1 Peter 2:25).

The need of Repentance

Man, who was created in the image and likeness of God, had become a sinner due to his disobedience to God's commandment.

Thus the subsequent generations of Adam became sinners. Therefore sin became universal (Romans 5:12; 3:23; 1John 1:8; Psalms 51:5). There is sin by birth and sin by deeds in every individual. Man lost fellowship with God due to sin. The Bible teaches that propitiation of man is not possible through any sacrament, sacrifice or the good deeds. The only way to forgiveness of sin is through believing in the sacrifice of propitiation of Jesus Christ. Repentance is the first step towards this.

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

1. The Old Testament prophets preached repentance (Deuteronomy 30:12; 2Kings 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. Repentance was the subject of sermon of John the Baptist was (Mathew 3:1,2,8; Mark 1:2-4).
3. Jesus Christ started His public ministry by preaching repentance (Mathew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15).
4. Peter preached repentance on the Pentecost Day (Acts 2:38).
5. In the former days, the main message of Apostles was repentance (Acts 3:19, 30-32, 8:22, 11:18, 17:30, and 20:21).

The main ingredients of repentance

1. The guiltiness of sin : One cannot repent until the guiltiness of sin arises in the heart. When a person hears the gospel of Christ, such a guiltiness is created in that person.
2. Confessing sin : The next step towards repentance is confession of sins. Confession and acknowledgement of sin are the factors that lead to repentance.
3. Give up sin and turn to God : The third step towards repentance is to put off sin and the nature of sin and turn to God and become a new creature.

The fruit of repentance

Repentance leads a person to salvation. The heaven rejoices over a sinner that repents (Luke 15:8, 10).

Likewise, the person who repented receives mercy and remission of sins from God (Luke 24:47, Isaiah 55:7). His sins are blotted out (Acts 3:19) and enable him to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

When the Word of God and Holy Spirit work together in a repented person, the re-birth occurs in him. The one who accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and redeemer experiences the joy of salvation. He gets the assurance of eternal life. The one who repented should produce the fruit worthy of repentance and to fulfil the salvation process. It is through faith and not by the works of the laws that one is saved. Through repentance a person is re-born once but he has to continue the experience of repentance in his daily life.

Practical Lessons

The period of youth is when one can be drawn to the doctrine that is preached in the name of modern doctrines. If the fundamental doctrines are not understood correctly, there is a possibility that one can be trapped in the cunning craftiness of false doctrines and its teachers. Therefore, let this lesson be helpful in studying the fundamental doctrines well and counter the false doctrines and be a good soldier of the true doctrines. Let us repent and remain in the joy of salvation.

Questions

1. How many fundamental doctrines are there? Name them.
2. What is the importance of fundamental doctrines?
3. What is repentance? Why is it required?
4. What are the main features of repentance?
5. What is the effect of repentance?
6. How are repentance and re-birth related to each other?

CHAPTER 31

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church (Contd..)

Baptism

Reading Portion : Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-42; 8:12-13, 9:17-18; Rom 6:1-11, 1 Peter 3:20-21 and Col 3:1-4

Memory Verse : Romans 6:4

Purpose : To understand that baptism is a commandment of God to the Church; the person being baptised should deeply understand its meaning and purpose; to baptise and unite with Christ and to live in the newness of life.

Introduction : Baptism and Lord's Table are the two most important commands given to the Christian Church. Baptism is to unite with the death of the Lord and Lord's Table is to commemorate His death. Therefore baptism is to be taken once in life time but the Lord's Table is to be observed till His second coming. As there are various opinions and wrong rituals existing among Christians, it is essential for us to understand it in the light of the word of God.

The meaning according to original language

In Greek, the original language of Bible, a verb 'Baptidzo' (Baptize in English) and a noun 'Baptisma' (Baptism in English) are used. If we examine the Greek-English Lexicon, its meaning is to dip, to sink, to immerse, to plunge or to go under the water, etc.

When a cloth is to be coloured it is dipped in the chemical solution and when it is taken out one can see a difference. This word (baptidzo) also has been used in the same meaning.

In the translation of Bible from Syrian to Malayalam, the words like *dipped*, *were immersed*, *dips*, *etc.* are used. A very clear definition has been given in the 'Hoodaya Canons', the official book of Syrian Christians wherein baptism is explained as 'immersion in water'.

The need of baptism

1. It is the command of Jesus Christ (Mat 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). This is one of the most important last commandments of the resurrected Christ.
2. It is the Apostolic Doctrine and a solemn rite of the former Church (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12, 36, 40). Whenever the former church and Apostles preached the Word, they taught this doctrine too and the people accepted the same. We can see many evidences from the following.
 - ◆ The baptism of the Ethiopian Minister (Acts 8:26)
 - ◆ The baptism of Paul (Acts 9:18).
 - ◆ The baptism of Cornelius and his family (Acts 10:48).
 - ◆ The baptism of the prisoner and his family (Acts 16:23-34).
 - ◆ The baptism of Lydia and family (Acts 16:14-15).
 - ◆ The baptism of those who believed in Corinth and Ephesus (Acts 18:8; 19:4-5).
3. It is the counsel of God (Luke 7:30). Though the tax collectors and sinners accepted John the Baptist's baptism, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God.
4. Jesus Christ was baptised as the fulfilment of God's righteousness. Therefore those who believe in Him have to follow this example (Matt 3:15). We read that Jesus Christ, as a prerequisite for his public ministry, was baptised in Jordan river under the hands of John the Baptist and so fulfilled all the righteousness of God (Matt 3:13,17). Jesus Christ, being sinless, still received baptism to be at par with the entire mankind of sinners and to become an example to others.
5. The baptism, which is the counsel of God, the doctrine of Apostles, the command of Jesus Christ and the solemn rite of the former church is to be received by all those who accept Jesus Christ as their saviour.

Who has to receive baptism?

- a) Those who are conscious of their sins by hearing of the gospel and repent should confess and give up the sins and receive baptism. (Acts 2:37-38).

- b) Those who wish to become disciples of Jesus Christ should take baptism (Matt 28:18-20).
- c) Those who are dead to sin should take baptism (Rom 6:3).
- d) Those who believe the gospel and wish to receive it should take baptism (Mark 16:16).

When the Ethiopian Minister understood the Word of God and wanted to be baptised, Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" and baptised him (Acts 8:37). The former church and the apostles baptised only those who heard the gospel and believed. There is no evidence anywhere that child who cannot understand the word nor respond to it, has been baptised. Child baptism was not prevalent in the church till the 5th century. However, by the 5th century, the doctrine that remission of sin is possible by baptism and the belief that children who did not receive water baptism will not enter into the heaven led to development of this false doctrine.

The method of baptism

There are many types of baptism prevalent in Christian churches. The meaning of baptism according to the original language is to be dipped, immersed, dips, etc. Accordingly we observe in the New Testament that baptism took place by revealing the essence of this meaning (Mathew 3:6,11; Mark 1:5,9; Acts 8:38). The usage of words like 'went up straightaway out of water', 'they came unto a certain water', 'and they went down both into the water', etc. supports the fact that baptism took place by full immersion in water.

In Chapter 2, pages 19-26 of the 'Hoodaya Canon', it is mentioned that baptism has to be given publicly by immersing in water. In the book 'A Study book for the First Communicants', on page 48-52, its writer Bishop Yuhanon Marthoma has written that there is no evidence in the Bible for child baptism; and it is written in the book of Acts and in the Epistles that the adults who believe the word have to be given baptism by immersion.

The former church and the Apostles followed baptism in the triune name of the God (Matt 28:19).

Why is baptism required?

Baptism is the external manifestation of the internal faith. Baptism is an external action to reveal the faith developed in the heart of an individual by acknowledging the gospel. The following explains why baptism is required.

1. It is an evidence of accepting the message of salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).
2. To unite with Christ (Rom 6:3).
3. To be partakers of Jesus' death (Rom 6:3).
4. To be partakers in Jesus' burial (Rom 6:4).
5. To be in the likeness of Jesus resurrection (Rom 6:5; Col 2:12).
6. To walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:5)
7. To put on Christ (Gal 3:27).
8. To unite and become one body with the church, the body of Christ (1Cor 12:13).
9. To be a good conscience toward God. (1 Peter 3:21)

Practical Lessons

Baptism is a subject which has debated a lot. We should be able to understand the authority of this basic doctrine and counter the wrong and false doctrines. Let us be ready to take the baptism which represents our unification to the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and lead a holy life.

Questions

1. What is the meaning of baptism? Explain.
2. What is the method to be adopted in baptism?
3. Why is baptism required?
4. Who should take baptism?
5. Is there any evidence in the Scriptures about child baptism?

CHAPTER 32

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church (Contd.)

The Holy Spirit

- Reading Portion** : Joel 2:28-29; Luke 3:22; John 3:5, 14:16-21, 16:7-15; Acts 1:5,8; 10:44-48; 1Corinthians 12:13.
- Memory Verse** : Ephesians 4:30
- Purpose** : To know about the need of receiving Holy Spirit, its greatness and how to lead a victorious life with the fullness of Spirit.
- Introduction** : Holy Spirit is one of the personality in the divine Trinity. The relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in respect of creation, redemption and caretaking is manifested alike right from the book of Genesis to Revelation (Gen 1:1-2; Rev 22:17). Even the beginning of the New Testament Church is with the out pouring of Holy Spirit. Many people in the Christian world are living without knowing the about Holy Spirit or His works. Let us study about the utmost important gift - the Holy Spirit – given in the fundamental doctrines.

Holy Spirit

In Hebrew language the word 'Ruah' and in Greek 'Pneuma' has been used to indicate Holy Spirit in Bible. Both the usages give the same meaning. It means, wind, power, breath, etc. These usages talk about Jehovah's power or Jehovah's Spirit. Though the works of the Holy Spirit are mysterious, invisible, in-depth and also done visibly,

Holy Spirit is not a mere power but also a powerful personality (John 4:24; 14:16,26; 1Cor 3:16-17; 2:10-13).

Jesus Christ, who introduced the Holy Spirit to the world, also points out His power. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Here, the Greek word 'allos' is used to indicate 'another'. The meaning of this Greek word is 'another of the same kind'. It is clear from this that when Jesus Christ was going to the presence of Father in Heaven after completing His mission in this world, he appointed the Holy Spirit who is in the likeness of Jesus (i.e. another of the same kind) to take over the works of this world.

Jesus has used the word 'paracletos' to introduce the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The meaning of this word is 'comforter'. The word 'paracletos' is also used to mention about Jesus interceding for us sitting at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, to use the same word for the Holy Spirit also, shows Him as a person. There are many other parts in the Bible strongly emphasizing the personality of Holy Spirit (John 16:7,8,13,14,15; 15:26; Luke 12:12).

The works of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, who is equal to the eternal Father, works along with the Father from eternity to eternity. The Holy Spirit is working for the redemption and restoration of the lost sinner from his present stage. As the beginning of the Church was made with the out pouring of Holy Spirit, we can say that the Church is a work of the Holy Spirit.

It is because of the working of the Holy Spirit, that one becomes conscious about sin, God's righteousness and consequent judgement.

The Holy Spirit dwells in a believer as a guide, comforter, adviser and intercede for him (Rom 8:27). He strengthens a believer in prayer (Rom 8:26-27), gives strength to present testimony (Acts 1:8), frees from the law of sin and death (2 Cor 5:7; John 3:5-6; Eph 5:16-18), and prepares us for standing against the wiles of devil (Eph 6:10-11).

The Holy Spirit anoints and appoints the individuals for His work and also distributes the gifts (Acts 13:2-5; Rom 8:14-16; Acts 8:39; 16:7). It is the works of the Holy Spirit that dwell in an individual and enable him to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

In a nutshell, the Scriptures clearly explain to us that the Holy Spirit takes active part from guiding a person from salvation to his complete bodily redemption.

The anointment in Holy Spirit

The gift of Holy Spirit or the anointment of the Holy Spirit is the promise of God to those who are saved by receiving Jesus Christ. Though there were works of the Holy Spirit even in the Old Testament period but the anointment of the Holy Spirit is the promise given only to the New Testament believers. The promise of Jesus Christ to send the Holy Spirit was literally fulfilled by showering and anointing with Holy Spirit on those 120 people who were tarrying for the promise on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8). From that day onwards the Church is witnessing the works of the Holy Spirit.

Like in baptism, the person taking baptism is immersed in water, the Lord immerses the believer in the Holy Spirit.

Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, clearly points out about the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Jesus Christ too, in His life in this world and also after resurrection had stated about the anointing in Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39, Acts 1:8).

The anointment received in the Holy Spirit changed the apostles. They made competent to do the bigger mission. They were given power to give powerful testimonies before their adversaries and to preach the gospel till the end of the world (Acts 4:8-14; Ephe 3:16).

In a nutshell, the anointment in the Holy Spirit is the precious gift to be experienced by all those who have been redeemed. It is promise that we should be inherited (Acts 1:4; 2:39; Luke 24:49; Gal 3:14).

We can see that the manner by which the gift of the Holy Spirit to be received, which is God's promise to His children, is through repentance, baptism, faith, zeal, prayer, etc. (Luke 11:9-13; John 7:37-39; Acts 19:1).

The manifestation of anointing in Holy Spirit is normally seen by speaking in other tongues. This has been repeatedly seen wherever individuals have received the anointment of the Holy Spirit (Act 2:4; 8:18; 10:45; 19:6). In one of the writings of Pr. KE Abraham, 'Anointing in Holy Spirit', more than 42 evidences have been provided from first century to the middle of 20th century proving that speaking in other tongues is the manifestation of receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit (page 115-130).

The fullness in Spirit and its anointment

A fullness in the Spirit is felt along with anointment. Baptism is one time experience whereas fullness in Spirit is a continuous activity

(Acts 4:31; 7:55; 13:9, 52). The fullness of Spirit is required continuously in order to conduct some specific services in special circumstances. With the baptism in the Holy Spirit, one gets filled with the Spirit. It is written "be filled with Spirit" (Eph 5:18). We can compare the filling of Spirit with an empty vessel which is filled when immersed in water.

Anointment is a direction for mission work. In the Old Testament period, Prophets, Priests and King were anointed with the Spirit. We must understand that like all the parts of the body have different functions, each anointed believer has different mission.

Practical Lessons

It is essential to be filled with the Holy Spirit to have victorious and fruitful Christian life. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot win over the world, sin and flesh. The paradise into which we can enter today is the church of God. We should receive the anointment of the Holy Spirit in order to live as a witness of Jesus and complete His mission.

Questions

1. Explain the meaning of the word used for the Holy Spirit in the original language.
2. What are the works of the Holy Spirit?
3. Is the Holy Spirit a power or a personality? Prove.
4. What do you mean by anointment of the Holy Spirit?
5. What do you mean by filling with the Holy Spirit?
6. What is the purpose of anointment in the Holy Spirit?

CHAPTER 33

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church (Contd..) Separation & Prayer

Reading Portion : Exo 19:5-6; Rom 6:15-21; 12:1-2; Gal 5:19-21; 2 Cor 6:14-17.

Memory Verse : Romans 12:1-2.

Purpose : To understand how far the redeemed children of God should keep themselves separated and live as a holy people of God.

Introduction : Why are the Pentecostal people called as the separated children of God? (Do enquire about the opinion of children). The uniqueness of the children of God are in their separation and leading a holy life. God has separated the Israelites for Him. Therefore God has given them separate laws, customs and rituals in all spheres of life. We, the New Testament Israelites, are separated for God and therefore should have a difference in our lifestyle.

What is separation?

Separation, in the light of Holy Scriptures, is defined as being holy or peculiar. God had redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage so that they remain separated from the gentiles and be a holy nation for Him (Exodus 19:5-6).

The purpose of using the word separation is to show the leaving one and joining the other. In the light of New Testament, when one is saved, he is separated for His God. A saved person is different and distinguishable from an unsaved person (1 Peter 2:9-10). Both in Old

and New Testaments, separated means offered to God as holy. The church of God is a group of separated people.

Matters from which separation is required

1. Sin (1 John 3:6-8; Gal 5:19-20)
2. The world (2 Cor 6:16; Acts 2:40; Rom 12:2)
3. False doctrines (Matt 16:12; Mark 8:5; 1 John 7).
4. Superstition and customs (Acts 14:15)
5. Worship (John 4:23).

We live in a world full of sin. We must keep away from the sins of lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life which led to the falling of the first man. When we say that we should be separated from the world, it does not mean that we should not have any type of association or cooperation with the people in the world. It only means that we should keep ourselves away from the influence of sin.

Paul exhorted us to be separated from the influence of the crooked and perverse generation (2 Cor 6:16-17; 11:1-3). The word of God warns us not to conform to this world but to be separated from it and to be perfect (2 Cor 6:14-17). The friendship with the world is enmity with God. Therefore whosoever is separated from the world is the friend of God (James 4:4). The Holy Scriptures teaches us the necessity of separation in doctrines and life. A child of God is duty bound to clearly recognise and keep away from false teachings, superstitions and bad customs, etc.

God's children have to keep a clear separation from the rituals of gentiles, bad customs and rites of namesake Christian churches, conforming to the world, etc. The true worship is through separation from such aspects.

In case of family life, individual life or social life, etc, one should not conform to the world but keep a separation according to the word.

PRAYER

What is prayer?

Prayer is communication between God and His devout. Like breathing is necessary for survival, prayer is essential for sustenance of spiritual life. Through prayer, man who is created in the likeness of God keeps relationship with Him. The relationship established through prayer should be like a father-son relationship (Luke 11:2). As far as Christian churches are concerned, prayer is not a mere repetition as

heathen do but it is the blissful moments of communication with God. Prayer can favourably move the hands of the God who controls the universe.

Factors that comprise prayer

The Jewish Rabbis used to teach their disciples how to pray. After observing Jesus' prayer life, the disciples approached Him requesting to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:2). Accordingly Jesus gave them an illustration of prayer which is known as "Lord's prayer" (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). This is a model of prayer. It contains two parts. The first part emphasises about the name of God, Kingdom of God and Will of God. The second part is the request for getting the need of men (food, forgiveness, victory). Many Christian denominations teach that this prayer has to be compulsorily made every day. This is merely a model of the prayer given to disciples who did not know how to pray. Let us examine the factors that comprise a prayer.

1. Adoration

Adore God after understanding his glory and character.

2. Confession

While adoring God, we submit ourselves before Him and also confess His glory (Heb 13:15).

3. Thanksgiving

Through prayer we should thank God for all the blessings he has provided us (Col 3:15-16).

4. Supplications

When we make our needs and requests known to God through prayer, he answers the same (Phil 4:6). We can see this in the Lord's prayer also.

Whom should we pray?

We should pray to God the Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit (John 14:13; Rom 8:26-27).

The importance of prayer

1. It is the commandment of God the Father (Psalms 50:15; Jeremiah 33:3). The calling of God that "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" is an inspiring fact for the saints.

2. It is the example and commandment of Jesus Christ (Mathew 6:9, 7:7; Luke 21:36).
Jesus Christ's life in this world was prayerful. He taught His disciples to pray and also commanded them to pray.
3. The Apostles and former church prayed continuously and also counselled to pray (Acts 20:31; Timothy 1:3; 1 Thes 5:17; 2 Thes 3:1-2; Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Peter 4:7; Colossians 4:2).

The conditions for prayer

1. Prayer should in the name of Jesus Christ (John 14:13).
2. God doesn't hear the prayer of sinners. Only those who are in the Father-Son relationship can pray (Matt 6:9; John 9:31).
3. Prayer should be according to the will of God (1 John 5:14).
4. Prayer should be fervent and attentive (James 5:15; Eph 6:18)
5. Pray without ceasing and continuously (Luke 18:1-7; 11:3-13; Col 4:2).
6. Pray without an evil conscious and iniquity in heart (Heb 10:19-22; Psalms 66:18).
7. When praying, believe that it is received from the Lord (Mark 11:24; James 1:5-8)
8. Pray in the Spirit (Eph 6:18)
9. Pray with humility and meekness and confess each other's transgressions. The mentality to forgive sins of others is essential to get answer from God (Mark 11:25).

Practical Lessons

The experience of prayer makes us strong. Those who do not have a prayerful life are weak. Prayer should not be for fulfilment of one's personal requirements but it is a submission to fulfil God's will in our life. This is the prayer according to the will of God. Personal or private prayer is essential for spiritual growth.

Questions

1. What do you mean by separation?
2. What are the matters from which all the children of God should be separated?
3. What do you mean by prayer?
4. What are the features involved in prayer?
5. What is the need and importance of prayer?
6. What do you mean by saying 'pray according to the will of God'?

CHAPTER 34

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church (Contd..) Lord's Table

Reading Portion : Matt 26:17-30; Mark 11:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42, 46; 1Cor 10:15-21; 11:23-32

Memory Verse : 1 Cor 11:26

Purpose : To grasp that Lord's the Table is the shadow of the relationship of a believer with the Lord and also with fellow believers and to live in a Christian fellowship.

Introduction : Baptism and Lord's Table are the two sacraments given by God to the Christian Church for observance. We have already learnt about baptism. Let us now study about the importance and the symbolic meanings of the Lord's Table.

Different names

1. Lord's Table (1Corinthians 10:21)
2. 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 (Mathew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:24)

(The word Eucharist has been derived from Greek word 'Eucharisteo' meaning thanks giving, give thanks, etc.)

Importance of the Lord's Table

1. It has been established by our Lord and it is His commandment :

Lord's Table is one of the most significant commandments given to His disciples. It was established by the Lord Himself on the night of the betrayal by Judas (1Corinthians 11:23). Its detailed history has been given by three disciples (Mathew 26:26-29; Mark 11:22-25; Luke 22:19-20) and Apostle Paul (1Corinthians 11:23-26). On the Passover night, the last Passover Feast was conducted by Lord according to the law and thus also established the Lord's Supper. It denotes the end of an era and the beginning of another. The dispensation of Law ended and the dispensation of grace started.

2. Lord's Table is the doctrine of apostles and also observed by former church (Acts 2:42; 20:6-7)

The doctrine about Lord's Table has been clearly mentioned in 1 Cor Chapters 10 and 11. The former church used to observe this in their gatherings (Acts 20:6-7). Accordingly, the church is conducting it till now.

The meaning of Lord's Table

The Lord's Table reveals deep meanings that link the past, present and future times.

1. This is done to remember the Lord (1Cor 11:26)

The Lord commanded to do it for His remembrance. It proclaims the death of our Lord. When we take part in Lord's Table, we remember Jesus' crucifixion and His afflictions and sufferings. Each one of us should remember that Jesus died for us and in lieu of us. Therefore we should come to the presence of God with a broken and repenting heart. It not only commemorates the death but also the resurrection of the Lord. Lord's Table is conducted on the day of resurrection of Jesus Christ. By this, we remember that our Lord is living for ever (John 14:19) and that Christ is always with His people (Matt 28:20).

2. It is sign of the New Testament

The cup is the symbol of the sprinkling blood shed by Jesus as the sign of New Testament.

3. It proclaims the death of Jesus

When the believers gather to remember the Christ the Lord, they proclaim His death before the world (1 Cor 11:26).

4. It is a fellowship with Christ and also with fellow believers:

Whosoever takes part in the Lord's Table is a partaker of the one body. It is written that "For we being many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). We are partakers of one bread. Therefore if we have anything against our brethren, we should reconcile with them and only then should we take part in Lord's Table (Matt 5:23-24).

5. It reminds us about the promise of the Lord's second coming (1 Cor 11:26).

For a believer, the Lord's Table is a promise of his future hope. It also reminds us of the hope that whosoever has been redeemed shall take part in the Table of Lord together in heaven.

The qualifications to partake in the Lord's Table

1. One must have received Jesus Christ as his Saviour (Acts 2:41-42).
2. One must have been baptised according to the Word (Acts 2:41-42)
3. One who is leading a holy life (1 Cor 5:11; 11:27).

The Word forewarns that if anybody takes part in this unworthily, he eats and drinks it for damnation (1 Cor 11:30). It also gives us the warning that those who take part unworthily may become weak and sick and may even die.

This holy sacrament contains various spiritual mysteries and warnings. Therefore, we must understand the seriousness of the Lord's Table and take part in it regularly till the second coming of Lord Jesus Christ.

Practical Lessons

There have been many misunderstandings and debates on the subject of Lord's Table in the Christian world and it still continues. Therefore let us clearly and deeply study and understand the spiritual meanings and its seriousness and take part in it jointly.

Questions

1. What are the other names used for the Lord's Table.
2. What are the symbolic meanings of the Lord's Table?
3. What are the essential qualifications for taking part in the Lord's Table?
4. What is the importance of the Lord's Table?

CHAPTER 35

The Fundamental Doctrines of the Church (Contd..) Fellowship

Reading Portion : 1 John 1:1-4, 21; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 10:16-17.

Memory Verse : 1 John 1:6

Purpose : To understand the blessings and sweetness of Christian fellowship and lead a Christian life accordingly.

Introduction : The entire human history shows that God's desire is to be in fellowship with man. This was the objective in the creation of man. In the New Testament we see Christ, the Son of God, incarnated as man to have fellowship with man. Jesus Christ, through His crucifixion, fulfilled the sacrifice required to reconcile God and man again for the purpose of fellowship. The church of God is the gathering and fellowship of such believers.

Fellowship – meaning and importance

In the original language of Greek, the word 'Koinonia' is used to define fellowship. This word also mean 'common mind'. Fellowship also mean 'divide among', 'see in common' to show charity. In the New Testament background this word also has the meaning like join, give share, distribute, cooperate, etc.

Christian life is a life of fellowship. Our fellowship is with God the Father, His Son and our redeemer Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9) and the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). As the church is the body of Christ, we have fellowship with the co-believers in the church (1 Cor 10:16-17).

The objective of the Church is completed in the fellowship. The strength of the former church was the fellowship between the believers. Fellowship was the face of the former church. The children of God had fellowship including spiritual as well as material matters. There are many people who after seeing and understanding the joy of fellowship in the church have accepted Jesus Christ and have become the children of God.

Fellowship is the indescribable experience of communion of man, the creation of God, with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It is also a selfless spiritual relationship between similarly experienced fellow brethren and hence it is matter of great magnitude.

The basis of fellowship

The basis of our fellowship is the deep relationship between the Triune God and His children who are redeemed by the blood of our Lord. The understanding that we all are children of one heavenly Father and therefore we all are brethren further strengthen the spiritual relationship. The love, trust, caring, unity, brotherhood, etc. between each believer are the foundation of this fellowship.

The essential ingredients of fellowship

1. Prayer

Prayer and fellowship were the important aspects of the former church. Prayer enabled them to keep a strong relationship between God and fellow believers. The former church used to gather with one heart and one soul.

They used to gather for fellowship, bear the burden of each other and prayed. When the church prayed without ceasing, Peter was released from prison. After the ascension of Jesus, the first fellowship of the disciples was for prayer (Act 1:14). When they prayed with one accord, the showering of the Holy Spirit occurred. Thus, prayer is the supreme factor in fellowship.

2. Listening to the Word

Stating apostle's doctrine and fellowship together in Acts 2:42 indicate that learning of the word is of utmost important.

3. Worship (Adoration)

The prime objective of the fellowship of God's children is to adore God. Prayer and listening to the Word prompts them to worship God.

4. Helping each other

The supreme reason for the growth of the former church was the fellowship of helping each other. The verse “Neither was there any among them that lacked” (Acts 4:34) points out to the greatness of the caring of each other. Like the spiritual fellowship, we should have fellowship in material needs by sharing, distributing or partaking. The former church demonstrated equal significance in partaking and unity both in spiritual and material matters. The fellowship becomes meaningful when the blessings of God are shared amongst each other; one’s abundance should meet others’.

Practical Lessons

Whosoever keeps fellowship with God is bound to keep similar relationship with his fellow believer both spiritually and materially. Fellowship becomes meaningful by selfless love, sacrificial service and caring for each other.

Questions

1. Explain the meaning of fellowship.
2. What are the fundamental factors of fellowship?
3. What is the significance of fellowship?
4. The fellowship is the main reason for the growth of the former church. Explain.

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