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Search  
the  
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*Vol. 38*

# CONTENTS

LESSON \_\_\_\_\_ PAGE

## OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

482 - OBEDIENCE AND LOVE FOR GOD.....	5
483 - LAWS OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY..	11
484 - WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY.....	16
485 - CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS.....	22
486 - LAWS CONCERNING DEBT AND SLAVES.....	28

## NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

487 - CEREMONIAL LAW VERSUS GRACE.....	34
488 - PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY.....	40
489 - THE MACEDONIAN CALL.....	45
490 - IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL AND SILAS.....	52
491 - PAUL PREACHES AT MARS' HILL.....	58

## SPECIAL STUDIES

492 - EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.....	64
493 - THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT.....	69
494 - HEAVEN: THE DESTINY OF SAINTS.....	76

## LOVE AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD

MEMORY VERSE: “Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway” (Deuteronomy 11:1).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 11:1-32

Our last study in the book of Deuteronomy gave an account of the rewriting of the ten Commandments, the prayer of Moses for Israel’s forgiveness and the Lord’s charge to keep His Commandments.

Today, we are going to see God’s command to Israel to be obedient to His commandments and have genuine love for Him. God promised to bestow abundant blessings on them if they fully obeyed Him. We will also study the reaction of God on the disobedient.

### REASONS FOR OBEDIENCE AND LOVE FOR GOD

(Deuteronomy 11:1,7-15; John 14:15; 21:16, 17; Deuteronomy 30:6; John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:11, 12, 19; 3:18).

**“Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments alway”** (Deuteronomy 11:1). This chapter opens with the conjunction<sup>1</sup> “therefore”, which implies its connection with the previous chapter. It was a charge to Israel to love God because He led Israel **“into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude”** (Deuteronomy 10:22). They were implored to remember the faithfulness of God to the promise made to their fathers.

**Question 1: What are the reasons stated in this chapter why Israel have to obey and love God?**

It is the duty of the children of Israel to love God because He is their Maker. For the great acts of God manifested to Israel, they were commanded to love Him. God has showered on them endless love. He plagued Egypt for their sake and destroyed them in the Red sea. He brought them with a strong hand into the wilderness and preserved them from evil. He delivered them from the hands of those they thought were mightier and stronger than them in the countries they had passed through and now about to go in and possess the Promised Land. Many times, Israel showed lack of love towards God through disobedience. On each occasion, they were plagued and were not able to stand before their enemies. Therefore, loving God is an unfailing condition for them to be able to stand before their enemies and possess the Promised Land (verse 8). It is also a condition for them to experience prolonged life in the land flowing with milk and honey (verse 9). Love for God is also a condition for Israel to have rain sent down” **in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil”** (Deuteronomy 11:14). They will also have grass in their fields for their cattle to graze, and have full blessings of God (verse 15).

**Question 2: *Why should believing youths love and obey God?***

**“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13). God is love and He is always the first to show His love towards man. The Scripture reveals: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”** (John 3:16). It was in love that God created man and crowned him with glory. It was also in love that, in sin, **“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). It is by love that He showed us His mercies by which we are not consumed (Lamentation 3:22, 23). Other reasons are: for His protection, provision, promotion, preservation and power. Christian youths ought to love and obey God unreservedly.

It is impossible for sinning youths to truly love God without first accepting His offer of love. By accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour through repentance, they can receive the grace to love and obey God. For the believing youths, God expects them to love Him promptly, perfectly and perpetually. This will not be possible without experiencing sanctification of heart. **“ And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live”** (Deuteronomy 30:6). Sanctification experience can be obtained through consecration and prayer of faith to God.

**REACTIONS TO THE DISOBEDIENT BY GOD** (Deuteronomy 11:2-8, 26, 28-31; Numbers 14:1-12; 16:1-31; 25:1-9; Hebrew 2:1-3).

Moses reminded Israel of the severity of the judgment of God on the disobedient (Deuteronomy 11: 2-7). His aim was not to make them afraid but for them to know that, though God loves His children, He does not tolerate any act of sin (Proverbs 11:22). Therefore, they were to remember some characters who displayed disobedience to God and how they got punished by the Lord. Their characters spanned through their journey from Egypt till the time of Moses exhortation.

**Question 3: *Mention some characters in our text that were punished by God for disobedience.***

**“And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm, And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day”** (Deuteronomy 11:2-4). Other characters include Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their households. They rebelled against the man of God and the ground opened and swallowed them (Numbers 16:1-40). For this reason, New Testament believers are admonished to fear the Lord. **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting**

**holiness in the fear of God**" (2 Corinthians 7:1). No youth should become careless and indulge in any act of disobedience. The youths should also know that, since God did not spare those people in our text, anyone who disobeys Him will never go unpunished. Some of the acts of disobedience committed by some boys and girls are: immorality, indecent<sup>1</sup> dressing, frivolous attitude and irreverence to God. Such youths need to understand that God is of a purer eyes than to behold evil (Habakkuk 1:13).

**Question 4: *What are the consequences of disobedience on the children of Israel?***

God warned Israel of serious punishment whenever they deviated to serve other gods or engaged in any other sinful acts. He warned that He would **"shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you"** (verse 17). Since God did not delight in their destruction, He gave them a remedy<sup>2</sup> to overcome disobedience. The solution proffered to them by God was: **"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates"** (verses 18-20). The same is applicable to us today. Youths should make deliberate efforts to hear, read, learn the word of God and keep them in the heart. They should also set them before their eyes so that it should guide them daily. It should also be a lamp to their feet, so they could know how to walk in this dark and sinful world.

**Question 5: *In what ways are some youths displaying disobedience today and what are the consequences?***

It is unfortunate that some youths today are found disobeying God. They still have interest in worldly dressing, association and music. Others defy God's standard as found in Scriptures regarding the area of marriage. They also come late to the house of God without genuine reasons. Some forsake the assembly of God's children. They do not attend the Youths Home Success and School Fellowships. Some are constantly disobeying their parents, constituted authorities and church leadership. These youths should remember the words of Christ. **"...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"** (Luke 13:2, 3). God gave Israel a token of curse which they should place in mount Ebal when they got to the Promised Land (verse 29). Each time they look at it, it should remind them of God's severity against sin. Rehearsing in our hearts, God's past judgment on the disobedience, will keep us from disobeying Him. This accounted for the admonition of Christ to the believers to **"Remember Lot's wife"** (Luke 17:32).

**REWARDS FOR OBEDIENCE AND LOVE FOR GOD** (Deuteronomy 11:16-27, 29-32; Deuteronomy 28:1-13; Malachi 3:16-18; Galatians 6:8; 1 Corinthians 2:9).

The Scripture says: **“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”** (1 Corinthians 2:9). As God expected Israel to obey and love Him, unlimited blessings are prepared by Him as a reward for them. **“That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him”** (verses 21, 22).

**Question 6: *What are the rewards God promised Israel if they obeyed and loved Him?***

As the children of Israel obeyed and loved God, they would also enjoy the support, supply and the super abundant blessings of God. He promised to multiply their days and that of their children. He gave them the land He promised their fathers, and drove out the inhabitants of Canaan for them (verse 24). God promised to give them wherever the sole of their feet should tread upon (verse 24). He empowered and made them stronger than their enemies and made them a dread to the inhabitants of the land (verse 25). God's blessings was to be upon them as long as they obeyed Him. He gave them a token of blessing which they should set in mount Gerizim (verse 29). Any moment they looked at the mount and saw it, they should remember that obeying and loving God bring blessings. As we read through the Bible and lift God's word above our personal opinion and refuse to add sentiment to it, resolving to keep them in love for God, then, we have the blessings of God. God will promote, protect and preserve you from all evils. He will grant good health and healing to those who love and obey Him. There will be enduring success, victory, wealth and eternal inheritance for such people.

# LAWS OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

**MEMORY VERSE:** “These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth” (Deuteronomy 12:1).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 12:1-32.

The worship of God is a divine service that requires reverence and respect. To ensure this is achieved, God gives us laws and regulations to guide our worship. In our text, God gave the laws of worship and service in the sanctuary through Moses at the border of Canaan to the children of Israel as they were about entering the promised land. This is because true spiritual and divine worship, when established and maintained gives a refreshing and reviving influence to the family, church and the nation. On the other hand, a corrupted, human-devised worship has an evil influence that sets worshippers in a downward and negative move against God. It is interesting to note that the principles God gave concerning true worship has never changed. Our memory verse says: “**These are the statutes and judgments**” we should observe “**all the days that ye live upon the earth**” (Deuteronomy 12:1). There must not be addition or subtraction (verse 32). Therefore, true worship has essential characteristics which worshippers must observe.

**Question 1: *What are the essential features of true worship?***

“**But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him**” (John 4:23). The essential features of true worship include: (1) the **Word** of the God (Colossians 3:16); (2) **Obedience** to the word of God (Luke 6:46); (3) **Redemption** from sin by God (Titus 3:13,14); (4) **Submission** to the word of God (Ephesians 5:21); (5) **Holiness** of heart and life before God (Hebrews 12:14); (6) **Integrity** before God (Acts 24:16) and; (7) **Preaching** the word of God (Acts 20:7).

**EXTERMINATION<sup>1</sup> OF FALSE WORSHIP** (Deuteronomy 12:1-3,29-31; 7:1-6,23-26; 1 Kings 8:40; 1 Samuel 15:1-6; 2 Samuel 5:19-21; 1 Chronicles 14:8-12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

“**Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:**” (verse 2). The entrance of Israel into Canaan marked the formal entrance of true knowledge, pure religion and the worship of true God. This can only be possible when true knowledge of God, pure religion and true worship gain ground and established without adulterating<sup>2</sup> influence of idolatry.

**Question 2: *What did God want Israel to do with the idolatrous spots of the heathen nations?***

“**And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place**” (verse 3). The means of freedom from the influence of idolatry is the extermination or destruction of every monument or symbol of idolatry. This means, any place where the idolatrous nations worshipped their gods were to be destroyed, burnt and overthrown. They were not to be remembered again by the children of Israel. In the same way, Christian youths are

expected to do away with anything in connection with idol worship. **“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry”** (1 Corinthians 10:14).

### **Question 3: Why was God so firm in dealing with the Canaanites?**

The command to exterminate the heathen Canaanites were with a moral purpose. The Israelites were given Canaan as a possession because the seven nations were incorrigible and idolatrous. They had spurned God’s laws and warning for more than 400 years (verse 31; Genesis 15:16). There was nothing left for them but to be cut off and without remedy. Today, God is warning sinners and backsliders to turn from their sins, accept and believe on the Saviour Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Anyone who refuses, rejects and continues in his sins will be punished without remedy. **“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1). Also, God was not only going to cut off the unrighteous from the land, but He also wanted to establish true worship. This He wanted to accomplish through Israel. The sparing of the Canaanites would endanger this purpose of God and Israel’s faith in Him. Hence, the command to destroy every trace of idolatry corresponds with divine prudence, policy and justice. The children of Israel (and we too) must take heed to this law of God. **“Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise”** (verse 30).

We, as the children of God must observe and obey His commandments without delay. As the children of Israel were expected to obey this word of God **“all the days that ye live upon the earth”** (verse 1), the Lord expect the same from us. We should pray and promise God to obey His word. **“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end”** (Psalm 119:33).

**EXALTATION OF TRUE WORSHIP** (Deuteronomy 12:4-14; Psalm 96:1-9; Deuteronomy 14:22,23 John 4:19-24; Malachi 3:8-12; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

**“But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:”** (Deuteronomy 12:5). For the children of Israel, God demanded centralisation in worship as they entered Canaan. This was a sharp contrast to heathen worship. The Canaanites had innumerable places or spots of worship. The idea of a central place of worship takes after the erection of the tabernacle at Sinai. Therefore, centralisation of worship will be a stepping stone from the danger of polytheism to true divine worship. The central place of worship was also to ensure strict and monitored compliance to God’s rules regarding true worship.

However, it must be noted that, while God demanded a centralised place of worship in the Old Testament, there is a shift in emphasis in the New Testament. Today, the true worship of God is **“in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him”** (John 4:23) and not the place. Jesus said: **“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). This does not mean we do not meet together for fellowship and worship as children of God (Acts 20:7,28-32; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The true worship which Moses exalted in his exhortation had some basic biblical characteristics.

### **Question 4: What are the characteristics of true worship?**

**“And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:”** (verse 6). The characteristics of true worship are: one, the worship should be in the place God chooses

(verses 5,11,14). This promoted unity in Israel as a nation. Two, the worship was characterised by giving tithes and offerings (verses 6,11,14,17). God had always cherished people who would offer to Him with a willing heart (Exodus 35:5). Abraham gave tithes of all he had. Solomon offered to the Lord generously at the dedication of the temple. Paul in his epistle teaches that **“God loveth a cheerful giver”** (2 Corinthians 9:7). Tithes and offerings are to be brought to the place God has chosen for worship. There are blessings for those who obey the Lord (Malachi 3:10-12). Three, true worship is characterised by the presence of the whole family (verse 12). It provides occasion of rejoicing for all the members of the family. Four, true worship promotes righteousness and holiness (verses 8,9).

**REGULATIONS FOR TRUE WORSHIPPERS** (Deuteronomy 12:15-28,32; 14:27; Leviticus 3:17; 7:22-27; 17:10-14; Acts 15:19-31).

**“When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after”** (Deuteronomy 12:20). God did not just exalt the worship of His majesty. He also gave regulations so that our worship will be true and acceptable to Him.

**Question 5: What are the regulations which God commanded Israel to observe in our text?**

In our text, there are specific regulations given by God to His people. One, all groups of people were free to eat clean animal (verses 15, 20-22). Two, they were restrained from eating blood (16, 23-25). Three, they were restrained on where to eat holy things (verses 17,18,26). Four, they were warned against the neglect of the Levites (verse 19). This shows care and love for ministers (verse 19). For this reason, God commanded: **“Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth”** (verse 19).

**“Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD”** (verses 23-25). Making drink offering of blood was a popular heathen practice among the Canaanitish nation. The act of drinking blood is a violation of the sanctity of life and the gift of God. But pagan idolaters cared not for life or the word of God. They drank blood as an offering because they were thirsty for blood. The Scripture says: **“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips”** (Psalms 16:4). The daily sacrificial atonement has given way to the atonement of Christ. We need not shed any blood for any reason.

**“Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God”** (verse 28). The children of Israel were encouraged to obey the word of God so that it would be well with them. When we obey God, He is happy and He demonstrates it by giving us His blessings. Start to obey Him today and His blessings will flow into your life. These blessings include: (1) Spiritual and physical wellness (Psalm 1:2,3); (2) Overall success in all endeavours (Joshua 1:8); (3) Revival and Renewal always (Isaiah 40:28-31); (4) Spiritual experiences and strength (Ephesians 1:3); (5) Healthy always (3 John 2); (6) Increase in intelligence quotients (Proverbs 10:6,7) and ; (7) Power and possibilities in all things (Luke 4:32; 5:17). Therefore, **“let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:”** (Hebrews 12:28). It is our privilege and responsibility to

worship and serve the King eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God and King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 1:17).

Lesson 484

## **WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY**

MEMORY VERSE: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 13:1-18.

In our previous lesson, we saw the instructions God gave with regard to true worship. This instruction did not remove the possibility of temptation to spurn<sup>1</sup> God and true worship. To guide against a downward trend towards idolatry, God told the children of Israel how to deal with the temptation to worship false gods which is the focus of this lesson. God’s relationship with Israel brought them under an administration directly under His control. The supremacy of God was the key to their national life. Therefore, any attempt to draw them away after other gods was adjudged<sup>2</sup> treason or rebellion against God. This was why a severe judgment loomed over idolaters and seducers.

Today, Christian youths are warned to stay away from idol worship in any form. “**Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen**” (1 John 5:21). Although there may be temptation and seducers to draw one into idolatry, God still has the power and the grace to preserve those who are ready to follow Him in obedience. From our text, He prescribes solutions on how to overcome temptation to idol worship.

**WARNING AGAINST ENTICEMENT INTO IDOLATRY BY FASLE PROPHETS**  
(Deuteronomy 13:1-3, 6-8, 12-14; Exodus 20:4; Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3,4; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 2:18-23)

“**If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them**” (verse 1,2). In our text, God warned Israel against those who would, on entering into the land of promise, compromise and attempt to teach others to do so. Three categories of people were indentified. These were the prophets, relations and the whole cities. The judgments in all cases were severe and unsparing. When you turn your devotion from God to some other things and change the affection of your heart towards the things of God, that is compromise. Some youths do not only compromise, they also teach and seduce others to do so. In the Old Testament, Balam compromised his faith and ministry in exchange for honour and wealth he never lived to enjoy. Judas Iscariot also compromised his faith and lost his life without any remedy.

**Question 1: Why is idol worship a great sin before the Lord?**

“**Thou shalt have none other gods before me**” (Deuteronomy 5:7). In dealing with people who bring in idolatrous influence into the nation, teach others to compromise and seek to seduce the people of God, divine punishments were pronounced on them (verses 15-17). Idol worship is a great sin before the Lord because it is against His commandment. It makes the heart to have a divided loyalty (Hosea 10:2). It leads to compromise and backsliding (Hosea 4:16,17). It competes in the heart to take the place of God. Such a person will be forsaken by God. “**Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone**” (Hosea 4:17).

**Question 2: *Why is warning against false prophets and idolatry relevant to the Church today?***

**“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before”** (Matthew 24:24,25).

It is significant to know that the command God gave the children of Israel as a guide in their devotion to Him and warning against strange gods have direct relevance to the youths, families and the church today. First, just as absolute loyalty to God was the guiding principle for the Israelites, the same is required from us. Second, just as God warned that temptation may come after entering the promised land, Christ also warned that our relationship with Him does not cancel the possibility of temptation from the devil (Matthew 26:40,41). Three, just as temptation or seduction may come from a so-called “prophet”, relative or a whole city (all from within the nation), a backslider may rise against the true gospel in Christ. We must keep our commitment and conviction to the teachings we have received in the church.

**PUNISHMENT AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS AND IDOLATERS** (Deuteronomy 13:5,9,10,14-17; Joshua 22:10-34; Jeremiah 28:1-17; Acts 13:6-12; 8:9-11, 18-24; Colossians 3:5,6; Galatians 1:6-9)

**“And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee”** (Deuteronomy 13:5).

**Question 3: *What were the punishments for false prophets who wanted to turn people from the true worship?***

The judgment against false prophets and idol worshippers was severe. The Israelites were to stone such people to death on entering the Promised Land. False prophets, seducers and compromisers of true worship deserve a common treatment – REJECTION. God regards them as the enemies of believers who should not be allowed to influence the body of Christ. Therefore, whatever the temptation is and the source it could be coming from, our resolved attitude must be to withstand it at all cost. The call of Christ and the teaching of the word of God as upheld in the Church are so convincing to the heart and conscience that nothing in any way should set them aside. Christian youths should follow Christ and look away from “signs and wonders”. The believer should always remember that miracles are not a sufficient test of truth. Jesus said: **“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:22,23).

**OVERCOMING THE TEMPTATION AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS AND IDOLATRY** (Deuteronomy 13:4,11,18; Acts 20:28-32; John 10:1-5,14,27-29; Jude 3)

**“...So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you”** (Deuteronomy 13:5,11).

**Question 4: *Why does God allow the rise of seducers in the Church today?***

God permits these group of people as a means of proving the church. When a church survives the seduction and compromising influence of false prophets and seducers, she becomes strengthened, purified and firm in holding to the truth of the word of God. **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 1:3).

**Question 5: *How can we overcome the temptation against false prophets and idolatry?***

**“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him”** (Deuteronomy 13:4). From our text, there are seven principles given by God on how to overcome temptation against false prophets and idolatry. These are: (1) walking before the Lord in righteousness (verse 4; Genesis 17:1). Abraham and Enoch showed us the examples. (2) Fearing the Lord always (verse 4; Luke 12:4,5). (3) Obeying the word of the Lord (verse 4; Deuteronomy 12:1-4). Partial obedience brings God’s judgment. (4) Listening to the word of the Lord (verse 18; Proverbs 28:9). (5) Keeping the word of the Lord always in your heart (verse 4; Proverbs 3:1,2; Deuteronomy 11:1). (6) Serving the Lord always (verse 4; Matthew 6:24). Jesus warned His disciples that it was not possible to serve God and mammon. (7) Cleaving to the Lord till the end (verse 4; Deuteronomy 4:4; Acts 11:22,23).

In view of the inherent danger in idolatry, we must keep away from idolatry and its allied sins in the church today. John the Beloved warned: **“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen”** (1 John 5:21). Our devotion must be to the course of the gospel. In loyalty to Christ and the cross, we ought to keep ourselves in a trusting, humble attitude as we walk in the light and reject every temptation to transfer our allegiance. If we do this and flee idolatry, compromise and seduction in every form, we are going to experience purity and power in the church.

Lesson 485

## **CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS**

MEMORY VERSE: “And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 14:1-29.

The book of Deuteronomy has many lessons for Christian youths today. Some of these lessons are illustrated by pictorial or symbolic languages. Example is the chapter we are studying today. In our text, the children of Israel were referred to as peculiar people who were to eat clean animals only. They were forbidden by God to eat anything unclean. This, a typical Jew obeyed. **“But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean”** (Acts 10:14). However, in the light of the New Testament, the application of this text would be different. In relation to our fellow men, God does not allow discrimination (Acts 10:14,15; 11:1-3). Secondly, concerning the food to eat or not, the Scripture commands us to receive **“...with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”** and not to refuse (1 Timothy 4:3-5). Yet, we must maintain good hygienic conditions in the preparation of our food (Deuteronomy 23:13,14; Acts 27:33-37). Today’s study will enlighten us on God’s demand from Christian youths in all areas of their life style and giving to Him.

**GOD’S DEMAND FROM PECULIAR YOUTHS** (Deuteronomy 14:1,2; Exodus 19:3-8; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9).

**“Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead”** (Deuteronomy 14:1). God commanded the children of Israel not to make marks on themselves. For this reason, they are not expected to cut themselves or make any baldness between their eyes for the dead. As Christian youths, our body belongs to God. We are not allowed to place incisions<sup>1</sup> or any mark on our body for any reason. Tattoos and painting on the body should also be forbidden. We must not introduce anything that God has not approved in His word on our body. We should offer our body wholly as a living sacrifice to Him. All those who are saved through the grace that is in Christ by faith belong to God. **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”** (John 1:12; Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

**“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth”** (Deuteronomy 14:2). God describes the children of Israel as a holy, chosen and peculiar people totally belonging to Him. The New Testament also describes Christian youths as lively stones, a holy priesthood, chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation and a peculiar people. What a wonderful privilege purchased by the blood of Jesus for the redeemed!

**Question 1: *How can a sinner be transformed and be a peculiar Christian youth?***

**“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.... But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:6,8). The love of God through the death of Christ has purchased forgiveness of sins for all who repent and believe in Christ. This transformation brings innumerable<sup>1</sup> benefits into our lives.

**Question 2: *What are the benefits of being a peculiar youth from the Lord?***

**“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:”**

(Exodus 19:5). Some of the benefits include promotion, protection, preservation, prudence, power, etc. Will you love to be a peculiar child to the Lord?

**GRACIOUS DELIVERANCE THROUGH JESUS, THE PRINCE** (Deuteronomy 14:3-21; Acts 10:9-16; 1 Timothy 4:1-8; 1 Corinthians 8:8)

**“Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing. These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat”** (Deuteronomy 14:3,4). We thank God through Jesus Christ who has delivered us from ceremonial laws. To the children of Israel, this was a specific instruction and command from God. From verses 4-6,9-11, the Lord gave a list of animals that are clean to be eaten. Also, in verses 7,8,10,12 and 21, He gave a list of animals that are unclean and not to be eaten.

There are two principles we should apply in understanding the Old Testament scriptures. These are the primary interpretation and prophetic implication. To the children of Israel, the primary interpretation was to obey all that the Lord commanded in this chapter. However, the prophetic implication to us is that God does not permit discrimination in His Church. This was the reason why, when Peter refused to eat what God has prepared, he was told that: **“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common”** (Acts 10:15).

**Question 3: Answer TRUE or FALSE:**

**(i) Discrimination<sup>1</sup> is permitted by God in our fellowship.**

**(ii) Eating food from people of other culture cancels your salvation in Christ.**

**(iii) We must not allow eating of food to weaken the faith of other believers.**

**(iv) If we are disposed to eat food from other culture, once it is blessed in the name of Christ, it will not harm us.**

**(v) As future missionaries, we should learn to accept and eat other people's food.**

In the New Testament, God commands believers to receive with thanksgiving every creature of God. **“Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer”** (1 Timothy 4:3-5). This does not mean that if we do not eat food from other cultures, we have sinned (1 Corinthians 8:8).

**“But of all clean fowls ye may eat. Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk”** (Deuteronomy 14:20,21). The children of Israel were commanded to eat clean animals while unclean animals were not to be eaten because they were **“holy people unto the LORD”**. However, we should know that eating unclean or clean animals today, does not recommend us to God for salvation in Christ by faith. Also, you may keep the laws but still be unclean or defiled in the sight of the Lord. We must then seek to know what can make one unclean or defiled before God. **“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do**

**fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away**" (Isaiah 64:6). The scripture says: **"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one"** (Job 14:4).

**Question 4: What are those things that can make a Christian youth unclean or defiled before God?**

**"And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man"** (Mark 7:20-23). Sins and evils are things that can make a Christian youth unclean or defiled. Refusal to eat or not to eat does not defile one (Mark 7:18,19). Christian youths are not called to uncleanness but to holiness of life (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

**Question 5: How can we be cleansed and kept righteous before God?**

To be cleansed from uncleanness without and within is the responsibility of God. However, we must make ourselves available for God to perform the work of grace. **"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work"** (2 Timothy 2:21). The cleansing is through the blood of Christ by faith. **"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:7,9). After the initial cleansing, we should maintain the grace by doing the following practical things: (i) stay away from all uncleanness (2 Timothy 2:19). (ii) Flee from youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). (iii) Keep yourself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). (iv) Believe God that He is able to preserve you from evils (1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24; Romans 1:17). (v) Seek the Lord for a second work of grace (sanctification) in your heart and life (Isaiah 6:5-7; Psalm 51:10). (vi) Learn to live in righteousness through grace daily (Isaiah 1:16,17; Titus 2:11,12). (vii) Live in the fear of God daily (1 Corinthians 7:1). (viii) Read and meditate on the word of God (Ephesians 5:25-27; John 15:3). (ix) Pray daily for spiritual strength to overcome temptation (1 Peter 5:10,11; Colossians 12). (x) Preach the gospel that produces righteousness (Romans 1:16,17; Matthew 5:16). This life of holiness, God demands it, the Saviour commands it, the Spirit inspires it, the Word commends it, the world contends with it, the apostles defended it and the believers must uphold it. Our prayer and desire always should be: **"...cleanse thou me from secret faults"** (Psalms 19:12).

**GIVING: DIVINE COMMAND TO PURIFIED YOUTHS** (Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Malachi 3:8-12; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 8:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Luke 6:38).

**"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year"** (Deuteronomy 14:22). The love of God is not passive but active. As He blesses His people, He also expects them to respond by giving to Him. Here, the Lord commanded them to completely pay their tithes every year.

**Question 6: What is tithe?**

**“...Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee”** (Genesis 28:22). Tithe is ten percent of our gross income or gift. As students, we are not to pay tithe on money given to buy textbooks or to pay school fees. Furthermore, God specifically commanded them that their tithes should be paid where He was to choose. We are to pay our tithes where we receive spiritual food. For our giving to be acceptable, we must have a good relationship with God.

**Question7: What should we give to God first before our tithe will be acceptable?**

Giving to God with a sinful heart and mind will not be acceptable. Therefore, we must give our hearts to God in repentance. **“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways”** (Proverbs 23:26). Also, we must give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). Acceptable giving is by the grace of God. Apart from giving to God, our Saviour, we also should give to saints and sinners in need with a pure heart (Galatians 6:7-10). The more we give to God, the more we are blessed of Him. From now, develop a gracious habit of paying tithe and giving to the needy.

**“...that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always”** (verse 23). The purpose of receiving the teachings of the word of God is for us to learn to fear the Lord always. The evidence of fearing God is when we stay clear from evils and sins. **“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil”**. **“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil”** (Proverbs 3:7; 16:6). Do you have the fear of God?

**“And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee”** (Deuteronomy 14:27). The Levites were ministers of God like the priests. They were not to possess any inheritance in Israel. Therefore, they were not to be forsaken by the Israelites. As the priests were to be taken care of by them, so were the Levites (Numbers 5:10; 18:12). Unfortunately, Israel forgot the commandment of the Lord years after and forsook them. Consequently, the Levites left their duties in the temple (Nehemiah 13:5,10,11). However, New Testament ministers should not make themselves burdensome even though the people forget their God-given responsibility (2 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

The result of obeying the commandment of God was **“that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest”** (verse 29). The call to serve God is not without His blessings. Later in the history of the children of Israel, God challenged them saying, **“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him”** (Isaiah 51:1,2). We cannot serve God in vain (Isaiah 45:19). He will surely reward abundantly. This is the time to serve Him faithfully and sacrificially.

## **LAWS CONCERNING DEBT AND SLAVES**

MEMORY VERSE: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (**Romans 13:8**).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 15:1-23

The Lord’s dealings with the nation of Israel show Israel’s peculiarity to Him. He had told them in the previous chapter that **“thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nation that are upon the earth”** (Deuteronomy 14:2). He called and chose the nation of Israel to Himself, and wanted them to be different in several ways from the heathen nations, in principles and practice.

From our text, the Lord reveals the brotherly relationship that should exist between the creditor and the debtor, the rich and the poor as well as the master and his servant. The privileged were to be considerate, kind and hospitable to the less privileged. Thus, the Lord introduced the year of release – a sabbatical year which was to be a form of celebration all over the land of Israel. **“At the end of every seven years thou shall make a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall releases it: he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother: because it is called the Lord’s release”** (verses 1,2). Nothing of such existed among the heathen nations. Indeed, Israel was a peculiar nation. Similarly, the church of Christ is called and chosen to be a peculiar body. The Scripture commands: **“Let brotherly love continue”** (Hebrews 13:1).

**THE LAW OF CANCELING DEBTS** (Deuteronomy 15:1-6; 23;19,20; Galatians 4:3-5; Romans 5:6-9; Matthew 6:12; 18:27).

Debt is a sum of money owed to somebody. The creditor is the lender while the borrower is the debtor. In our text, the Lord wanted the creditor to relate with his debtor on the basis of brotherly love. He therefore established a law of forgiveness and release. **“At the end of every seven years thou shall make a release. And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it: he shall not exact it of his neighbour or of his brother: because it is called LORD’S release.”** (verses 1,2).

**Question 1: *Why must the creditor cancel the debtor’s debt at the end of the sabbatical year?***

The Lord’s instruction was that at the end of every seven years the children of Israel must cancel debt. At this period, the creditor must not require payment from his fellow Israelites or brother. This must be so because the Lord’s time for cancelling debt has been proclaimed. The creditor may require it from a foreigner but must cancel any debt his brother owed him.

**Question 2: *What is the significance of the release of the debtor at the sabbatical year?***

By this law, the Lord released the debtor from the bondage of debt. A sabbatical year consists of seven years and the number seven stands for completeness, finality or fullness. The seven years of indebtedness shows the helplessness and hopelessness state of the debtor to free himself of the bondage of debt. And so, only by the **“LORD’S release”**- a divine intervention - can he be freed and set at liberty. And because it is the **“LORD’S release”**, the creditor cannot require ought from him anymore.

**Question 3: *How does the Lord’s release’ apply to youths today?***

All sinners are debtors spiritually. They owe a debt they cannot pay. But at the fullness of time, Christ paid the price of release and redemption from the spiritual debt they owed. **“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the element of the world: but when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”** (Galatians 4:3-5). This is the Lord’s release from the power and bondage of sin. At the fullness and perfection of time, Christ came and died so that our sins could be blotted out. However, when we borrow anything, we should endeavour to return it to the rightful owner. It is only a wicked person that owes and refuses to pay back. **“The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.”** (Psalm 37:21).

**“Save when there shall be no more poor among you for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command this day”** (verse 4). The plan of God for the nation of Israel was that they should be richly blessed. He, however, exhorted them to **“carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God”** and do as they were commanded by His word. The condition of blessing is hinged on obedience to His word. For a Christian to be richly blessed by the Lord, he must observe and do as God’s word instructs. This will make Christian youths rich in their spiritual life and their academics coupled with diligent studies.

**THE LAW OF CARING FOR THE POOR** (Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:35-38; I John 3:17-18; Galatians 6:7-10; 2 Corinthians 9:6,7; Romans 12:8,13; 1Timothy 6:17-19).

Verses seven to eleven of our text centre on showing concern for the poor in the land. **“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shall not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother”** (verse 7). This was a law and a command from God to the rich people of the land to take care of the poor around them. The Lord’s command was that the rich should not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward their brethren. Rather, they should be open-handed and cheerfully give of their riches to care for the poor and needy. Neither should the rich harbour any wicked thought that the seventh year, the year of release is near, because of that show ill will towards the needy. The rich should give generously to the poor and do so without a grudging heart so as to be blessed by God. By this law, the Lord thoughtfully made provision for the care of the poor and needy in the land of Israel. This also shows how compassionate and caring the Lord is. It brings to light the divine thoughtfulness of our benevolent<sup>1</sup> God. He had even made some provision for the care of the poor before now. **“And six years thou shall sow thy land, and shall gather in the fruit therefore: but the seventh year thou shall let it rest and lie still: that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shall deal with thy vine-yard, and with thy olive yard”** (Exodus 23:10,11). He made further provision of tithe to the poor; each year the children of Israel presented a tithe of produce as an offering to God. Every third year the tithe would be distributed to the poor, fatherless, widow and needy people. **“At the end of three years thou shall bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shall lay it up within the gates.... And the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest”** (Deuteronomy 14: 28,29).

God accepted the gifts to the poor and needy as an offering to Himself. Therefore, the rich were to take it as a responsibility to care for the poor and needy people of the land. Jesus said, **“verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”** (Mathew 25:31-46). Also

the scripture says, **“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again”** (Proverbs 19:17). It will therefore amount to sin and disobedience to God’s express command for the rich to overlook the condition of the poor and needy people. **“Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land”** (verse 10,11).

#### **Question 4: How can Christian youths care for the poor and needy today?**

The word of God applies to everyone. As Christian youths, we can equally manifest care and be generous to fellow youths around us. We can help those that are academically poor by assisting them in their areas of deficiency. We can share our personal belongings with the poor and the less privileged. More than these, we can share the gospel of salvation to sinning youths around us.

Proper perspective<sup>1</sup> about giving to care for the poor and needy people will help us to do it with the right attitude and motive. Giving to assist the poor and less privileged is an offering to God. It is commanded by God as we have seen from our text. Therefore, we do it not for the sake of the beneficiaries, nor with the motive of expecting a pay-back. But it should be done as a special service to the Lord; as appreciation for all He has done for us. In view of this, the Lord, through Paul the apostle, told Timothy to exhort the rich **“that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate”** their riches with the poor and needy around them ( 1 Timothy 6:18 ).

**THE LAW OF CONCESSION FOR SLAVES** (Deuteronomy 15:12-23; Exodus 21: 1-6; Leviticus 25: 39-43; Jeremiah 34:13,14; Isaiah 61:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

**“And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee”** (verse 12). If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself and serves his master six years, the master must freely release him (the slave) in the seventh year, being the year of the Lord’s release. By this law, the Lord wanted Hebrew masters to manifest the following virtues toward their slaves: (1) concern for servants; (2) care for servants; (3) compassion in servitude and (4) compensation for services. **“And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine press: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him”** (verses 13,14). The law required the masters to make provisions for their servants on the year of release. The Lord reminded them, **“Thou wast a boundman in the land of Egypt”** but divine justice released them at God’s accepted time.

Similarly, masters today should manifest concern, care, compassion, and make provision for compensating their servants. We are to remember that we are debtors to divine justice, and we have nothing to pay with. That we were slaves to sin and moral defilements, but Christ paid our sin-debt and has released us into a gracious compensation and eternal inheritance. Believing youths who are privileged to occupy positions of leadership in the schools or community should relate with their subjects accordingly.

Furthermore, when we clearly preach the gospel, the acceptable year of the Lord is proclaimed. That is, the year of release of the sinner, deliverance of the soul, and obtaining rest in Christ. We are called to be agents of the Lord’s year of release (2 Corinthians 6:2). However, if the servant says he does not want to leave his master because he loves him and is well off with his master, the master would take an awl and

push it through his servant's ear lobe into the door and would become his servant forever (verses 16,17).

Today, believers are Christ's servants for life by virtue of the redemptive work that He accomplished on our behalf. If not for the ransom Christ offered for the salvation of our souls, we could have been forever lost. Therefore we are the Lord's. We have been bought with a price. We are therefore to please Him alone in all that we do, and live only for His course. He is our Master, Lord and Saviour.

Finally, the Lord reminded the children of Israel of the need to set apart for Him, every firstborn male of their herds and flocks. They must not put the firstborn of their oxen to work and should not shear their firstborn sheep. They were to eat them in the presence of the Lord at the place He would choose when they eventually got to the Promised Land. Hence, all firstborn male of their flocks and herds were sacred to the Almighty God.

This implies that believers should give their best to the Lord and also give Him first place in their hearts. God and His word must be our first point of consideration in all matters of life before any other thing. He demands and rightly deserves our best because He gave us His best to save our souls. In view of this undeniable fact, Paul by the Spirit's inspiration admonished thus: **"I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that ye present you bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service"** (Romans 12:1).

Lesson 487

## **CEREMONIAL LAW VERSUS GRACE**

MEMORY VERSE: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (**Romans 6:14**)

TEXT: Acts 15:1-35

The two previous chapters of this book consider the experience of Paul and his fellow missionaries during their first missionary journey. He and Barnabas,

had been separated by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2).

Meanwhile, **“certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”** (verse 1). When Paul and Barnabas came back from their first missionary journey, they had to combat with this influx of false doctrine. They took their stand against the people who taught such doctrine and the matter eventually got to the apostles in Jerusalem who used their spiritual experiences and understanding to settle it. Messages were sent to the Gentiles on the basic requirement for God’s salvation. On receiving such correspondence, **“they rejoiced for the consolation”** (verse 31). Then, Paul and Barnabas continued to minister to the church in Antioch (verse 35). Today, we will be studying this contention which arose from the Jews’ belief in the Mosaic law and how believers today are to handle similar issues.

**CONTENTION DUE TO THE DOCTRINE OF CIRCUMCISSION** (Acts 15:1-5; Romans 2:26-29; 6:14,15; 4:8-10; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:6; Titus 1:9).

**“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”** (verse 1). While Paul and Barnabas were on their first missionary journey, some men came from Jerusalem to tell the people that they could never be saved only by Jesus. They told them that they needed to add the circumcision of Moses. When Paul and Barnabas heard this, they contended seriously with them to the point that the matter was referred to the apostles in Jerusalem. **“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question”** (verse 2).

We need to note that this false doctrine did not come through people who were outright sinners but from **“certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed...”** (verse 5). There were some of the brethren who were Pharisees and believed on the Lord Jesus. These men still held their Jewish tradition and Mosaic rites with which they still judged their spiritual lives and that of others. They were usually contentious against the liberality and the simplicity of the gospel until enlightened. They were the ones who contended with Peter when he went to preach to Cornelius and his household. **“And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him”** (Acts 11:2).

**Question 1: What should be our attitude to those who preach contrary to the doctrine of Christ we have received:**

- (a) If they are not members of the church?**
- (b) If they are members of the church?**

Sometimes, emphasis on tradition may be from members of the church who have not fully understood the Bible. You do not have to accept what they say or preach. Like the apostles, you can report such to the leaders. Regardless of where the false doctrine is coming from, our goal is to earnestly contend for the faith. **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common**

**salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).**

**Question 2: *Why should we not support false teachers?***

When people come to tell you something contrary to the doctrines of the Bible which the leaders in the church have taught you, you have to refuse and resist it. **“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed”** (2 John 1:10). The two words **“dissension<sup>1</sup> and disputation<sup>2</sup>”** show what should be our stand against false doctrine and false teachers. Such stand is necessary because God is not happy with any child of His who takes side with false teachers (2 John 9-11; 2 Chronicles 19:2). Paul and the other apostles, used their lifetime contending for the truth against false doctrines and therefore left us with a good legacy.

**CAUTION DEDUCED FROM DIVINE CIRCUMSTANCES** (Acts 15:6-12; 10:47,48; 5:1-14; Romans 15:4).

**“And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter”** (verse 6). When the matter got to the elders of the church at Jerusalem, they did not gloss over it but gave time to consider it. Youth leaders should give attention to youths when they ask questions to clarify doctrinal issues. Draw references from the Bible to open their understanding to what is right.

**“And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”** (verses 7-9). Peter began to tell the story of how he was chosen and sent of God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (which James later acknowledged was the first time: the beginning of Gospel public preaching, to the Gentiles in verse 14). He rehearsed to the assembly how they were purified in their hearts and were also baptised with the Holy Spirit. From this, he drew a conclusion that, if God gave them(the Gentiles) the Holy Spirit like any of the Jews who became a Christian even when they(the Gentiles) had not yet been circumcised, then God had saved and sanctified them with no regard to circumcision. Hence, circumcision was not a prerequisite for their salvation. In much similar way, there are many things that people hold to be the requirement for salvation but which are not.

**Question 3: *Mention some things which people hold as evidence of true Christianity.***

Some youths held a particular style or way of dressing as the evidence of genuine Christianity; some others, the kind of church people attend. In any case, true religion is a total transformation of the heart which affects the outward lifestyle. **“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is**

**that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God**" (Romans 2:28, 29). The only way to have such inward change is repentance.

While recalling the conversion of Cornelius house, Peter gave caution that converted Jews should not expect that the Gentiles cannot be saved without the circumcision of Moses. As a matter of fact, it amounts to tempting God like the Israelites did in the wilderness when, against living evidence, people do not believe God can do something. **"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** His conclusion was that, **"through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they"** (verses 10, 11).

That seemed to silence them and they became attentive to the testimonies that Paul brought from his mission field to the Gentiles. **"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them"** (verse 12). The assembly took caution from God's divinely influenced circumstances which led to the conversion of the Gentiles.

**Question 4: *How can we encourage our faith through testimonies of God's work and more in the lives of others?***

**"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"** (Romans 15:4). It is advisable that we learn from the actions of God in the lives of others. After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the people who were not ready to live a transparent Christian life were so scared that they did not join the church (Acts 5:13). If you are praying for something that you have not received an answer to, the testimonies of answered prayers of others is an encouragement that we should not give up praying nor charge God foolishly.

**CREED<sup>1</sup> DELIVERD TO THE GENTILE CONVERTS** (Acts 15:13-35; I Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16)

**"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren' ...to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things"** (verses 13-17). James told the people that what Peter had just said was in line with the scriptures. God had intended to save the Gentiles. God has a foreknowledge of all that would come to pass. **"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"**(verse 18). James therefore gave a suggestion that the converted Gentiles should flee from immorality, idolatry and eating blood (verses 19, 20). These sayings pleased the whole church and they decided to send a letter through Barsabas and Silas together with Paul and Barnabas to those Gentiles (verses 21, 22). **"And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and**

**Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well”** (verse 23-29).

The letter sent to them were like creeds, doctrines or teachings of scripture. It contains basic requirements for Christian living. Upon receiving the message, doctrine or teaching they rejoiced (verse 31). Those who accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem also preached to the people for sometime, to confirm their faith (verses 32, 33). After a while, Barsabas left for Jerusalem while Silas remained with Paul and Barnabas to continue teaching the people. **“Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also”** (verses 34, 35).

After settling this dispute, the church continued the teaching and preaching of the Word of the Lord. The disciples were strengthened and made steadfast in the Lord and Church. As Christian youths, we must stay away from false doctrines and also help those who have gone astray from the Lord to come back. We must also endeavour to strive to keep our souls while trying to help others. **“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ... And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fir; hating even the garment spotted by flesh”** (Jude 21,23). It takes watchfulness and prayerfulness to overcome false teachings (Acts 20:28-31).

Lesson 488

## **PAUL’S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY**

**MEMORY VERSE: “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do”** (Acts 15:36).

TEXT: Acts 15:36-41

In our previous study, Paul and Barnabas contended with the brethren who spread false doctrine of circumcision being a pre-requisite<sup>1</sup> for conversion in the Antioch church. They received some form of creed or doctrine from the elders at Jerusalem for the Gentiles who became Christians in the Antioch churches,

and beyond, to assure them of the simplicity in salvation by grace (Acts 16: 4). This experience of spreading false doctrine might have informed Paul of the need to go back to all the places where he and Barnabas had preached the gospel in order to see how they do. He would need to be sure that they have not been destabilised by false teachers.

Therefore, he decided to embark on the second missionary journey. He told Barnabas his vision. Unfortunately, they fell apart on account of whether to take Mark (Marcus or John Mark) or not. Barnabas took Mark and left for Cyprus without the backing of the Church and the Holy Spirit who appointed him. While Paul and Silas, were recommended by the brethren to the grace of God.

**DEMONSTRATION OF TRUE CHRISTIAN SHEPHERDING** (Acts 15:36; 14: 21-23; Colossians 1: 1-3, 9-11; 2: 5-8; Philippians 2:19-23; 1Thessalonians 2: 1-10).

**“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do”** (verse 36). Some days after, Paul and Barnabas came back from Jerusalem, Paul initiated the idea of going back to see the converts which they had among the Gentiles. He wanted to see them, know their present state and confirm if they had continued in the doctrine he left with them. This is what we term follow up. Like a nursing mother gives attention to ensure that her child is kept safe from sicknesses, diseases and other forms of danger until the baby grows old enough to look after himself, so should mature believers look after the spiritual and physical welfare of newly converted souls.

**Question 1: *What is follow up and why is it necessary?***

Effective follow up is the act of visiting new converts to encourage them in the way of the Lord. Jesus said: **“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: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Mt 28:19, 20). It is necessary because, through it, the faith of converts are strengthened in the doctrines of the Bible. They are taught how to do personal devotion, get closer to God and live victoriously. They are also taught how to handle persecutions and temptations, how to deal with false teachers and their doctrines and how to do evangelism among many more things.

**Question 2: *What is the major hindrance to effective follow up?***

Follow up could be done directly by the person who preached to the converts. Some other times, if the situation so demands, another person can be sent. One major thing that hinders effective follow up is selfishness. **“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”** (Philippians 2: 20, 21). But the act of soulwinning demands genuine love and sacrifice from the Christian youth who is doing the follow up (1Thessalonians 2:1-10).

**“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren ... see how they do”** (verse 36). There is yet another lesson we can learn from this verse on how we can do meaningful visitation. Paul wanted to visit the brethren but he had a clear purpose for his visitation. Many people waste precious time doing visitation but no good outcome(s). This is because there is no clear purpose before they set out. **“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not”** (1Timothy 5:13). One of the dangers of purposeless visitation is that one can become idle and eventually fall into sin of backbiting or even immorality as it was in the case of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob (Genesis 34: 1-5). We should not embark on any visitation without a meaningful purpose.

**DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO CHRISTIAN SERVANTS** (Acts 15: 37-40; 2 Timothy 4:10; Colossians 4:10; Mark 11: 25, 26).

**“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work”** (verses 37, 38). As Paul and Barnabas were planning their journey, Barnabas decided (determined) to take Mark along with them. Paul had another view about this. In any case, this should not have caused any disagreement between them because Mark was not mentioned to be in the team by the Holy Ghost. **“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”** (Acts 13:2). Paul made it clear later that Mark was Barnabas’ cousin (Colossians 4:10). This might explain why he was interested in him.

**Question 3: *Mention the major factor the causes discord among youths.***

Sometimes disagreements come between youths. It could be on doctrinal differences or some other personal preferences. As for Paul, his refusal was not sentimental<sup>1</sup>. **“But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work”** (verses 38). He considered that Mark was not matured for the rigour of the work because he had left them too early from the first journey. Nothing personal! Most times, like we see here, disagreement comes between youths when they have too much consideration for personal preferences rather than allow God’s will to be the focus (Acts 21: 14). Since Barnabas was not going to give up his sentimental opinion for Paul’s reasonable point, **“the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus”** (verse 39). Obviously, he (Barnabas) was so upset that he could not wait for the blessing of the church. It is most convenient to say that he was not sent forth by the church this second time. Hence, no record by the Holy Ghost concerning their work. But Paul waited for the church until he was sent forth and recommended by the brethren. **“And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God”** (verse 40). We can infer from this how gentle in spirit, firm though, Paul must have approached the matter.

**Question 4: *What should be our attitude to brethren who are in disagreement with us on any matter?***

Years later, Paul still maintain good relationship with Mark. **“Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him”** (Colossians 4:10). Several times he referred to him as a co-labourer in Christ (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1Peter 5: 13). This is an example of Christian forgiveness. People who have fallen apart from us should be forgiven in our hearts and when opportunity comes for physical reunion, we should allow it.

**DEDICATION OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER** (Acts 15: 41; 2 Timothy 4:16,17).

**“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches”** (verse 41). Many people loose heart from following a particular course the moment they loose a seemingly reliable person. But Paul, trusted that with God on his side, he could achieve great thing with Silas. Therefore, he went to all those Gentile churches, confirming their faith in the gospel. He had not trusted the success of his ministry to any man but God. He had to cooperate with Silas. The result of their success was tremendous<sup>1</sup>. **“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”** (Acts 16:5).

**Question 5: *When people do not support in the work of the Lord, should we back out?***

When it appears that you are left alone, or with fewer people, in a matter that concerns everybody, just keep on doing your best. God who sees your faithfulness will support you. For various reasons, Paul had often been left with none or fewer people than expected. Sometimes, this was because he had sent them on mission and some other times because they went from him for worldly and selfish gain (Philippians 2:20, 21; 2 Timothy 4:9-12). He has always demonstrated love, forgiveness and courage in such situation. **“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion”** (2 Timothy 4:16,17).

Lesson 489

## **THE MACEDONIAN CALL**

MEMORY VERSE: “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9).

TEXT: Acts 16:1-15

In chapter fifteen of the Acts of the Apostles, we did see how Paul and Silas became partners in the missionary work. **“And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches”** (Acts 15:40,

41). Having been recommended by the church, the grace of God was given to them to serve God faithfully. Paul and Silas therefore were missionaries.

**Question 1: *Who is a missionary?***

A missionary is an individual committed to preaching the gospel of Christ relentlessly in another nation. **“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: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Mathew 28:19, 20). Such a person is always on the move from one place to another carrying the goodnews to all the people wherever they are found. A missionary is a surrendered person whose life is fully given to doing the will of God. He is also a sacrificial individual whose time, talent, treasure are fully given to accomplish the work of God. He is always sensitive to the Spirit leading and does not ignore the Holy Ghost whenever He speaks. He is selfless and has the attitude of quick response to carrying out the Lord’s commands. He has a compassionate mind. Like God, he is not willing that any should perish. This desire in him drives him daily to preach the gospel wherever he sees the opportunity. Paul was one of the greatest missionaries of all times and was specifically called to go and preach to the Macedonians.

**CALL AND CONSECRATION OF DEDICATED CONVERTED YOUTHS** (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:5, 6; 1 Timothy 1:2, 3, 12, 13; Mathew 9:36, 37; 10:1-7; Luke 10:1-11; Jonah 1:1, 2).

As Paul the apostle went into the mission work, he realized the need for people that are like-minded to do the work with him. This was necessary because of the greatness of the work. He had many people, race, and nations to carry the word of God to. It was impossible for only him to do it. The question is, if over two thousand years ago, even though the population of the world was lesser than it is today, Paul saw the need to have more people to work with him. In view of the increased world population of over six billion, how much more we need men, women, boys and girls to get involved in this great work? The church needs more converted, committed and consecrated youths to do the work. **“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest”** (Mathew 9:36-38). Timothy was a youth when he was called to be a missionary.

**Question 2: *Before the call of Timothy, what was the Bible testimony of him in Acts 16:1?***

The testimony of Timothy as revealed in this chapter was that, he was a believer and **“was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium”** (Acts 16:2). We learn from here that before any youth engages himself in the work of preaching the gospel, he must be saved from sin. God does not use sinners but saints to lead sinners to the Saviour. The mother of Timothy

was a believer herself and Timothy whose father was a Greek followed the path of his mother and gave his life to Christ. **“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”** (2 Timothy 1:5). What a great challenge for those boys and girls whose parents are believers but who refuse to surrender their lives to Christ! The life of Timothy was a challenge to the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. He did not bring reproach to the name of Christ or that of his parents. He was not a boy noted with ungodly or unruly habits like many youths today whose life and acts are a shame to Christ, the Church and their parents. It looks like the more years they spend in the church, the worse they become but with prayer and love, God will change them.

**Question 3: *What was the response of Timothy when he was called into the mission work?***

Timothy unknowingly has prepared himself to become a missionary. His lifestyle have been a message to all. When God called him through Apostle Paul, he did not delay in heeding the call to work in the mission field. When it was necessary for him to be circumcised, he did not see it as a hard requirement or task. He willingly yielded to the exercise that carries along a great pain at his age. This is consecration. There are some characters in the Bible called into the mission work. We have Jonah (Jonah 1). He was called by God to go and preach in Nineveh but he refused to go. Some youths are like Jonah today. They have heard messages imploring them to go and preach the word to sinning youths around them but refused. Such youths should learn from Jonah. He would have lost his life if he had not repented. They should repent now and do the work of God before He will begin to require the blood of sinning youths they could have preached to from them. Apostle Peter was another person called to preach to the Cornelius and his household. He would have refused due to racial sentiment if God had not prevail on Him (Acts 10:1-16). Christian youths should remove the barriers hindering them from preaching the word of God to sinners. God’s will is to **“have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:4). Like Timothy, saved youths needs to consecrate their lives and make use of opportunities available to preach to sinners before it is too late.

**CHURCHES ESTABLISHED THROUGH DECREE ORDAINED BY CHRIST** (Acts 16:4; 9:31;14:21-23; Colossians 2:16-23; Galatians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2).

One of the missions of Apostle Paul in his missionary work was the establishing of churches in all the places he went to preach. **“And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches”** (Acts 15:40, 41). He was not a careless preacher of the word of God. Paul and Silas adopted follow up strategy in ensuring that the people continued in the faith. The apostles at Jerusalem had to come together to ordain a decree, (God’s laws or commandments) being inspired by the Holy Spirit to regulate the activities of the church. An example was in Acts 15:1-39 where they had a deliberation on what the churches should observe from the laws of Moses. This became

necessary because they realised they were in a new dispensation<sup>1</sup> of grace. In this dispensation, Christ whose blood was shed to give full liberation<sup>2</sup> for man from sin and its consequences was the focus. His sacrifice on the cross brought about the abolishment<sup>3</sup> of ceremonial laws.

**Question 4: *What is the most important thing for the establishment of the churches?***

**“And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem”** (Acts 16:4). The basic foundation for the establishment of the church and the preservation of converts and believers in the faith is the word of God. The word of God is all that we need today in bringing souls into the Kingdom of God and sustaining those already in the faith till the end. It should not be supplanted by any other activity. Godly inspired music, love feast and charitable giving are good but the church should not be established solely on them. The only thing that will crush the church and subject it to just social gathering when missing is the word of God. This account for the reason some churches have no life in them today. Our Lord Jesus Christ was successful in His ministry on earth without some of these substitutes. The early church succeeded without them. They were heading for failure when they introduced things contrary to the command of God (Acts 5:1-10; 6:1-7). Contemporary churches should learn from these.

**Question 5: *What should be the place of the word of God in the church today?***

**“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”** (2 Timothy 4:1, 2). The word of God should take the first place in the church today. It should be exalted above singing, giving, ceremonies and above the preacher’s personal opinion. If God exalted His word above His own name, what should the church do? The word of God should be the focus of our message. We are warned not to preach another gospel. Whosoever does so is accursed. **“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”** (Galatians 1:8).

**CAUTION AND CALL TO PREACH IN DESIGNATED CITIES** (Acts 16:6-15; Jonah 1:1; Mark 16:15, 16; Mathew 10:1-20; Luke 10:1-17; Acts 1:8).

**“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia”** (Acts 16:6). As Apostle Paul obeyed the call to preach the gospel to the heathen nations, he did it with caution. He was always sensitive to the Spirit’s leading. This was the reason why he succeeded. He was a wise master builder who was guided by God’s Spirit in him. The Holy Ghost is a partner in the evangelical work. Any youth that wants to be successful as a missionary should consecrate and pray to be endued with the gift of the Holy Ghost and power.

A wise missionary should not preach anyhow. He must be moved and directed by the Holy Spirit. Many preachers of the word have had problems for this ignorance. They have preached when and where they should not have. They could have avoided some of the problems they encountered if they had listened to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows the places and people where and whom God had prepared to receive the gospel. Christ said none can come to Him except the Father draws him. For Paul, he wanted to preach at Prygia and the region of Galatia and was forbidden at that time to do so. Also, **“After they were come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not”** (Acts 16:7). They were disallowed by the Spirit because there was a place God had prepared people for salvation at that time and urgent attention was needed to accomplish the work. If youths could learn how to listen and depend on the Holy Spirit, they will record success in their ministry. Begin today to listen to the Holy Spirit and you will record tremendous success.

Paul had a vision of an urgent call to come and preach at Macedonia. **“Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”** (Acts 16:10). This is another area of problems with youths. They do not understand that preaching is an urgent task needing urgent attention.

### **Question 7: Why is Preaching an urgent task?**

The task of preaching is urgent because sinners can die at anytime. If this happens, they will go to hell fire and suffer through eternity. Their souls are precious and valued by God than the riches in the world. Christ had died for them. A price has been placed on them, the blood of Jesus is the high price and was shed for them. We should not allow it to be wasted. We should act now, otherwise, He will be unhappy with us. Many people we see today, we might not meet them again throughout our lifetime. Therefore, while they can be reach now, preach to them. The response of Paul led to the salvation of many women at Philippi after they had prayed and preached. Prayer is also very important for a soul to be won for Christ. As we obey God today, pray, preach after listening to the Spirit of God, precious souls shall be won to Christ through you in Jesus name.

Lesson 490

## **IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL AND SILAS**

MEMORY VERSE: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

TEXT: Acts 16:16-40

The companionship of Paul and Barnabas was sharply severed and Silas filled his place, **“being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God”** (Acts 15:40). However, the missionary work of Paul continued with great exploits. His mission still enjoyed the direct leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In their outreach to the city of Philippi, they came across a damsel<sup>1</sup> possessed with a spirit of divination, whom Paul delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit. Due to the loss of gain from those who were using the oppressed damsel for divination, they were beaten and imprisoned. While in the prison, Paul and Silas prayed and praised God and great supernatural power of God visited the prison. Through this miracle, the Philippian jailer was converted with his

household. This is the reason our memory verse says: **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28).

**PREACHING WITH POWER TO SAVE SOULS AND DELIVERING THE OPPRESSED** (Acts 16:16-24; Philippians 2:9-11; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 9:37-43; Acts 8:9-13,18-24; 13:6-12; 19:13-20; Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18).

**“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation”** (Acts 16:16,17). Paul and Silas were led by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel. Nevertheless, they met with difficulties. A demonised damsel followed the team and made a show of religion and her association with them. The damsel lived upon pretence and brought gains to her masters out of fancies and lies. The demons in her proclaimed the identity of the missionary team, which appeared scripturally correct; but she was influenced and inspired by the evil spirit in her. Through this evil power, souls were bound in captivity to sins and evils.

**Question 1: *What is the purpose of the devil and his agents against souls?***

The actions of the damsel with the spirit of divination give us the contrast between the servant of Satan and the servant of God. The servants of God had truth and selfless interest in the spiritual and physical welfare of the people in their minds while she had cunning lies and deceits, framed to defraud men of their substance which was injurious to their souls. Thank God, her goal and that of her master were disappointed.

**“And this did she many days. But 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”** (verse 18). Paul, for some days, tolerated her. Her witness may have been true but it was certainly liable to be misunderstood. Following the example of the Lord, Paul resisted the association of his work with the witness of a demonised damsel (Matthew 8:28-34). It is necessary that the Christian service is dissociated<sup>1</sup> from the work of the devil. Also, like Christ, Paul delivered the possessed from the evil power instantly by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our responsibilities as soul-winners are preaching the gospel to save souls from sins and also delivering those who are oppressed and possessed with evil power. This ministry was part of Paul’s ministry given by the Lord. **“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”** (Acts 26:18). Ours is not different. Let us be faithful to fulfil it too (Colossians 4:17).

**Question 2: *How can those who are possessed with evil spirit be delivered today?***

**“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:9-11). The deliverance was effected by the name of Jesus Christ through faith. Love for the captive underlined Paul’s action and he was indifferent<sup>2</sup> to what the damsel and her masters would say. If we also go in the name of Jesus Christ, have faith to accomplish the impossible, coupled with prayer and fasting when necessary, act selflessly and in the spirit of love, Satan will flee and fall before us. Through this, we will be of help to the demonised and oppressed and minister effectively to their spiritual and physical needs.

**“And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,”** (verse 19). When the masters of the damsel **“saw that the hope of their gains was gone”**, they accused Paul and his team of troubling the city. They incited the mob and brought them before the magistrates. Persecution was not strange to the servants of God. We too should not see persecution as a strange thing. The Scripture says: **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”** (2 Timothy 3:12,13) and **“we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22). The maltreatment was done with utter disregard of justice and order. The angry mob, rulers, magistrates and multitudes came together against the servants of God who brought the light of the gospel to their city. Does this not confirm the word of God that says, **“men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”** (John 3:19). We thank the Lord their suffering was not in vain. It led to the salvation of more people. Paul later pointed to this fact when he wrote to Timothy. **“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”** (2 Timothy 2:9).

**PRAYER AND PRAISE: SOURCES OF DOMINION OVER CHALLENGES OF LIFE** (Acts 16:25-28; 2 Chronicles 20:1-23; Daniel 6:10; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Psalm 57:1-11; 104:33,34; 42:1-5,8,11; John 11:40-44).

**“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed”** (Acts 16:25,26). Paul and Silas were beaten with many stripes, thrust into the inner prison and their feet kept in stocks. However, at midnight, they prayed and sang praises to God. They rejoiced that, **“they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”** (Acts 5:41). It was Paul and Silas’ midnight prayer and praise that transformed the gate of death and hell into the gate of heaven and joy. It is an evidence of great triumph when our spirit sings not within the safe wall of the Church, but behind the barred doors of the dungeon. Prayer and praise are secrets of victory and dominion over challenges of life. **“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation”** (Habakkuk 3:17,18).

**Question 3: What are the benefits of praying and praising God in times of adversity?**

**“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears”** (2 Samuel 22:7). Our prayer can remove the hindrances placed by Satan. When the believer prays in the name of Jesus, it is the same as if the Lord Jesus was making request to the Father. Prayer changes people and things. Prayer makes a seemingly helpless minority a mighty force that can influence the destiny of nations. A servant of God once wrote: “Prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made flinty<sup>1</sup> rocks gush into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled<sup>2</sup> lions, disarmed vipers and poisons, marshalled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of the moon, arrested the repaid sun in its great race, burst open iron gates, recalled souls from eternity, conquered the strongest devils, and commanded legions of angels down from heaven. Prayer has bridled and changed the raging passions of man, and routed<sup>3</sup> and destroyed vast armies of proud, daring blustering<sup>4</sup> atheists<sup>5</sup>. Prayer has brought one man from the bottom of the sea, and

carried another in a chariot of fire to heaven. What has not prayer done?" We must pray purposefully, perseveringly and persistently in any situation we might find ourselves.

The effect of the prayer of God's servants brought a great earthquake, the foundation of the prison was shaken, the doors were opened and every one's band were loosed. At this point, the keeper thought the prisoners had fled but the man of God said: "**Do thyself no harm: for we are all here**" (verse 28). That was God's preservation and protection over His ministers.

**PARDON AND PRESERVATION OF SOULS IN GOD'S KINGDOM** (Acts 16:29-40; Isaiah 55:6-8; Micah 7:7,18,19; Acts 3:19,26; 2:40-47; 8:37,38; 14:21,22; 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10).

An earthquake came as an outward answer to the prayer and praise of the holy men of God. The keeper of the prison woke up in despair thinking that the prisoners had escaped. However, Paul assured him that all the prisoners were in the prison and this brought the greatest question of his life. "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" This should be the greatest cry of a youth who is not saved from sins. A lawyer once asked Jesus: "**what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**" (Luke 10:25).

**Question 4: *How can a sinner be saved from sins?***

**"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"** (Acts 16:31). Here, the jailor was called to turn away from his sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. The faith that saves is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36; 3:26; 8:35). The Scripture says: "**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life**" (1John 5:12). Faith in Christ brings forgiveness of sins. However, there no forgiveness without repentance. "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities**" (Acts 3:19,26).

**Question 5: *What are the evidences of genuine salvation?***

**"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway"** (verses 32,33). The conversion of the jailor and his household was quickly followed by discipleship and preservation in the Kingdom and fellowship of the saints. The jailor showed the sincerity of his conversion by willingly and happily surrendering himself to water baptism. He also showed that his indifference and hard heartedness had been changed by offering hospitality to those whom he had treated as criminals but now welcomed as friends and fellow brethren in Christ. Today, if the faith of a convert is real and genuine, it must be accompanied with eagerness to learn more of Christ and His word. When this is certain, we should do all we can to keep them in the Kingdom and in the fellowship with other believers of the same faith and conviction.

**"And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go"** (verse 35). The next day, the magistrates sent order that the men should go. But Paul would not merely go. The hour of the supreme honour and triumph of Christ's servants had arrived. Why did he refuse to go? He refuse because they were Roman citizens and by Roman law, it was a crime to flog a Roman without a cause. But in this case, they had been beaten, imprisoned, thrust into the stocks, treated with every hardness and indignity. "**But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out"**

(verse 37). The magistrates on hearing this, were afraid and came to plead with them to depart. With this, the servants of the Lord left and turned to the house of Lydia. When they saw the brethren, they were comforted.

**Question 7: What challenges can we receive from the life and ministry of Paul and Silas at Philippi?**

As Paul and Silas continued in the ministry after the humiliating imprisonment, they stood before us as true servants of the most High God, having transparent integrity and living for one purpose – the presentation of the truth to men for their present and eternal welfare. What a great challenge! In them we see no selfish purpose, love for power and praise. All we see is the intense love for God, an entire devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, unquenchable love for souls and the calm steady hope of His appearing and the Kingdom of Christ. Their preaching convinced men, got them converted and converts were established in the faith and Church. These they did with all blamelessness of purity and quietness. The love of God moved them to suffer for the salvation of souls. Their sacrifice, selflessness and strength of character and commitment made them pay any price for the salvation of others. Souls cannot be saved today if we are not ready to sacrifice our time, talents and treasures to save these souls from sins. Jesus paid the greatest price for sins. We are to make a little sacrifice and effort to get sinners into the Kingdom. The question from the Lord is: “Have you done the best for Me, when I have given you My best?” The songwriter says:

“When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all”.

Pray for grace to serve God sacrificially, selflessly and sincerely for the rest of your life. You are called to fulfil your ministry. **“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”** (Colossians 4:17).

Lesson 491

## **PAUL PREACHES AT MARS’ HILL**

**MEMORY VERSE: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16).

TEXT: Acts 17:1-34

Paul had just left the prison in the city of Philippi where he led the keeper of the prison with his household to Christ and comforted the brethren. He then came to the city of Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. Thessalonica (a very important town in present European Turkey now named Saloniki) was a large and populous city on the Thermaic bay and the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia. The violence of the Jews drove him from the city, when he fled to Berea (Acts 17:5-10) where they met some very noble believers who were dedicated to the word of God. These believers are a model for today’s saints as the Lord instructs that we should **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”** (John 5:39).

**Question 1: Mention some characteristics of the Berean Christians which youths ought to emulate today.**

**“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”** (Acts 17:11). The believers in Berea were noble in spiritual matters. They received the word of God with readiness of mind and daily search the scriptures for confirmation of what they were taught. We too should do the same.

While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy at Athens, he saw the city with the eyes of Jesus that they were lost as the whole city was given to idolatry. This led to his preaching at Mars’ hill in Athen.

**PERSISTENT PREACHING IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION** (Acts 17: 1 – 15; John 17: 9 – 16; 2 Timothy 3: 10-15; 14:1,2,5; Numbers 22: 18; Jeremiah 18: 18 – 20; Matthew 11: 12; Romans 8: 35; Acts 20: 24).

The Church has faced several persecutions in various lands as saints try to fulfill the great commission which was given by the Lord. Paul came to Thessalonica where he decided to share the scriptures at the synagogue for three Sabbath days. He preached Jesus to the congregation which included Jews and Gentiles. While the majority of the Gentiles believed, the Jews resisted and opposed Paul and the other disciples. The Jews were not happy that the gospel which hitherto had been the preserved right of the circumcised race spoken by the Priests and Levites was now declared to all. In addition, the hatred of the conventional Jews against the followers of Christ reared itself up again as they were not happy with the message preached by the saints. **“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people”** (Acts 17:5).

Led by their evil intention, they were able to create chaos in the land which led to Paul and Silas being led out of the city in the night for their safety to Berea. As believers, Jesus Christ said **“...The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also”** (John 15:20). Christ was persecuted by the Jewish people of His time and He continued until His sacrifice at Calvary to save mankind from eternal death. When passing through persecutions, there are lessons to learn from the life of Paul and the disciples. One, persecution does not mean that God is not pleased with our lives. It is only an expression of the unbelief or envy of our persecutors. Two, no matter how much good you do to others, they may still persecute you. Paul was spreading the good news and explaining to the Jews some things which they did not understand, yet, they were passionate in persecuting him and other disciples. Three, when the persecution gets to a point that the safety of our lives cannot be guaranteed, then we need to go for urgent counseling or keep away from the area. The brethren discussed with Paul and Silas and searched for the best way to safeguard their lives. They protected them and led them out of the city to safety. Youths should not blindly face danger in the name of facing persecution gallantly. Leaders should be urgently notified when the dangers become life threatening. This should be reported to the State and National Office for immediate action to ensure the lives of youths we are preaching the gospel to is not

unnecessarily wasted. God is interested in our lives and in our message and none should be taken for granted.

**Question 2: *When we face opposition while preaching, how can Christian youths encourage themselves?***

After Paul left to Berea, he did not allow the opposition they faced to deter them in the preaching of the gospel. As they got to the synagogue, he went to preach Christ to them. The audience at Berea was honorable and nobler **“...than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”** (Acts 17:11). They spent time to listen to the message without allowing their myopic<sup>1</sup> understanding of the prophets and the law to affect their acceptance of the gospel of Christ. The Berean saints were ready and they did search the word of God to understand God’s will for their lives. What a challenge this gives to those involved in evangelism today? God alone knows the outcome of all our evangelistic efforts. He alone is able to know the future of the ministry that the converts we would bring into the Kingdom would be. We have a mandate to preach, we should not allow any form of persecution, discouragement or threats to stop us from preaching the gospel. The Berean saints are also a challenge to us in that they searched the scriptures and had a willing mind to accept the word of God. Christian youths need to spend more time understanding the word of God. God is interested in how we assimilate and accept His word. Unbelieving youths should also listen to the word of God with an open mind and be **“... doers of the word, and not hearers only, ... For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”** (James 1:22; Romans 2:13).

One would have expected the Thessalonian Jews to leave Paul and the others to continue the good work they had started in Berea, but the devil, inciting them, made them continue their evil work of hindering the work of evangelism. **“... when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people”** (Acts 17:13). The devil does not give up easily on his task of drawing souls far from God or stopping the efforts of reaching out to the lost. As Christian youths, this should point us to dependence on God and real battle in prayers before going out for evangelism. Also, we should know that the devil will attempt any strategy to stop any saved youth from fulfilling his God’s given ministry.

**PRACTICE OF IDOLATRY BY THE ATHENIANS** (Acts 17: 16 - 23; 1 Corinthians 10: 14; Colossians 3: 5; Jeremiah 25: 5 – 7; Exodus 34: 14).

As Paul left Berea, he had to wait at Athens for the other disciples. While waiting, he watched the idolatry of the land and how the people were strongly given to sacrilege<sup>1</sup> in their mode of worshipping God. Athens was popular as a knowledge hub; it was a place where people were taught in their customs, philosophy and arts. However, the people were superstitious and wholly given to idolatry. Paul watched as they left the worship of God on the sidelines while giving a lot of attention to the enemy of their souls. The Philosophers of Athens were also a very proud group of people who were highly dedicated to the studying of various theoretical learning. They frequently argued as everyone tried to impress upon the others the veracity<sup>2</sup> of their own principles and philosophies over others.

In spite of their seeming high educational level, they were busy serving the unknown God in unacceptable ways. The knowledge of the world does not give

salvation or spiritual enlightenment to the unsaved. There is only one way of salvation and that is through Jesus Christ: the Saviour.

**Question 3: *Mention ways in which youths practice idolatry today.***

Idolatry is usually defined as worship of any image, idea, or object, as opposed to the worship of the Almighty God. Just like the Athenians who were worshipping the unknown God in their own wrong knowledge by using different images, some youths today are still involved in idolatry. When a youth gives any other thing priority in his life than God, the youth may be indirectly falling into idolatry. God demands our full and total worship and does not want us to place anything above Him. In our lives, actions, thoughts and desires, God should be of paramount interest and priority, for only then can He be pleased with our lives.

**PAUL'S PASSIONATE MESSAGE AT MARS' HILL** (Acts 17: 24 - 34; Genesis 1:1; 2 Chronicles 6:18; Genesis 1:27)

Paul did not allow himself to be carried away by their arguments and strong discussions; he rather looked for a rare opportunity to spread the gospel. Paul was zealous for the course of the gospel and he did not resist the opportunity to preach to these educated but darkened souls. He went to them daily in the synagogue to discuss with them in the defence of the faith. Believers are called to defend the faith. The scriptures says **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 1:3).

**Question 4: *How should believing youths relate with the highly educated or knowledgeable who are also argumentative?***

While preaching the gospel, youths should not get into arguments with the people they are trying to win to Christ. If you are speaking to someone who has a lot of questions, request that you would prefer to take the questions after you finish speaking to him or her. This is to give you sufficient time to tell them about Jesus. Also, as youths, when faced with people whose questions are beyond what we can sufficiently answer, we should refer such to our leaders. We should also be very careful about those who unnecessarily take our time in effortless tasks of busybodies who delight in talking. Time is precious, and we are expected to employ it well, because eternity depends upon it. We must not waste it in unprofitable conversation.

However, Paul was also educated and highly trained by one of the major sects at that time. He understood how to intelligently negate the philosophies of this crowd who **“spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing”** (Acts 17:21) and preach Christ to them. When they heard the way he was interacting, the crowd was divided. While some said **“...What will this babbling say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is”** (Acts 17:18,19). Paul stood on Mars' hill and articulately presented Christ to them.

**Question 4: What lessons can we learn from Paul's presentation of the gospel to the elites at Athens?**

Paul's articulate and straight-to-the point message dwelt on Christ. He started by highlighting their mode of worship of the unknown God; then he explained the real God and His attributes to them, saying, **"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring"** (Acts 17:28); He described how God should be worshipped and explained the futility in their present mode of worship. He ended by stating the future state of every man and the certainty of judgement. His speech had clarity and conviction and made some of them take the decision to follow Christ. However, there were those who mocked and failed to take a decision regarding Christ. There is danger in postponing the day of salvation. God wants everyone of us to be saved. He is interested in our salvation and anyone who comes to Christ will receive pardon and live a righteous life. But for those who fail to repent, there is certainty of eternal judgement if they die in their sins. Repent today, because, **"...now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Lesson 492

## EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

**MEMORY VERSE: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).**

TEXT: Jude 3-13

Christian youths are called out of the world and the evil practices into the righteousness of God. It is a call to higher and better things. It is also a call to the heavenly things, unseen and eternal. It is a call from sin to Christ, from uncleanness to holiness. This is according to the Divine purpose and grace. The moment a youth gives his life to Christ, he has some forces to contend with, such as the Devil, sin, the world, and the flesh. Faced with all these odds, the Church is always contending, struggling, fighting and resisting oppositions. Generally, this struggle is not against flesh and blood or over the temporal, perishable things of life like money, land, possession or material things. The fight is one organised by the Devil and designed to take from us our great pearl, our treasure, the imperishable word, will, mind and revelation of the Almighty. This is referred to in the Scripture as the FAITH - the totality and entirety of all that we believe.

**OUR CALLING: FOUNDATION FOR CONTENDING** (Jude 1-3; Acts 3:19; John 8:30-32; 2 Timothy 1:6-9; Hebrew 3:1-6; 1 Corinthians 7:23,24)

**“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 3). This epistle is addressed to all believers, those who had repented of their sin and accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

**Question 1: *What qualifies a youth to be able to contend for the faith?***

At conversion, Christian receives **“the power to become the son of God”** and to **“go and sin no more”** (John 1:12; 5:14). The strongest of men without conversion is a prey for the Devil in the contest for faith. The weakest of men, with conversion, is a terror to the Devil and his host. Peter, the Apostle, in his message on the day of Pentecost, alerted his audience: **“repent and be converted”**.

**“Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away”** (Isaiah 41:9). God calls men because He is not willing that any should perish but that all should have eternal life. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. It is only after we have taken heed to that call that we can start contending for the faith. **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). Believers are called and chosen by the Lord to show forth His praise in any environment they find themselves.

**Question 2: *In what ways does the Bible describe our calling?***

The Bible describes the calling God gives Christian youth in these ways. First, it is described as a high calling – one higher than any other calling we could ever have on earth. It is higher than a call to serve in government, foreign service, school organisation or to enjoy an overseas’ scholarship. The highest call we can ever have is one coming from heaven above. Paul the Apostle puts it this way: **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 3:14). Second, it is described as a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9). Why? It is a call that only the Holy Spirit can explain, interpret and impress on you. It is a call that has to do with holiness, because God, our Father is holy (Matthew 5:48). Third, it is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). It comes from heaven and opens the gate to us into the presence of the Father.

Our call is further pictured in different ways in the Scriptures. Each of the description shows detail of the benefits accruing to us as a result of our response to the call of God. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians described our call as one to the fellowship of His Son (1 Corinthians 1:9). If you profess partaking of the redemptive grace of God, know that we are called into the great riches of Jesus and we are to get into partnership with Him. In this relationship, we drop our poverty, destitution, want, dryness and get into the riches, prosperity, power and grace of God. Jesus, by the fellowship of sonship is lifting us up to His side on His throne (Ephesians 2:6). He is the Master of angels and all creation. His is the glory and majesty of heaven. He is calling us – suffering, sorrowful and sad ones – to come and share in fellowship and enjoy His glory, majesty and joy.

We are also called to eternal life and holiness (1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). The call of God on us not only brings us into the Kingdom, it also sanctifies us and preserves us in the Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). The translation that comes from our calling is one to a realm where Satan, witches, wizards and powers of darkness cannot reach us or operate. This preservation touches our soul, spirit and body. There is a hedge, an impenetrable wall around all the redeemed of the Lord who have responded to the call of God. Are you among the redeemed? Have you responded to the call of the Lord? Why not come today? (Matthew 11:28; 1 King 18:21).

**REASONS FOR CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** (Jude 4-13; Acts 13:8; Jeremiah 5:31; 1 Timothy 1:9; Galatians 2:18; 2 Corinthians 2:17)

The epistle was written to guard believers against the false teachers who had begun to creep into the Christian church, and to scatter dangerous tenets, by attempting to lower all Christianity into a merely nominal belief and outward profession of the gospel. Having denied the obligations of personal holiness, they taught their disciples to live in sinful courses, at the same time flattering them with the hope of eternal life. The vile character of these seducers is shown, and their sentence is denounced, and the epistle concludes with warnings, admonitions and counsels to believers.

**Question 3: In what ways is the devil deceiving youths into compromise today?**

Compromise is an agreement with an opposer or something that somebody accepts because what was wanted is (seems) unattainable. There are some areas today where some Christian youths who were once fervent in the Lord compromised their faith, they build again those things they once destroyed (Galatians 2:18). They compromise in their: (1) faith – going after false prophets and doctrines; (2) fellowship – getting involved in modern Christianity, unequal fellowship; (3) friendship – unequal relationship, immorality and filthy communication, (4) fashion – worldly, carnal, indecent dressings; (5) their feasting – extravagant<sup>1</sup> and sensual; (6) faithfulness – dropped out, started giving excuses; (7) fervency – abandoned for coldness; (8) fruitfulness – no more good report and evangelism; (9) the fear of God – no longer retain God in their mind.

**Question 4: What are the reasons they give for their compromise?**

Some of the reasons are: intimidation: some youths yield to peer pressure because they want to be accepted, or because other youths may make fun of them if they don't go along with the group. They feel intimidated and then try to impress others or gain their approval by compromise. Another reason is their inquisitiveness. They are curious to try something new that others are doing. They are inquisitive to experiment with evil. The idea that "everyone is doing it" may influence some youths to leave their better judgement, or conviction and copy others contrary to what they know to be right.

**"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ"** (2 Corinthians 2:17). False teachings always lowers the standard of righteous living, lightens the demand of God's laws, removes fear for the damnation of the soul, sears the conscience and takes away responsibility to both God and man. Those who love

false teaching to create some comfortable spiritual environment for themselves are compromisers. The Lord surely frowns on any fellowship, partnership or relationship with agents of spiritual contempt and compromise. We should avoid the agents of the Devil who make believers to compromise and backslide. Their goal is to make standing believers make a shipwreck of their faith. **“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”** (1 Timothy 1:19).

**CHRISTIAN YOUTHS CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** (Jude 3; Nehemiah 13:23-27; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Timothy 6:12-14; Jeremiah 35:5-10,18,19)

**“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 1:3). To earnestly contend is to strive manfully, tenaciously laying hold and keeping something Satan is labouring to take from us.

### **Question 1: *How should Christian youths contend for the faith?***

Christian youths are commanded to contend for the faith earnestly, diligently, courageously, boldly, constantly, gainfully and honestly. Our strength, life, and our all must be involved in the struggle against anyone or anything who wants to take the faith away from us. As we contend for the faith, we must effect a clean separation from all those who compromise the faith even if it would result in persecution, deprivation or misconception. Nehemiah set an example of such a position as he contended for the faith (Nehemiah 13:23-27). We must also WATCH and PRAY – **W**ait on the Lord; **A**bide in Christ; **T**rust in the Lord for supply of strength; **C**ontinue in the faith; **H**old fast the sound doctrine to the end. **P**reach the gospel earnestly; **R**efuse invitation from the camp of compromiser; **A**void self management; **Y**ield yourself fully to God.

We must take these seven pledges as our commitment: (1) I pledge my loyalty to the law of Christ, (2) My labour to His commission, (3) My liberty under His control, (4) My lips to speak for Christ, (5) My looks under His control, (6) My league with others for Christ, (7) My life as hope for Christ and in support of those who hold on to the truth and holiness.

The whole Church must rise and contend for the faith, conquer and subdue the enemy and raise up an enduring standard in the church to save the church from the atrocities<sup>1</sup> perpetrated all around us today. Join the army of the Lord.

Lesson 493

## THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

MEMORY VERSE: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (**Hebrews 9:27**).

TEXT: Revelation 20:11-15

In every sphere of life, it is in the nature of all human beings to err. It is common to see youths in our schools, houses and environment being caned, rebuked or punished. Some other youths are even tried in the Juvenile Courts for offences and sentenced to different kinds of punishment. Guilty youths in our world today are always given some punishments when caught. This shows that the subject of judgment is not strange to us. With God, things are not different.

### **Question 1: *What do you understand by "The White Throne Judgment"?***

In God's plan for the world, He will judge all those who reject His words, love and mercy. This great judgment which will come upon the disobedient is called "**The Great White Throne Judgment**". This is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible which anyone who neglects, do so at his own peril. This doctrine opens our eyes to the time when all wicked and ungodly people (from the age of accountability) including youths, who reject the salvation of God will be judged and sentenced to eternal, unending punishment.

**JUDGMENTS IN THE SCRIPTURES** (Isaiah 53: 4 – 11; John 3: 15 – 18; 1 Corinthians 11: 31, 32; 2 Corinthians 5: 10,11; Jeremiah 30: 3- 7; Matthew 25: 31 – 46; Jude 6)

**“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). From this passage, it is clear that judgment is certain for all men. However, contrary to general assumptions, saints and sinners will not be judged at the same time. The judgement of God will be separate for different classes of people. The Lord God has always been just in His judgments: condemning the guilty and acquitting the innocent. Examples of judgments in scriptures include those lived during the time of Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah and Korah’s company. God does not change. His judgment remains the same today as it was in time past. The guilty will be judged as God will keep to the same principle. **“... For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous”** (Psalms 125:3)

**Question 2: *Why will believers not be judged like the sinners?***

At the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ became the substitute for sinners. Everyone who believes in Him, by virtue of His death have been judged for their sins (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; John 3:18). **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”** (Romans 8:1,2).

**Question 3: *Mention the various judgments found in scriptures. Support your answers with references?***

There are different forms of judgment in Scripture. The first type of judgment we have in scriptures is when the repenting sinner personally exercises saving faith in the sacrifice of Christ and accept Him as Saviour. That person becomes judged and declared justified. **“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after”** (1 Timothy 5:24). Then, as the believing youth lives the Christian life, he daily judges (or examines) himself in the light of God’s word (1 Corinthians 11: 31, 32; 1 John 1:7). This is the second type of judgment. Failure in this type of judgment will result in suffering or chastisement (Hebrews 12: 5 - 11). The third type of judgment will be experienced also by believers at the “Bema” seat of Christ (Romans 14: 10; 2 Corinthians 5: 10, 11; 1 Corinthians 3: 11 – 15; Revelation 22: 12). This will be after the Rapture and the purpose will be to distribute rewards for the works done by all believers while on earth. In this third type of judgment, none will be condemned since all will be believers, but all believers shall be rewarded based on how they have utilized their talents in the work of the Lord.

The other types of judgment will be with the intent of punishing sin. These include the judgment of Israel during the Great Tribulation (Ezekiel 20: 33 – 44; Jeremiah 30: 3-11; Matthew 24: 4 – 25) and the judgment of the (living) nations at the Second Advent (Matthew 25: 31 – 46). Israel will be judged (for her many centuries of rebellion against God) by the cruel hand of the Antichrist. At the

end of the ordeal, **“all Israel shall be saved”** (Romans 11: 26) as they shall **“look upon me whom they have pierced”** (Zechariah 12: 10). The nations of the earth will be gathered before the heavenly Judge to be accepted or rejected depending on their attitude towards Christ now (John 1:11; Romans 9: 5). That is the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25: 31 – 46). The judgment of angels for rebellion against God is identifiable as a sixth type of judgment in Scriptures (2 Peter 2: 4; Jude 6, 7). The seventh is the final judgment and is known as the Great White Throne Judgment.

**THE GREAT, TERRIBLE AND FINAL JUDGMENT** (Revelation 20: 11 – 15; Daniel 7: 9, 10; 12:2; Matthew 11: 20 – 24; John 5: 25 – 30; Act 24:15; Mark 9:43-48)

**“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them”** (Genesis 6:5-7). The world is corrupt and polluted. The fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden brought mankind to shame, guilt and condemnation. From Adam, sin came into everyone that was born into the world. God made provision for the salvation of man but humanity has generally preferred to turn away from God’s call to repentance and pardon. Man has remained rebellious and disobedient. For a long time, it has repented God that He made man on the earth for every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart has been evil continually. God predetermined judgment and punishment for the wicked. His word declares that **“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”** and that **“the wages of sin is death”** (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23).

God has been judging sinners over the ages. He judged the world in the days of Noah, when He destroyed all the living by the flood with the exception of eight persons (Genesis 6: 17, 18; 7: 10 – 13, 21 – 24). He poured out His wrath and indignation upon Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed all that were in them except Lot and his two daughters (Genesis 19: 13, 24 – 26). On other occasions, He brought judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their supporters. He punished the Egyptians for refusing to let God’s people go. At various times, He brought judgment on Nadab and Abihu, on Uzzah, on Sennacherib and his 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isaiah 37: 36 – 38) and on Annanias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1 – 10). However, in the Great White Throne judgment all those who were destroyed in all those cases will still be judged.

What then is this judgment? It is the last and final judgment. It is the judgment that concludes the affairs of this present evil world. At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the devil will be released from the bottomless pit for a while (Revelation 20: 3, 7). He will go out to deceive people again and will gather multitudes to fight against Christ and His saints. This is referred to as the Battle of Gog and Magog. Satan and his people will be defeated. Fire will come from God in heaven to devour them. After this, Satan shall be cast into the lake of fire. With Satan finally sentenced to eternal torment in the lake of fire, the stage then becomes set for the final judgment of all sinning people.

**Question 4: Describe in details, the make-up of, and proceedings at the Great White Throne Judgment.**

The details of the judgment are as follows:

**a. The Throne:** The great God of heaven and earth shall sit on a great throne. It is white showing the purity of God. The setting of the throne is magnificent and of great splendor and glory that befits the eternal King.

**b. The Judge:** The Judge is God Almighty, the Omniscient and Omnipresent. He knows everything and so there will be no miscarriage of justice. He is everywhere, so all things are open to Him. His sight will be so terrible because it is judgment time.

**c. Those to be judged:** (verses 12,13). All those who died in sin from the time of Adam till the time of the Great White Throne Judgment will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15). They will all stand before God for judgment including: (i) All categories of sinners, living and dead; small and great; rich and poor; educated and uneducated; male and female; rulers and ruled will all be judged for neglecting the salvation of God (Hebrews 2:3). (ii) All backsliders who denied the faith of God who once bought them (Exodus 32:33; Hebrews 10:26–30,38, 39). (iii) All those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ (John 3:18,19). (iv) All religious hypocrites (Matthew 23:27). This judgment cannot be avoided by any sinner. The sea, death and hell will give up the dead in them. The bodies of all the dead will be united with their souls and spirits to stand before God to receive the just reward for their ungodly lives. It will be a very great and sobering gathering.

**d. The Judgment:** Everyone of these sinners will be judged according to his works (verses 12,13). It will be done in righteousness. It will be open and everyone on trial will know why he or she is going to the lake of fire. It will be to judge (i) All unrighteous deeds of youths (1 John 5:17). All unrighteousness that was not cleansed by the blood of Christ before then will bring condemnation; it includes unrighteous feelings and imaginations. (ii) The secret deeds of youths which others may not have known of, done in darkness: examination malpractices, immorality, pornography, secret cults, abortion and malice. (iii) The words of men: every idle word, gossip, backbiting or slander will be brought to judgment; all foolish and unedifying words; corrupt, graceless, defamatory<sup>1</sup> and abusive words will be judged (Matthew 12:36,37; Ephesians 5:4). God's judgment will be fair, just and without partiality or respect of persons. No one can influence nor bribe God. **“For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward”** (Deuteronomy 10:17).

**e. The books:** (verse 12) **“...and the books were opened”**. These are the books of records that will contain everything done by sinful boys and girls while on earth. It is according to the records written in these books that judgment will be delivered. This will remove all possibilities of arguments. There will be no room to say the sentence given was based on hearsay or guesswork. All things will be documented and these in many books.

**f. The book of life:** Only one book (verse 12). **“...and another book was opened, which is the book of life:...”** This is the book that contains the names of all those who are born again, washed in the blood of Jesus. Their sins had been judged earlier at Calvary when they repented of their sins, confessed them and received Jesus as their Lord and personal Saviour. We must endeavour to

make sure our names are in this book. All saints in all ages, from the time of Adam to the time of the judgment have their names written in the book of life. Those whose names are in the book of life will be spectators at the scene of the White Throne Judgment.

**Question 5: *Where will those whose names are not in the book of life be?***

**“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:15). An awful end awaits all those that have to appear before God in the Great White Throne Judgment for **“God is a consuming fire”** and **“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 12:29; 10:31).

The lake of fire is the eternal abode of the devil and his angels (Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41). The lake of fire was not meant for man but all those who rejected God and be on the side of Satan, by committing sin, will have no choice than to share in their master’s destiny. Death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophets had originally been cast (Revelation 19:20). The fire will never go out, it cannot be quenched. It will burn forever and ever. The worms do not die. The fire does not destroy but continuous torments. It will be a terrible thing. Whosoever was not found written in the book of life will suffer forever in the lake of fire. His companions and neighbours will be Satan, the beast, the false prophet, demons and evil spirit. However, there is the possibility of escape from this judgment. This is through repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**ESCAPING THE FINAL JUDGMENT** (2 Peter 3:9-14; 1 Peter 4:7; John 3:3,5,16; Mark 1:14,15; 1 Timothy 4:16).

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”** (John 3:16,17).

**Question 6: *How can one escape the Great White Throne Judgment?***

The will of God is that all should repent and believe the gospel and be saved. To escape the Great White Throne Judgment, you need to repent of all sins, confess them and receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Genuine salvation through repentance and faith in Christ is demanded from anyone who hopes to escape. Other conditions include living a holy life everyday, making your restitution, following peace with all men, preaching the gospel and avoiding every appearance of evil. **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”**

Lesson 494

## HEAVEN: THE DESTINY OF SAINTS

MEMORY VERSE: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

TEXT: Revelation 21:1-27

The subject of heaven is a revelation of hope and happiness to the redeemed of Christ, as well as that of doom and downcast for those who rejected the redeemer that died for the sin of mankind. Some scriptures give revelation about heaven, and insight of the existence of it as the dwelling place of God the Creator of all things. The Psalmist attempted to know the condition of dwelling with God in heaven after life on earth has ended. “**LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?**” (Psalms 15:1). When Jesus came into the world, He spoke about heaven. He preached the need of repentance by sinners (old or young) so as to have eternal life. He also warned against the danger of eternal damnation in hell. When comforting His sad disciples at the revelation of His crucifixion and death, He gave deeper insight into the likeness of heaven. He said “**Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you**” (John 14:1, 2).

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, the loving Saviour wrote to the seven churches to make them know their spiritual states and the fierce trials some of them would encounter. He exposed to the world the danger of rejecting Him and choosing the way of sin. The careless believers and the sinners are warned of the suffering that shall befall them after the rapture of the saints. After all these, detailed revelation about the beauty and glory of heaven, the destiny of the saints was given at the end of the book of Revelation by Christ. This is to let us know that after our light affliction comes the weight of glory which Jesus the righteous Judge has prepared for us in heaven.

**Question 1: Give a clear description of heaven as revealed in our text.**

In the language of man, there is no word found to describe the beauty and glory of heaven. It is only when we get up there that we shall understand the beauty and glory of the place where our great God dwells. Though the book of Revelation chapter 21 gives an insight into it, all we need is to endure to the end and strive to enter in at the strait gate, because when we shall enter there, only then shall we be able to explain. Attempt shall be made to give a clear description of heaven as explained in our text. We shall also see those that will be counted worthy to enter and dwell there. There will also be need for youths to take an appropriate decision to dwell in this beautiful city which description surpasses human understanding.

**CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF NEW JERUSALEM** (Isaiah 66:22; 65:17, 18; 64:4; Hebrew 11:10, 16; Revelation 21:1-3, 9-23; 22:5).

**“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind”** (Isaiah 65:17). God promised in the Old Testament the creation of a new heaven. The Saints of old in their life-time sought for the heavenly city despite having little knowledge of it. There were things that were so sure to them about heaven: (i) It is a place where the Almighty God dwells with the holy angels; (ii) It is a better country; unlike the earth, it has a foundation; the maker is God Himself (Hebrew 11:10, 16). It was through the vision of John the beloved in the Isle of Patmos that the description was given. It is a city that has wall of great height, with twelve gates and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on them. The city lies foursquare, the length, breadth and height of the city are equal and it is seven million, nine hundred and twenty thousand feet (7, 920,000 ft). The building is made of Jasper stone, the city also of pure gold like clear glass, her light was the glory of God like a stone most precious, even like a Jasper stone, clear as crystal. The foundation of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stone.

**Question 2: Read Revelation 21:19-21 and mention how many precious stones the foundation wall is garnished with.**

The foundation of the wall of the city is garnished with all manner of precious stones as follows: the first foundation is Jasper; second is Sapphire; the third is Chalcedony; the fourth is Emerald; fifth is Sardonyx; sixth is Sardius; seventh is Chrysolite; eighth is Beryl; ninth is Topaz; tenth is Chrysoprasus; eleventh is Jacinth; twelfth is Amethyst. The gates are made of twelve pearls each and every several gate a pearl. The street is made of gold as transparent as glass. There is no temple there, for God and the Lamb are the temple of it. No need of the sun and the moon for the glory of God does lighten it, and there is no night there. **“For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceive by ear, neither had the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waited for him”** (Isaiah 64:4). This city prepared by the LORD for the redeemed should be the desire of everyone. Youths, will you all be there?

**CLEANSSED DISCIPLES FOR HEAVEN** (Revelation 21: 5-7, 27; Joel 3:17; John 3:3; Hebrew 12:14; Psalms 15: 1-5; Isaiah 65:18, 19).

It was a known fact even in the Old Testament that sinful men or sinning youths shall not inhabit heaven since it is the place where the holy God lives. A songwriter said **“Heaven is a holy place, filled with glory and with grace, sin can never enter there”**. King David, when meditating, asked God, **“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place?”** And God gave the answer **“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully”** (Psalms 24:3, 4). God’s answer to David for this

important question is, someone whose works and thoughts are clean and pure. Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God! Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews thought he was already a disciple for heaven. Having listened to Christ's messages several times, he thought it necessary to come to Him for clarity. This also is what Christ expects from Christian youths today. There is need for youths to come to Jesus who is speaking to them now. He is the one that shed His blood upon the cross of Calvary for the remission of their sins.

**Question 3: *What conditions qualify sinning youths to dwell with God in heaven?***

Sinning youths that have the hope of living in heaven at last must have acknowledged their sinfulness, confessed their sins, be cleansed from sins through the blood of Jesus, and turn away from them. They need to allow Christ to lead them in all their ways. They should make deliberate effort to be pure in heart through the sanctifying power of Christ and be at peace with all men and other fellow youths. It is written: "**Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**" (Hebrews 12:14).

**Question 4: *Are all who go to Church qualified for heaven?***

Heaven is meant for the overcomers, those that persevere and endure affliction for Christ's sake. Those who deliberately refused to yield to temptation, those who do not retard<sup>1</sup> at trials; and those that endure persecution. Their heart's determination is, "I have laid my hands upon the plough, and will never look back". "**He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son**" (Revelation 21:7). They must overcome the world (1 John 5:4, 5; 2:15-17), Satan (Revelation 12:11), False prophets (Mathew 7:15), self and sin (Romans 6:12). Heaven is more than a reward for believing youths. It is the consummation<sup>2</sup> of God's redemptive work. The thought of dwelling with God in heaven is more attractive than merely living in the most beautiful place on earth. The purpose of our redemption is restoring back to man the lost glory before the fall. It is only in heaven we can enjoy full and sweet fellowship with God. Living in heaven allows us to see God, Jesus Christ, the angels and all the saints who had gone to glory. It will be wonderful to see our loved ones who had gone to be with the Lord again.

**Question 5a: *Mention some of the saints in the Bible that you hope to see in heaven.***

**Question 5b: *Are you personally determined to be there?***

**CONSCIOUS DECISION FOR HEAVEN** (Revelation 21:8,27; Mathew 16:26; Deuteronomy 32:29; Isaiah 55:6,7; Psalms 15:1-5; Isaiah 65:18,19).

Everyone desires to spend eternity in heaven, even the sinners. From the foregoing, it is clear that sinners cannot make it to heaven. They may come to church everyday, pray and fast all the time, be given to good works, lead other youths and play important part in the school fellowship, sing in the Choir, have beautiful Christian names. Yet, without genuine repentance, they can neither see nor enter heaven. There is only one way to heaven, it is the highway of holiness which comes through real encounter with Jesus Christ the Saviour. There is only one decision to be taken consciously by the youths, that is, to give their lives to Christ. They should weigh the cost of losing their souls! Let me remind you once again how a songwriter puts it:

*Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost,  
Tho' you gain the whole world for your own? ...  
Even now it may be that the line you have crossed,*

*Have you counted, have you counted the cost?*

Christ said **“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”** (Mathew 16:26). For every decision you make or take, there is always a corresponding outcome! If you choose to continue in your sins, you have succeeded in choosing hell fire. **“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all liars, shall have their parts in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** (Revelation 21:8). For this reason we call you to take a conscious decision now as a sinning youth.

The saved youth are admonished by the Lord **“to endure to the end”**. Therefore, do not give up to temptations. Trials will not destroy you but only make you stronger. Choose not to compromise, do not look back brothers and sisters; for we shall soon get to the shore of heaven where Christ will wipe away all our tears! It is only then we can tell the story how we overcome. The undecided youths, hear the word of God **“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”** (Deuteronomy 32:29). Today is the day of decision. **“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD; and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:6, 7). What is your decision now?