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Scriptures**

Vol. 32

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Lesson 404

CEREMONIAL CLEANSING FOR THE UNCLEAN

MEMORY VERSE: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil” (Isaiah 1:16).

TEXT: Numbers 19:1-22

Our text today deals with the commandment the Lord

gave to the children of Israel concerning the cleansing of unclean person and those defiled as a result of touching a dead body (verse 11). This was to be done by killing and burning a red heifer (baby cow) without spot and blemish. The ashes of the heifer “**shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin**” (verse 9). The holy nature of God hates sin. “**Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:...**” (Habakkuk 1:13). Today, we can only be cleansed by the blood of Christ as we repent and believe in Him. The blood of Christ was shed for the permanent cleansing without any need of sacrifices for cleansing (Hebrews 9:14).

A close study of the text before us shows: God’s ordinance (verse 2); provision of an heifer without spot and blemish (verse 2); the sacrifice that was to be done without the camp (verse 3,9); the cleansing was for the defiled person (verse 11,12); the purpose of the water of separation (verse 9); the permanence of the law (verse 10) and death penalty for the disobedient (verse 13). This law of cleansing was for any defiled person in Israel and strangers living among them. In the same way, the salvation provided by Christ is for every sinner who accepts and believes in His sacrifice. “**But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man**” (Hebrews 2:9).

Question 1: Why is cleansing necessary today?

Cleansing is necessary today because without it, we cannot have redemption and relationship with God. This means that we cannot enjoy the blessings of God. “**Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**” (John 3:5).

CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR CLEANSING (Numbers 19:1-16; Isaiah 1:16-20; Jeremiah 4:14; Acts 22:16; 2 Corinthians 7:1; James 4:8; 1 John 3:3).

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein

is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke" (Numbers 19:1,2). This ordinance was specifically for any defiled person in Israel and strangers living among them. The Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to speak to the children of Israel to provide a red heifer without spot and blemish which Eleazer the priest shall kill without the camp. The priest must be careful to observe this ordinance. One, the priest shall sprinkle the blood directly before the tabernacle seven times (verse 4). Two, the heifer shall be burnt before the priest and the cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet cast **"into the midst of the burning of the heifer"** (verse 5,6). Three, the priest shall wash his clothes and remain unclean till evening (verse 8). Four, the ashes of the heifer shall be kept outside the camp and kept for the congregation (verse 9). This is water of separation and for **"purification for sin"**. Five, any person who touched a dead body shall be unclean and shall purify himself on the third day (verse 11,12). This ceremonial law has been replaced with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. However, a sinner must take specific steps to receive the benefits of this sacrifice.

Question 2: State steps a sinner must take to receive salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). To benefit from the sacrifice of Christ and enjoy the salvation through Him, a sinner must accept Christ's sacrifice for his sins; believe in Christ as the only Way to God, the Father; confess all his sins to God and depend on the grace of Christ to live a new and overcoming life. Furthermore, other blessings through the blood of Christ include sanctification, healing, deliverance and protection from evil.

"Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him" (Numbers 19:13). The punishment for those who disobey this ordinance was death penalty. The Lord expects everyone in the church to obey His word. The scripture says that obedience is better than sacrifice and disobedience is sin (1 Samuel 15:22,23).

Question 3: Why do we need to obey God's command?

The purpose of obeying the word of God is to help us maintain a good relationship with Him. He has abundant grace that will enable us to obey His word.

Question 4: Mention specific areas God requires obedience from Christian youths.

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). The word of God specifically states areas God expects obedience from Christian youths. Some of them include command to: live a holy life (1 Peter 1:15,16), be filled with the Spirit of God (Acts 1:4,5), preach the gospel (Mark 16:15,16), pray always (1 Thessalonians 5:17), love God and man (1 Timothy 1:5), etc. Who is sufficient for these things? But our sufficiency is of God.

CEREMONIAL PURIFICATION BY WATER (Numbers 19:17-19; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 9:13,14; 13:20,21; 1 Peter 1:2,18-19; Revelation 1:5).

“And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel” (Numbers 19:17). The ceremonial cleansing by water was to be administered by a clean person to the unclean person. The unclean person shall take the ashes of the burnt heifer and the running water in a vessel and the clean person shall sprinkle the water upon the defiled and other things that are unclean. This shall be done on the third and seventh day (verse 19). The purpose of this process was for the **“purification for sin”**.

Question 5: What lessons can we learn from this procedure for the cleansing of those who were unclean as related to that in Christ?

One, only Jesus Christ qualifies as the clean Person that can cleanse sinners from their sins (Hebrews 7:26-28). Two, a sinning youth must acknowledge his sin, accept the sacrifice of Christ and confess his sins to God. Three, God expects our bodies and things belonging to us to be clean (verse 18; Romans 12:1,2).

In the Bible, water signifies both the scriptures and the Spirit of God by which true purification is obtained (Ephesians 5:26,27; Romans 15:16). Those who desire to be cleansed must submit themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. This ceremonial purification was a type of the cleansing of the conscience of believers from the pollution of sin (Hebrews 9:13,14). We cannot compare the effectiveness of the blood of Christ with the cleansing that was through the **“the ashes of an heifer”** (Hebrews 9:13). Even he that sprinkled the water of separation, or touched the unclean person, must be unclean till the evening, that is, must not come near the sanctuary on that day (Numbers 19:21,22). Thus, God is showing us the imperfection of those services and their insufficiency to purify man’s conscience. Through Him our conscience is purged from dead works and we have liberty and access to the throne of God. **“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”** (Hebrews 10:19,22).

CONSEQUENCE OF REMAINING UNCLEAN (Numbers 19:20-22; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 5:12; 6:23; Revelation 21:8).

“But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean” (verse 20). The consequence of refusing the provision made by God was death penalty. Also, all that the unclean person touched, or any person that touches him was unclean. This law was a perpetual statute to the children of Israel. It is a dangerous thing to look down on divine instructions. So, what a sinning youth call little sin, if not repented of, will be a ruin of such youth, while sinners that repent shall find mercy. Our uncleanness separates us for ever from God.

No unclean youth can have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The command of God is for us to repent and be cleansed in order to avoid the wrath of God. Those who fail to respond will have themselves to blame, because the holy God will judge every youth and those found guilty will be condemned.

Question 6: Why must sinful youths not disobey the command to be cleansed?

Disobeying the command to be cleansed will lead the offender into dangerous consequences. Neglect to get cleansed with the blood of Christ will: cause dullness of understanding (Acts 28:27), darken your mind (Ephesians 4:18), divert your feet (Isaiah 53:6), defile your tongue (Romans 3:13-14), deceive your heart (Jeremiah 17:9), devour your intellect (1 Corinthians 2:14), damn your soul in hell (Ezekiel 18:4). Avoid hell today by repenting and be cleansed with the blood of Christ. Having the knowledge of the content of the cleansing, there must be a positive response to the question of a songwriter:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r?
Are you wash'd in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you wash'd in the blood of the Lamb?

All youths should, therefore, desire to be cleansed since the provision is made available to all. There cannot be cleansing except we accept and believe in God's provision for our cleansing (Psalm 51:7; 79:9; John 13:9). Our soul, spirit and body needed to be presented to God for cleansing from all pollution.

Lesson 405

MOSES STRIKES THE ROCK

MEMORY VERSE: “And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also” (Numbers 20:11)

TEXT: Numbers 20:1-29

The plan and purpose of God for His people is sure,

stable and steadfast. His promises can never fail.

The scripture says: **“Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant”** (1 Kings 8:56). However, the children of Israel at this time did not believe and obey His word as He expected them. Later in their history, God expressed His mind thus: **“So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee”** (Psalms 81:12-16). This is the summary of the passage before us today. What a lesson for us!

POWERFUL ENEMIES FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT (Numbers 20:1-6,14-21; 21:1-3; Mark 7:20-23; 2 Corinthians 7:5,6; Exodus 17:8-16; 1 Samuel 17:1-3,21-50; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 4:14-18; 1 Peter 5:8,9).

In the journey of the children of Israel, they had to contend with problems (evils) that originated from their own minds – murmuring, discouragement, rebellion, inordinate ambition and lust. From our text today, they were complaining because of thirst. **“And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron”** (Numbers 20:2). We can recall that shortly after they crossed the Red Sea, a momentary joy filled the whole congregation. After this joy came several trials, temptations and tests, which in most parts, were fruits of the carnal and unregenerate hearts. This inner battle is called enemy from within.

This experience is parallel, in type, to the life of Christians. Immediately after salvation is a definite outburst of joy like a spring bringing out refreshing water. But after a while, the reality of the daily striving with the contentions¹ that originate from within the heart overwhelms the new convert. The cares of this life, distress, the deceitfulness of riches and subtle disagreement with the teachings of the word of God are possible issues that can arise from within the heart of a newly converted believer.

Question 1: *How can one have victory over these enemies from within?*

One, the person must be sure of salvation experience with the Lord. Two, he must move forward and be sanctified through the cleansing blood of the Lamb. Three, he must read the Bible and pray daily to overcome trials, temptations and tests that may come across his way. Four, he must rely on the Lord for victory. Five, he must be ready to obey God always.

Coming back to our text, **“And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him”** (Numbers 20:18,20,21). In this case, the Edomites organised themselves into enemies of the people and of the purpose of God.

Earlier in this text, Moses sent men to the king of Edom to allow Israel pass through his country but **“Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him”** (verse 21). This incident is not merely historical. It anticipates¹ the struggle and victory of the followers of Jesus over spiritual foes. Just as the king of Edom and his people were stirred up and angered at the coming of the children of Israel, so is the devil and his agents angry and stirred up at the news of the heaven-bound Christian pilgrims.

Question 2: *How can Christian youths overcome enemies of righteousness from without?*

“It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah” (2 Chronicles 20:1-3). The prayer of authority in the name of Jesus will scatter all our enemies. We should trust God that He will fight our battles for us. He is a God of battle. He has never lost any battle. **“Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s”** (2 Chronicles 20:15). He fought for Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Daniel and his friends, Peter, Paul, and a host of others. He will fight for us today.

PRECAUTION WHILE SERVING THE LORD (Numbers 20:7-13; Exodus 17:1-7; Deuteronomy 3:24-29; Numbers 27:12-14; Hebrews 4:1; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5).

As the children of Israel were complaining for lack of water in the camp, Moses and Aaron fell before their faces **“and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them”**. In response to this, the Lord commanded Moses to speak to the rock. **“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink”** (Numbers 20:7,8). Moses carried out God’s instruction wrongly. He

was commanded to speak to the rock but not to smite it. Although water came out of the rock but God was displeased with him. Jesus is the Rock of Ages. **“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ”** (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Question 3: What are the implications of striking the rock at this time by Moses?

Moses was commanded earlier to smite the rock in the book of Exodus. **“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel”** (Exodus 17:6). The implication is this, since the rock represents Jesus Christ; He must not be smitten twice. His sacrifice, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection are once for our sins. **“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”** (Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:28; 10:10). Therefore, the striking of the rock again would imply, in type, that the one sacrifice was inadequate, thereby contradicting the finality and power of the blood of Christ.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Numbers 20:12). This action of Moses and Aaron hindered them from entering into the Promised Land. They were disciplined by God Himself. This calls for caution while serving the Lord.

Question 4: What precaution should we take while serving the Lord?

“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). The service of the Lord is a serious work. We must be like Jesus Christ. To avoid any displeasure from the Lord, we should be obedient to all His instructions, be watchful, sober, humble, prayerful, disciplined and follow the example of Jesus (John 5:19,30). Those who will serve God acceptably must seek His face for sufficient grace. God is holy. He is of a **“purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”** (Habakkuk 1:13). He must judge sin anywhere sin is found.

For the sinning youths, the Bible says: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”** (Revelation 22:17). Accept Christ today. He was **“smitten of God”** for you. Do not reject Him. It may be dangerous and too late if you fail to repent now.

PREPARING FOR UNENDING JOURNEY OF LIFE (Numbers 20:1, 22-29; Genesis 3:8,9,19; 5:1-31; Psalm 90:9-12; Ecclesiastes 3:1,2; 12:1-7,13,14; Hebrews 9:27; Amos 4:12).

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die;...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Life here on

earth is short and brief. Wisdom demands that we prepare for death. It leads to an unending journey where we will not return to amend any wrong doing. It can take place at any moment. A time came when Miriam and Aaron died. **“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah”** (Numbers 20:23,24). The Lord commanded Moses to tell Aaron, the high priest, that the time to leave this world was up for him and Eleazar will take over from him as the high priest. What a difficult task!

Question 5: *What was Moses’ reaction to this commandment?*

“And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation” (Numbers 20:27). Moses was obedient, faithful and fearless in discharging his duty. This is a great challenge to us today. **“Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house”** (Hebrews 3:2).

Is death optional? No. Death is a necessary end to all except those who will be raptured. There are three types of death. These are: (1) physical death (Hebrews 9:27), (2), spiritual death (1Timothy 5:6) and (3) eternal death (Daniel 12:2).

Question 6: *How can one prepare for death?*

The first step is to surrender one’s life to Christ in repentance and faith. One should continue consistently in living in holiness and blamelessness to the time of death. **“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel”** (Amos 4:12). However, the fear of death should not hinder us from doing what is necessary today. God is still in control of the affairs of men.

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalms 116:15).

Lesson 406

THE FIERY SERPENT

MEMORY VERSE: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live” (Numbers 21:8)

TEXT: Numbers 21:1-9

In the previous chapter, we saw the various negative events

that befell Israel as a nation in the course of their journey to the resting place—the Promised Land. Miriam, their beloved prophetess and women leader died. The people murmured against God and blamed Moses and Aaron because there was no water for them to drink. Moses, their great prophet and the man who often stood in the gap that God should not destroy them, had himself, experienced a set-back in his relationship with God. He was rebuked by God for striking the rock twice instead of speaking to the rock as God instructed. This, God said, will hinder him from entering the Promised Land. Moreover, their journey was obstructed by Edom who would not let Israel pass through her territory. On top of all these travails, they lost Aaron the high priest.

Our study today focuses on the sudden attack of Israel by king Arad; Israel’s backsliding into their besetting sin of murmuring against God and Moses; the instant judgment that followed and the lifting up of the symbolic brazen serpent.

PRAYER OF VICTORY OVER ENEMIES (Numbers 21:1-3; Nehemiah 4:7-9; Psalm 56:9; Acts 4:21-31; Ephesians 6:10-13, 18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Our text opens with a conflict, a battle initiated by king Arad, the Canaanite. Arad, deliberately, made himself an enemy of the children of Israel. The world is a place of battle and conflict. Satan, the god of this world, does not know peace. Those who are under the control of Satan are also without the life of true peace. As Arad moved to be an obstruction to Israel on their journey to the Promised Land, so does Satan stand as a stumbling block against our Christian walk to heaven.

Question 1: *What are some battles Christian youths must contend with while journeying to heaven?*

In the New Covenant, we do not fight against flesh and blood. “**For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places**” (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemies are not boys and girls nor men and women. We must be at peace with all men (Mathew 5:9; Romans 12:17-21; Hebrews 12:14). Therefore, we cannot join sinning youths in rioting, violent acts or any other form of physical conflicts. A Christian youth is to fight against evil thoughts, worldliness, carnal ideas that are against the word of God, false doctrine, temptation, besetting sin, fleshly or youthful lusts, examination malpractice and compromise.

“And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities” (verse 2). King Arad could have repeated his act against the children of Israel by taking more of them as prisoners had Israel not made any move at this time. Many believers, surprisingly, are under Satan’s oppression and are defeated in the battles of life because of not taking any action. They are too cold and lukewarm in prayer. Israel prayed to the Lord for victory over enemies and He answered them. A prayerless youth will be powerless, weak and defeated in the battles of life. Only youths that wait on the Lord will renew their strength. On behalf of such prayerful youths, the Spirit of God will always lift up a standard whenever the enemies come like a flood (Isaiah 59:19).

Question 2: *What lessons can we learn from Israel’s prayer and response to the attack from king Arad?*

“And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah” (verse 3). It is worthy of note that God’s answer to Israel’s prayer was prompt. Why? Israel’s pattern of prayer was in total agreement with the will and plan of God. One, they relied on the Lord for victory (verse 2). Our prayers must be directed to God and to Him should our consecration be performed. Two, the Israelites positioned themselves in the centre of the will and plan of God. His plan was to destroy the Canaanites because of their sins (Number 2:1, 2). God had raised Israel and chosen them to be His agent of judgment on the Canaanites, as their iniquity was now full (Genesis 15:15-21; Deuteronomy 9:3-5). Three, Israel turned to God first before facing the challenge from king Arad. Christian youths should learn to take every challenge to God first. We must wait on the Lord for direction on how to go about every challenge we face in life (Psalm 56:9). Four, God answers prayers. No challenge should make you lose sight of this fact (verse 3).

PUNISHMENT FOR MURMURING (Numbers 21: 4-6; Psalm 106:24-27; 1 Corinthians 10:5-11; Philippians 2:14,15)

“And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way” (verse 4). Discouragement is one of Satan’s devices by which he fights believers. Discouragement is common to all classes of people. The major aim of discouragement is to lose God’s will and plan.

Question 3: *Mention Bible characters who, at one time or the other, were discouraged and how they reacted.*

Moses was once discouraged because of the heavy burden placed on him by the needs of the Israelites in the wilderness. **“I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand”** (Numbers 11:14, 15). Elijah was faced with the same challenge of discouragement, having been persecuted by Jezebel. **“And he requested for himself that he might die; and said, it is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers”** (1 Kings 19:4). David was also confronted with discouraging situation. Ziklag, their camp site, was invaded and burnt with fire by the Amalekites. Their wives and children were taken and carried away captives (1 Samuel 30: 6).

Question 4: Mention some conditions that bring discouragement to youths.

Discouragement can come as a result of persecution resulting in denial of legitimate rights. Other conditions include: sickness, failure in examination, yielding to temptation which brings guilt and Satan's accusation, delayed expectation and challenges in the family.

The greatest problem of the children of Israel which accounted for their major setbacks during their wilderness journey was loose tongue. They often compounded minor difficulty by uttering words of complaints and murmuring. Unfortunately, the children of Israel, rather than relying on the Lord for assistance to continue their journey to the Promised Land, resorted to complaint. **“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread”** (verse 5).

Question 5: What are the consequences of murmuring?

These Israelites got so immersed in the pool of their discouragement that they not only spoke against Moses, but against God also. What a blasphemy! God could not stand the insult and had to punish them. **“And the LORD sent fiery serpent among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died”** (verse 6). Let us be very careful of our words, actions and attitudes in times of discouragement. Furthermore, murmuring leads to loss of relationship with God, backsliding, defeat, sickness and it hinders progress (Psalm 106:25,26).

PROVISION FOR DIVINE DELIVERANCE (Number 21:7-9; Isaiah 45:22; John 3:14-16; I Peter 2:24; Romans 3:21-26; I John 2:1, 2.)

“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; Pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people”. This is very similar to what David said in trying to make peace with God. **“I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin”** (Psalm 32:5). O what a wonderful day! When a sinning boy or girl will come to God and say *“O Lord, I have sinned.”* God, in His nature, cannot despise a contrite heart. The Psalmist once again attested to this when he said, **“a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”** (Psalm 50:17). It is not the seriousness of the sin one committed that really matters. No matter the sin you commit, pardon and forgiveness can be obtained when you repent with faith in Christ.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten when he looketh upon it, shall live” (verse 8). The people had lost the favour of God by their faithless complaint. To regain God's favour, divine provision was needed. Many Israelites had already lost their lives as a result of the bites of the fiery serpents. To replace death with life, a brazen serpent was lifted upon a pole. Then the people looked and lived. That which was lost by faithless expression, they could only regain by the act of faith in the lifted brazen serpent.

By this act, the Lord was pointing to Christ as the divine remedy for sin. Several years later, Christ made reference to the brazen serpent that it typified Him. **“As**

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15).

Question 6: *What steps should a sinner and backslider take to receive forgiveness from God?*

To receive forgiveness from God, therefore, the following steps must be taken: one, repentance and confession of sin. Two, looking unto the Lord Jesus by faith. Three, believing on His atoning work on the cross. After salvation, Christ is able to remove other consequences of sin like sicknesses, oppressions, afflictions, etc. (1 Peter 2:24).

The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness is an object lesson for the New Testament saints. Christ was lifted up on the cross and as many as look to Him by faith will be saved. All sinners are dead spiritually. Only in Christ is true life (John 10:10).

Lesson 407

ISRAEL CONQUERS ENEMY NATIONS

MEMORY VERSE: “And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong” (Numbers 21:24).

TEXT: Numbers 21: 10-35

In today’s study, we are going to see how the journey of the

children of Israel, back from Kadesh after being refused by the king of Edom, was elongated and later directed by God. We are also going to see how prayers were made to God in request of water at Beer. Finally, we are going to see how God helped Israel in yet another battle against two other heathen kings.

PROMISES AND GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR PROVISION (Numbers 21: 10–20; 2 Chronicles 20: 1, 19-22; Exodus 15: 1-3, 14-16; Psalm 106: 12)

The children of Israel had just been forgiven by God and healed of the plague after Moses raised up the brazen snake as directed by God. After this encounter where many of the Israelites died, they forged ahead and continued their journey. While on their journey, God displayed His love and mercy by providing water for the children of Israel where they needed His help. As Christian youths, we learn here that (a) the children of Israel did not go back to Egypt or continue rebelling after their encounter, so also when we are wrong and are corrected by God, we should truly repent and not remain in stubborn attitude. (b) God did not allow the sins of the people to stand as an obstacle to His supernatural provision of water for them. When he forgave them, He forgot about their sins and they returned to receiving His favour. Christian youths today need to learn that when people offend us and repent, we should abide by the words of Christ that say “**when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses**” (Mark 11:25).

“**And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it**” (Numbers 21:16). When the children of Israel got to Beer, they began to express their prayer for water in form of a song. This little song was in accordance with the wants and feelings of travelling caravans in the East, where finding a source of water was an occasion of both prayers and thanksgiving. The Israelites wandered for days in the wilderness without water which led to prayers. Upon discovery of water, they then went into praises. The word which is translated “**digged**” from the original is rendered “**searched out**”. Many wells in the land were either concealed by the brushwood or the sand. This seemed to be the case at this time because they had to search out the water under the guidance of Moses. If water was obvious, there would be no need to dig or search as they did here. Hence, when God said, “**I will give them**

water” in verse 16, He meant by a supernatural means as in the case of bringing water out of the rock.

Question 2: What should Christian youths do in time of need for supernatural interventions?

When God delivered the children of Israel from the Red Sea, they sang for the attained victory and also in anticipation of the victories in the forthcoming battles. There are many occasions where we want God to intervene for us. This is not going to happen by murmuring or complaining but through prayer and praise. Jehoshaphat adopted this method. The scripture enjoins us to **“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (Philippians 4:6). God commands us to pray in times of trouble (Jeremiah 29: 12; James 5: 13-18).

Question 3: What could have made the children of Israel to be singing while in search of water?

“Then believed they his words; they sang his praise” (Psalm 106:12). God had told Moses that He would give water to the people. Though, they had not seen it but because they believed in God providing them with the water as Moses had said, they did not only search but also sang to God for the water. Faith in God will produce songs and calmness in the time of trials. The Psalmist displays his unwavering trust in the Lord by saying **“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies ”** (Psalm 18:2,3). Youths should, therefore, rely on God who cannot and will not fail.

PERMISSION FOR PASSAGE AND THE CONFRONTATION OF THE AMORITES
(Numbers 21: 21 – 23; Acts 22: 17-21; 23:11).

“And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king’s high way, until we be past thy borders” (Numbers 21:21, 22). Israel was courteous¹ enough to ask for entry permit into the land of the Amorites. They even said they would not cause them any economic loss. But Sihon, the king of Amorites, would not permit them. Besides, he **“gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel”** (Numbers 21:23). The refusal and confrontation of Sihon, king of the Amorites, came as a surprise since Israel was not confrontational in their request. Israel had even promised the Amorites of their desire for peace and wish to pass through the land of the Amorites without any burden or pressure on them.

When a Christian youth suffers disappointments, refusal of rights or denial of privileges, in the midst of the attending confusions and frustrations, God would be close enough to guide and direct in a new direction of opportunities. When Jesus Christ was in sorrowful state about His coming death, the voice of the Father came to Him to give assurance. The Lord was always guiding Paul in the midst of the persecutions against him by the Jews. We should, therefore, not be discouraged when faced with trying moments (Psalms 27:1, 5).

However, in spite of the incomparable strength God had given His people, He gave them a caution that they were not to meddle with anything of the land although those people would be scared of them. They were expected only to pass through the land and not use the promise of victory and the past conquest of some of the lands as an excuse to abuse the people, their land or their possessions. God also wanted the children of Israel to avoid being on the offensive, hence, His command that they should request to pass through the land.

Questions 4: What lesson can we learn from this caution?

God does not expect us to take advantage of the weak or poor people. The strong is expected to support the weak and the rich to support the poor. (Romans 15:1). Those who use their privileges to oppress others are under the wrath of God. (James 6: 1-6; Deuteronomy 24: 15). As a prefect in the school, the juniors will normally respect and fear you, but do not take their properties against their wish or send them on compulsive errand without sufficient money. Also, school officers are not meant to treat the members and other officers in the fellowship as their servants but they are expected to serve the church sacrificing and giving to others rather than waiting to be served. (Acts 20: 28 – 36). In the family, elders should also treat their younger ones with respect and ensure that they show affection and love towards them.

POSSESSING THE LAND AND VICTORY OVER THE ENEMIES (Numbers 21: 24–35; Numbers 21: 1-3; Deuteronomy 8: 18; Luke 10: 19; 2 Corinthians 10: 3-6)

When Sihon the king of the Amorites decided not to tread the path of peace but rather to go into conflict and confrontation with the children of Israel, he lost more for “... **Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof**” (Numbers 21:24, 25). Israel initially only wanted to pass through the land of the Amorites without touching any of the property of the Amorites, but as a result of the war, they lost their land and the houses. God took side with His people and delivered the Amorites into their hands.

It is important to note that Sihon was a very great king who had defeated the king of Moab and had taken all his land from him. Sihon had a city called Heshbon which was renowned for the victories of the army. As Christian youths, we learn here that we should never rely or join anyone to fight against the will and way of God. Like the Psalmist, we should be able to cry out to the Lord to “**Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man**” (Psalms 60:11). We should also not be deterred when we are in the will of God. He will give us victory over our enemy (2 Chronicles 20:17).

In spite of the landslide victory of Israel over the Amorites, Og, the king of Bashan also came and opposed Israel. “**Og the king of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei**” (verse 33). God encouraged His people and repeated the same victory. “**And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land**” (Numbers 21:34, 35).

Question 5: *What is the fate of the enemies of God's people?*

People who obey God have Him on their side. (Exodus 25: 22). All their enemies shall be broken in pieces. (1 Samuel 2: 10). God's children should realize that they have been given power to conquer all enemies including the flesh. **"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out thy enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them"** (Deuteronomy 33: 27).

Question 6: *How can Christian youths enjoy the use of God's power to the fullest?*

To fully enjoy the power of God, we must have complete obedience to the word of God. **"His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"** (John 2:5). Therefore, as God gave victory to the children of Israel, so, He will give us victory over our enemies (Numbers 21:35).

Lesson 408

THE PLOT TO CURSE ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out” (Numbers 22:11).

TEXT: Numbers 22:1-41

In our last lesson, we did see how Israel conquered

Og, the king of Bashan who greatly opposed and intended to stop them from journeying into the land of Canaan. This victory was the fulfillment of God’s promise to them. This conquest increased the cheering unbroken records of progress Israel made after they looked up to the lifted brazen serpent to the time they pitched at the plains of Moab. This testified to God’s endless faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to them. **“And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them”** (Deuteronomy 7:24). Youths, therefore, should endeavour to obey and trust God in all situations.

Our lesson today is based on one of the most practical moral teachings of the Old Testament. Therein, we shall see the fear and plots of the enemies of the people of God: Balak, the king of Moab, and the princes of Midian. We shall also see the compromise of a backslidden prophet who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15) and the consistency and faithfulness of God to His unchanging promises.

THE CONSPIRACY TO CURSE GOD’S PEOPLE (Numbers 22:1-6; Proverbs 28:1; 1 Samuel 19:1; Daniel 6:4-9; Acts 23:21; Proverbs 26:2, 2 Samuel 16:5-8).

Israel just conquered Sihon and Og, two kings of the Amorites. The Amorites, in time past, defeated and subdued Moab (Numbers 21:26). Balak the king of Moab, having seen that Israel defeated them, became afraid. **“And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel”** (Numbers 22:3). Moab was ignorant of God’s command of not allowing the children of Israel to take their land. **“And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession”** (Deuteronomy 2:9). Evil and wickedness in man always bring fear even when there is no need to be afraid. (Proverbs 28:13).

Question 1: *Why are youths sometimes fearful?*

Ignorance of God's favour on the Amorites made Balak to impatiently plan an attack on Israel. He consulted his princes and the Midianites. In the same way, ignorance of God's promises makes some youths to be fearful over situations which God has already taken care of. This makes them to take actions which are against the will of God. Some boys and girls fear unnecessarily over threats from the enemies instead of praying and having faith in God. New converts, sometimes, go back into the world over little persecution, denial of legitimate rights and trials, this ought not to be so. So Balak, his princes and the Midianites conspired to hire Balaam to curse Israel. Their intentions were to place a curse on Israel, weaken and make them feeble so they could overcome them in war.

Question 2: Mention instances of conspiracy against children of God in the Bible.

There are instances in the scriptures when the enemies plotted against the children of God. The Syrians planned against Israel, but God revealed it through Elisha. The lords of the Philistines planned with Delilah to entice Samson in order to know the source of his strength so as to subdue and destroy him (Judges 16:5). Saul, the first king of Israel also conspired with his son, Jonathan, and his servants to kill David, so as to stop him from being king as promised by God (1 Samuel 19:1). The other presidents in Babylon gathered together against Daniel for his uprightness, faultlessness and devotion to God. (Daniel 6:1-8). Others include plot against Paul the apostle by some Jews who took an oath to kill him. This was to enable them stop him from preaching Jesus (Acts 23:21). Apart from Samson who was careless, God delivered other godly people from the plots of the enemies. Christian youths should be very wise, harmless, careful, watchful and prayerful because Christ said **"I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"** **"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us"** (Mathew 10:16; 2 Corinthians 1:10).

THE COMPROMISE OF A PERVERTED¹ PROPHET (Numbers 22:7-12; 2 Peters 2:15; Jude 11; Deuteronomy 16:19; Ecclesiastics 7:7; Proverbs 1:10-15; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Acts 8:18-24).

Israel, in their journey after the conquering of the Amorites, pitched in the plain of Moab. A very distressing and uncomfortable position for Moab and they felt the need to do something. **"And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spoke unto him the words of Balak"** (Numbers 22:7). They consulted Balaam for his prophetic power against the children of Israel. Balaam was warned by God not to **"...go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed"** (Numbers 22:12). He was enticed by the gift of divination. After he had been warned of God not to go with them, he still chose to consult God the second and the third times. The Bible reveals to us later that he **"...loved the wages of unrighteousness"** (2 Peter 2:15). Balaam could not give details of what God told him to the princes sent to him. **"And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not**

curse the people: for they are blessed. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you” (Numbers 22:12, 13). Possibly they would have gone home knowing God would not allow a curse on Israel.

Question 3: *What is the danger of accepting ungodly gift?*

God’s gift and power should not be used for money- making purpose, because it makes the person an enemy of God. A gift with bad motive makes someone to be enticed to do evil (Proverbs 1:10-15). It leads to compromise (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). A gift makes a man to alter just judgment (Deuteronomy 16:19). It leads an individual to corruption and punishment in hell (2 Peter 2:15).

Gifted youths in the choir or other areas of work in the church are not to commercialise their gifts and talents. God gave these different gifts to edify the church (1 Corinthians 12:7).

“And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him” (Numbers 22:20-22). From the above references, God gave Balaam the permission to go with them to test him. The Lord promised any one that approaches Him with idol in the heart to answer him accordingly (Ezekiel 14:4). Youths should learn how to seek and do God’s will at all times even if it will deny them some temporary gains. Be warned against idol in the heart! Whether in choosing a career, in marriage or other areas of life, rest your mind only on knowing and doing God’s will.

THE CONSISTENCY OF GOD TO HIS PROMISES (Numbers 22: 24-41; Isaiah 54:17; Isaiah 41:12, 13; Romans 8:31).

God watched Balaam pursue the course of his heart due to the wages of unrighteousness. He registered His disapproval by sending His angel to withstand him on his way. Balaam did not see the angel at first. This shows how one with great spiritual power and endowment may be blind to his spiritual state. God revealed Balaam’s corruption through His angel. **“And the angel of the LORD said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me”** (Numbers 22:13). Ordinarily, he should have gone back, but his eyes were on the honour promised him. It was no wonder, therefore, that all he made was half-hearted confession **“...I have sinned”** (verse 34).

Question 5: *What is the danger of seeking for success by all means?*

Balaam’s love for the riches of Balak was so overpowering to the extent that after divine disapproval, he still did not have the moral strength to turn

back. **“...if it displease thee, I will get me back again”** (verse 34). Seeking for success at all cost leads to yielding to evil means of getting it. It leads to compromise, backsliding and eternal damnation. The faithfulness and consistency of God was also revealed. He told Balaam earlier that Israel cannot be cursed for they are blessed. Despite Balaam’s disobedience, God maintained His stand. He promised that **“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD”** (Isaiah 54:17). And indeed, **“...If God be for us, who can be against us?”** (Romans 8:31). Christian youths should let these promises settle within them to continue serving the Lord no matter the plot of the wicked.

Lesson 409

CHRIST'S INTERCESSION FOR THE CHURCH

MEMORY VERSE: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (John 17:9).

TEXT: JOHN 17: 1 – 26

This first fully recorded prayer of Christ was made

after Jesus had prophesied of the end of His earthly ministry to the disciples. **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33).

Question 1: Why did Christ have to pray for the Church?

After He told His disciples of His imminent departure from earth, Christ spent time in praying for the progress and preservation of the Church. He prayed as a man, and as the Mediator of His people; yet He spoke with majesty and authority. Christ presents in this study, a model for believing youths in the church to follow in praying for each other. His prayers towards the end of His earthly ministry glorified God, the Father, who also had glorified Him. Christ presented requests He needed to help Him complete the purpose for which He had come to the earth and to keep the church beyond His earthly ministry. He prayed for the holiness, happiness, and the glorification of God in the Church.

COMPELLING PURPOSE FOR THE INTERCESSION BY CHRIST (John 17: 1 – 8, 11, 12; 16:16; 21: 15 – 17; 2 Corinthians 9: 11 – 14; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5: 23; James 5:16; Acts 20: 18–35; Colossians 4: 12; 1 Peter 4:7)

In spite of several persecutions and unbelief of the Jews regarding the purpose of His coming, Jesus Christ was able to minister to many people. A number of people got converted. A selected few from the converts became disciples through which the gospel message was to be spread abroad the whole earth as Christ commissioned the believers saying **“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). Christ knew the battles ahead of Him in fulfilling the final sacrifice, the pains, trials and persecution the Church would face upon His ascension to heaven. This made Him to spend such quality time to pray for the Church.

Question 2: Why did Christ pray that the Father should glorify the Son?

Christ prayed here that the Father should glorify Him. This prayer was necessary because the world needed to believe in Christ's death as He went to the cross. Also, they needed to believe that Christ was the Messiah who came to set the world free from sin. The need for this glorification was to ensure Christ

continued with the plan of salvation. Christ, through His prayers, explains eternal life and His Power. He can forgive sin and set free anyone bound by the enemy. He has the power to give eternal life to as many as believe in Him because He is Eternal. Youths, who believe in God through Christ, will manifest conduct and character that exemplify Christ-likeness.

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word” (John 17: 4–8). Jesus was purposeful in His ministry; He finished the work which the Father sent Him to the earth to do. Many got converted and came into the Kingdom. Jesus did not give the credit to Himself, but gave all the glory to the Father.

Before the prayers, Christ had explained to His disciples through various parables, messages and illustrations about the nature of His sacrificial death, the pains, the sacrifice, His resurrection and His ascension into heaven. Moreover, Christ knew that the persecution He had been receiving from the Jewish leaders would be visited upon His disciples. He told His disciples, therefore, that **“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, 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: 18–20).

Question 3: Why is it important today that believing youths should pray for the Church?

Jesus prayed for the Church to be preserved in spite of the hardship around. He prayed that God will glorify Himself in the Church just like He had glorified Himself in the Son of God. The prayers of Christ also included the unity of the Church and the strength to be able to go through the cross. Believers, today, need to pray for the growth and preservation of the Church. The prayers should be free of carnality. Wherever Christians pray for these purposes, God answers like He did in the case of many other saints of old.

CENTRAL PLACE OF INTERCESSION IN THE CHURCH (John 17: 9, 10; Acts 10: 31–35; 12: 5–7; Exodus 18: 13–19; Daniel 9: 17–21; Acts 6: 2–4; Philippians 1: 2–6).

The whole chapter was dedicated to prayers for the Church by Jesus Christ, signifying the great importance that prayers should take in our churches today. Jesus said, **“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them”** (verses 9, 10). He prayed for the Church because the Church was not of the world but had yielded to the Father. Christ

emphasised the unity of the Godhead here as He showed the link between the Father and the Son.

Many youths today do not devote time to pray for the members and the growth of the Church. This has weakened the Church from moving ahead in the mandate given. As a result, many are weak and have become tools in the enemy's hand. Fellowship leaders must ensure that in line with the programs given, they spend time to pray for the Church, Missions, the believers and other related requests that will lead to the growth of the Church.

Question 4: Please answer YES or NO

- a. Do we have to be School Officers before we can pray?**
- b. Can we stop praying for the Church because the Church is very large?**
- c. Does God answer the prayers of junior students who pray for the preservation of the Church?**
- d. Do we have to be recognised to be able to continue praying?**
- e. If I decide to personally dedicate myself to pray for our YHSF and School Fellowships, can God bring back the old time revival?**
- f. Can I be a great intercessor and still be the best in my academics?**

The Church has great need of intercessors today because it is intercessors that will bear the weight of the church. The more intercessors we have today, the better for the church. Prayer is a disinfectant¹ and a preventive. It purifies life. It destroys the pollution of evil. It is a voice which goes into God's ear. Prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; they outlive a generation, outlive an age. Youths who pray are God's heroes. In our fellowships today, very few find time for prayer! They have time to read, sleep, eat, visit friends, and for everything else under the sun, but - no time for prayer, which is an important part of our Christian life.

Intercession is important and can be done by any saved youths. Youths do not need to be officers in the School Fellowships before they intercede. Intercession can be done at home; in the school bus; in our schools and campuses; on the path while we walk. It can be done anywhere by obeying that great injunction from the Lord: **"Pray without ceasing, ...I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"** (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8).

CONVINCING PATTERN OF INTERCESSION FOR CHRISTIANS (John 17: 1, 13-26; Matthew 6:27-34; Ephesians 6: 18 - 20)

There are seven main petitions in the prayers of Jesus Christ: (a) That Jesus may be glorified as He has glorified the Father (verse 1) (b) For Christ's restoration to His initial eternal glory since He had fulfilled God's purpose on the earth(verse 5) (c) For the safety of believers in this evil world (verses 11, 15) (d) For the sanctification of believers (verse 17) (e) For the unity of believers (verse 21) (f) That the world may believe the gospel message and the purpose for which Christ came to die (verse 21) (g) That believers may be with Him in heaven to behold and share of His glory (verse 24).

Question 5: What lessons do we learn from Christ's pattern of intercession?

Christian youths have a lot to learn from Christ's pattern of prayers. We learn the following:

- a) Christ was qualified to pray for the Church since He had fulfilled a life of obedience to God. Only saved youths are qualified to pray for the Church. Unserved youths need to be converted before they become qualified to pray for the Church or else their prayers will not be answered.
- b) Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven in full concentration. Intercession requires commitment and concentration. Youths should pray in places where they will be able to concentrate fully in prayers. This is the reason for closing our eyes while praying.
- c) Jesus was humble and His prayer reflected His desire to glorify the Father. Christian youths must be humble and glorify God when they receive answers to prayers.
- d) The prayers of Christ were clear, purposeful and straight to the point. It is not the length of the prayer that matters, it is the content and the faith of the person praying that get results.
- e) Jesus did not concentrate on carnal things but for the spiritual upliftment of the Church. We should be more concerned about the spiritual state of the Church.
- f) The unity of the Church must be kept by all as it is one of the requests dear to the heart of Christ.
- g) The Church has power over the evil one for Christ already prayed and paid the price of our preservation from the wickedness around.
- h) Evangelism is the heartbeat of the Almighty and Christ prayed for the fruitfulness of the Church when the Church reaches out. The only way to really grow is for all members of the Church to consistently reach out to the lost.
- i) Christ's desire is that all believers will dwell with Him in Heaven. The question is: Are you a TRUE member of the Church?

Lesson 410

BETRAYAL AND DENIAL OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me” (Luke 22:33, 34)

TEXT: John 18:1-18, 25-27

Our Lord Jesus had just ended His long passionate and priestly prayer for His disciples. He had practically expressed His persuasive love and affection toward the disciples whom He referred to in His prayer as “the men which thou gavest me out of the world” (John 17:6). All these were in preparation for the great event ahead of Him - the crucifixion. “When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples” (verse 1). The clause, “he went forth”, in our text, is very significant. It shows that Christ willingly surrendered and offered Himself to the sacrificial death of the cross, even though He knew that “Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons” (verse 2). Saint Mark, in his gospel, captured Christ’s statement on this fact: “Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand. And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders” (Mark 14:42, 43).

Question 1: *What is the mission of Christ to the world?*

Christ’s mission on earth which started about three years back was about ending. In God’s plan for Christ, Christ was to end His earthly mission by going to the cross. Before His birth, the angel revealed Christ’s mission on earth (Mathew 1:21). Christ Himself, during His earthly ministry, clearly stated His mission on earth. He said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19: 10). Man got lost right from the Garden of Eden. Christ’s mission, therefore, was to save man from the ruin of sin and bring him back to God. But divine justice demands that a ransom must be paid for redemption, and only a perfect, sinless sacrifice will be acceptable to God. This is why youths should not for any reason deny Christ.

JUDAS’ BETRAYAL OF THE MASTER (John 18:1-3, 5; Matthew 26:14-16; Luke 22:1-6,47,48; John 12:3-8; 6:66-71; 13:2,10,11,18,19; Hebrews 6:4-8;10:26-31; 3: 12-15; 1 Timothy 4:2)

The word ‘betray’ implies to expose and give somebody up to an enemy. It is an act of disloyalty by which a person exposes another to hurt. Betrayal is, therefore, a graceless act common among unsaved youths. Judas’ act of betrayal obviously reveals the fact that he had already backslidden long before now. The scripture had previously alluded to this in John

chapter 12 verses 5 and 6, where he pretended to show concern for the poor, but ignorantly exposed his greed, covetousness and dishonesty.

Questions 2: *What danger awaits backslidden youths who remain in that state?*

Judas continued in his secret sin of stealing. Though, unknown to the twelve disciples, his sins were open before the Lord. The Lord, being Omniscient, knew ahead of time who will betray Him. Backslidden youths should learn a serious lesson here. Backsliders who persistently and deliberately refuse the Lord's plea, reject His calls and willfully submit themselves to the devil are getting close to the corridor of apostasy. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (Hebrew 10:26).

Question 3: *In what ways do some youths betray the Lord today?*

Judas is set forth as an example of youths who betray the Lord today. Some youths who bear Christian names and profess to be part of the Church of the living God, like Judas, join groups of sinful, immoral, cultic and violent youths in the school and society to do evil. Like Judas "which betrayed him, stood with them", so do these religious but unrighteous youths stand in partnership with those that oppose the gospel and the church of God.

It is dangerous to tread the same path with Judas. His act of betrayal brought him under condemnation. He confessed later, "saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). Christian youths should learn a lesson here. As Judas did, so sinning youths betray born-again youths today. Jesus said: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another". But "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (Matthew 24:10; 2 Peter 2:9). God can both deliver and justify all true saved youths from the plots and conspiracy of the wicked. Judas, eventually, committed suicide. He lost the faith, lost his ministry, lost his life and went to hell fire. How terrible is the death of an unrepentant backslider!

JESUS' ARREST BY THE MULTITUDE (John 18:4, 6-9, 12-14; Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47)

The long planned plot of the elders of the Jews for Christ's arrest was eventually actualised, being made possible by the traitor among the apostles. As a matter of fact, Judas became the ring leader among the "great multitude" that came to arrest Christ, for he "went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him" (Luke 22:47). The kiss was the seal of his betrayal and sign of the person of Jesus Christ to the multitude that came with Judas.

"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, whom seek ye? As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (verse 4, 6). Christ asked the multitude a simple question- "Whom seek ye?". In response to the answer, He replied simply, "I am he". In verse 8, "Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way". Here, Christ sets before us an example of meekness in suffering and persecution, as well as a pattern of submission to God's will in every thing that concerns us. Even in the face of death ahead of Him, the oil of grace was in His lips (Psalm 45:2). Christian youths should emulate the Saviour's noble example here. "Let thy speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. But sanctified the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" (Colossians 4:6; I Peter 3: 15,16).

Christ's words, as meek and simple as they were, carried such divine and irresistible power and force that just hearing, the multitude "went backward, and fell to the ground". How awesome

is our Lord and powerful are His words! Nevertheless, He allowed them to rise up, arrest and take Him away in total submission to the divine plan and programme of God for humanity.

PETER'S DENIAL OF THE MESSIAH (John 18:10, 11, 15, 18, 25 - 27; Matthew 26:51-54; Luke 22:31-34, 54-62; 1 Peter 5:8)

Peter, in our text, had a wrong concept about defending the course of the Messiah. He tried to employ a carnal means in fighting for his Lord. Christian youths should realise that “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3). It is true that we are called to “fight the good of faith” (1 Timothy 6: 12), but it is a fight of “faith” and not of “flesh” (Ephesians 12: 12).

Question 4: *What do some youths do today to show their misconception of the fight of faith?*

Like Peter, some religious youths, in attempt to defend Christ or the church they belong to, go into quarreling and the use of abusive and angry words. Sometimes, some go into physical combat with those that oppose their belief. Some, in the name of spiritual warfare pray for the death of their perceived human enemies. Others are ready to fight with anyone who insults their pastor, leader or ridicule their church. Like He told Peter, the Lord is telling all youths “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” (verse 11).

From John 18: 15-18, 25-27, we see the series of events that led to Peter's denial of the Messiah. It is very instructive to note that failure to take proper heed to the Lord's instruction could lead to wrong actions. This was the case of Peter. The Lord, long before now had told them “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying” (Luke 9:44,45). Rather than meditating on the meaning and implication of Christ's saying, the disciples were “reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest” (Luke 9:46). Youths who always focus on position rather than applying the word of Christ to their lives stand the danger of losing the grace of God. Peter also had the same problem (Luke 22:31-34). Christian youths should be prayerful, watchful and be humble. A song writer warns all Christians thus:

**“Christian walk carefully danger is near.
On in thy journey with trembling and fear.
Snares from without and temptations within,
seek to entice thee once more into sin.
Christian walk carefully danger is near.**

Question 5: *Mention a word that describes Peter's action towards the Lord's warnings.*

Peter was over-confident. He was too sure of himself to the point that he never regarded the warnings of the Lord. Overconfidence is an element of pride. Any action or attitude that makes a person rely on a particular feature or attribute in him at the expense of the grace of God, amounts to pride and overconfidence. Obviously, Peter did not take advantage of the grace and divine assistance in the hour of temptation. He, who neglects the Lord's warning, will find himself helpless in the hour of trial and temptation. Peter paid dearly for neglecting the Lord's warning. Christian youths beware of the danger of sin. Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin.

Question 6: *What was the temptation Peter yielded to?*

Peter yielded to the temptation to tell a lie. Sin committed, if not immediately and sincerely repented of, will lead to another. Peter kept on telling lies without restraint. He later had to curse in order to support his lies. No amount of reformation except salvation can fully change a

sinning youth. Failure to take heed to the word of God we hear in the church or read from the Bible could expose our weakness to the devil and make us fall prey to his plots. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

Question 7: *What is the consequence of yielding to the temptation to tell lies or commit any other sin?*

All liars will have their part in the burning lake of fire. They will be excluded from entering heaven on the final day (Rev. 21:8, 21). The only way out is true conversion. This is the beauty in Peter’s case. He quickly responded to the Lord’s conviction. The Lord had placed a check of conviction in the crow of the cock. “Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew” (verse 27). The book of Luke tells us how Peter responded to the hearing of the crow of the cock, as well as the passionate look of the Lord. “And the Lord, turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock, crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22: 61- 62). Today, the Holy Spirit has come. He convicts the world of sin. Sinners and backsliders who respond to the conviction of the Spirit will be forgiven. Are you a sinner? You can respond to the call of the Lord now. Have you fallen like Peter? Why not heed the Spirit’s promptings and get restored. Are you still standing? “Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (1 Corinthians 10: 12; Hebrews 2: 1).

Lesson 411

THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (John 18:31)

TEXT: John 18:19-24,28-40

In our last study, we learnt that Jesus went through

Gethsemane (John 18:1; Matthew 26:36), was betrayed by Judas Iscariot (John 18:2,3), brought before Annas and Caiaphas (John 12-14,24), denied by Peter (John 18:25-27), forsaken by disciples (Luke 22:54) and humiliated by His critics (Matthew 26:67,68). Today, our lesson brings us to the residence of Pilate, the Romans procurator¹. As we come very close to Calvary, we begin to gain more insight into the precious price which our Lord paid for our redemption. The whole trial of Jesus before Pilate underscores the innocency of Jesus. Pilate’s verdict was clear and plain: “**Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him**” (John 19:4). This study will focus on the prophecies concerning Christ’s death, the purpose of His death and the condemnation of the Perfect One by the Jews.

CHRIST TRIAL AND FULFILMENT OF PROPHECIES (John 18:19-24, 28-32; 11:49-53; Isaiah 53:3-12; Matthew 16:21; 26:20-25; Mark 8:31; Luke 9: 18-22; 22:37; 24:7,25-27,46; Acts 26:22,23).

The Gospels reveal that Jesus was examined in four trials before He was finally put to death. The first trial took place before Annas (John 18:12-14, 19-24). The second trial was conducted by the high priest, Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57; John 18:13). The third was in the presence of Pilate (John 18:29-40; 19:1-16). The fourth trial took place before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12). The trial of our Lord commenced with Him being arraigned before Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas who was the high priest. Annas and Caiaphas were called high priests (Luke 3:2). However, Caiaphas was the current high priest. According to the law of Moses, Annas was the real high priest. The high priest held office for life. But with the invasion of the Romans into the nation of Israel, a change was brought into the procedure of priesthood by a yearly election of high priest. Despite this change, the people of Israel still looked to Annas as the real high priest though Caiaphas was the titular (official) leader.

Question 1: *From verse 19 of our text, why did the high priest ask for Jesus’ disciples and His doctrines or teachings?*

“**The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine**” (John 18:19). The high priest asked Jesus about His disciples and His teaching

to induce¹ Christ to implicate Himself and His disciples. Hence, Jesus wisely referred the high priest to those who had heard Him publicly for the information regarding His teachings. **“Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said”** (John 18:20,21). The Lord Jesus had taught in the Synagogues, the places appointed for public religious instruction and worship. The Lord had nothing to be ashamed of His doctrines. If He had spoken or taught anything that could not see the light of the day, His enemies would have produced evidences to establish the charges brought against Him. But the masses were witnesses of His teachings concerning God, man, sin, judgement, righteousness, forgiveness and eternal life. None came forward to testify against Him concerning anything contrary to peace, righteousness or orderliness.

This is a lesson for Christian youths today. Jesus is the Light of the world. He has nothing to do with all forms of secret associations. The Bible teaches against membership in secret cults and all forms of association with occultic societies. All those who still retain membership in secret cults can never be members of the Church of the living God. Genuine repentance entails renunciation¹ and separation from evil associations (Acts 19:18,19).

“Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover” (John 18:28). Jesus was led to the residence of the high priest immediately after His mock trial. The Jewish leaders who were filled with hatred and murder felt it was sinful to enter the judgement hall. This they did to qualify them to eat the passover. The scribal law says that the dwelling places of Gentiles are unclean. Hence, the Jews prefer to partake of the passover which represented Christ than to be defiled. These religious leaders had missed out the weightier matter of the law while doing non-essentials. Since they could not enter the judgement hall, Pilate went out to meet them and said, **“What accusation bring ye against this man?”**. Pilate was ready to conduct the trial according to the Roman practice but he discovered that the Jews had no accusation to bring against the Lord. They wanted to kill Jesus but they lacked the legal right to do so. But Jesus had predicted or prophesied that He would die by crucifixion. **“That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die”** (John 18:32). Christ’s prophesy must come to pass. The plan of redemption was on course because God was fully in charge.

Question 2: State the various prophecies concerning the crucifixion of Jesus. Support your answers with scriptural references.

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25,26). All aspects of Christ’s trial was predicted in the word of God. Some of them include piercing of His hands and feet (Psalm 22:16), parting of His garments and casting lots (Psalm 22:18), being despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3), wounded with stripes (Isaiah 53:5), smitten and bound (Isaiah 53:4; John 18:22), His betrayal and denial (Mark 14:17-21; Luke 22:31-34), spitting on His face (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:29-31)

and making His grave with the wicked and the rich in His death on the cross.(Isaiah 53:9).

CHRIST EXAMINED BY PILATE (John 18:33-37; Daniel 2:44; 7:13,14; Psalm 2:10-12;Isaiah 53:4-6,11,12; Psalm 22:11,16,18).

“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?” (John 18:33). Pilate was unable to find why the Jews brought Jesus to him. He, therefore, left his rostrum and re-entered the house calling for Jesus to follow him. He wanted Jesus to enlighten him as the Jews were not able to bring any charge against Him. Christ’s answer was prophetic, convincing and clear. He said: **“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence”** (John 18:36).

Question 3: *How can you describe Christ’s Kingdom?*

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13,14). Jesus Christ is the King of kings. He has a Kingdom founded on truth and righteousness. All the kingdoms of the world are transitory¹ but the Kingdom of Christ alone will remain forever. His Kingdom is immutable², invincible, immortal³ and imperishable.

Question 4: *How can one be a part of Christ’s Kingdom?*

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12-14). To be a part of Christ’s Kingdom, accept Christ now by faith and serve Him in holiness and righteousness.

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). Jesus had a purpose of coming into the world and died on the cross. His death was not ordinary. He died a painful and sacrificial death for the sins of the whole world (Hebrews 2:9).

Question 5: *What is the purpose of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross?*

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” **“But we see Jesus, who was made**

a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 2:9). Christ is the Saviour and Redeemer. He was "**smitten of God**" for every one of us; His body was beaten and broken for us. He paid the whole price for our salvation and redemption. He bore indescribable pain and the full penalty of our sins. To escape God's judgement, all we have to do is to repent of all our sins and believe on Christ as our Substitute, Sin-Bearer and Saviour of our souls. Then, live for His glory, walking in righteousness and following Christ's steps in everything while waiting for His Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10).

CHRIST, CONDEMNED AND BARNABAS, RELEASED (John 18:38-40; 19:4,6; Matthew 27:19; Mark 15:1-14; Luke 23:4,13-25).

After thorough examination, Pilate could not lay any charge against the Lord, yet, he could not release Him for fear of the Jews. He tried to clear himself from the whole matter by attempting to release Jesus according to their custom. "**But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber**" (John 18:39,40). Pilate thought that it would be wise to release Jesus but the Jews were bent on Jesus death. They preferred Barabbas, a robber to Jesus, the sinless, Holy One. Barabbas was a nuisance¹ to the community. He was a man of violence; a man who wasted the lives and properties of the Jews. Yet, the people preferred to release such a dangerous man. Today, there are those who reject Jesus and prefer Barabbas. They have rejected the Prince of Peace who has come that they might have abundant life and rather chosen to follow the thief who "**cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy**". All these were to fulfill the scriptures that Jesus was faultless.

Question 6: How can you show that Jesus was faultless even though condemned by the Jews?

"**Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all**" (John 18:38). Pilate, on three occasions declared that Jesus was faultless and worthy of no death (John 19:4,6). Even though He has done nothing worthy of death, yet He must die for the sins of the world. "**For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself**" (Hebrews 7:26,27).

The cruel injury inflicted on our Lord's body is far more severe than a casual reader of the Bible will notice. It was a punishment which the Romans generally used to afflict on a condemned criminal before crucifixion and was sometimes so painful that the sufferer died under it. Jesus was severely scourged. He was stripped of His garments and mercilessly whipped with thongs¹ that bit into His flesh. In a loud voice, thousands shouted "**Crucify Him, crucify Him**". Eventually, He died. Why? He died that we might live. He suffered so that any who comes to Him can be delivered and rescued from eternity in hell. He paid

the price of our sins by shedding His blood. Will you read through these words without falling on your knees and praying until Calvary becomes the reality in your life? A Song Writer 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”.

It is time to pray for forgiveness and cleansing through Christ’s blood. Pray with all your hearts and make a clear decision to follow Him to the end.

Lesson 412

THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him” (John 19:6)

TEXT: John 19:1-42

Our last study focused on the prophecies concerning

Christ’s death and the purpose of His death. Our lesson this week brings us to Christ’s experience at Calvary. Christ, our Lord, was crucified at Calvary. Crucifixion was a shameful way by which a criminal was put to an open shame and disgrace. It must, however, be pointed out that His crucifixion and death was not for any sin or crime He committed. It was a substitutionary death by which He redeemed the lost world. He offered Himself as an offering for the sin of the whole world. **“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).**

His crucifixion was not without God’s knowledge. It was God’s design for Him to give up His life a ransom for the salvation of many. **“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (Acts 2:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21).** This reveals to every youth the precious price our Lord paid for his redemption.

THE CONDEMNATION AND REPROACH OF CHRIST (John 19:1-15; Isaiah 53:3-8; Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-20; Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 20:18,19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32-34)

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands” (verse 1-3). None could comprehend the agony and the horror which the Lord went through. Despite this heart-rending sight, the Jews cried out: **“Crucify him, crucify him”.**

Question 1: *What lessons can Christian youths learn from what Jesus went through?*

From this, we have some important lessons to learn: (1) Christian youths should endure pains like Jesus did. (2) When we are ridiculed for well-doing, we should not be ashamed. (3) God will reward all those who suffer for Him as He honoured Christ.

Pilate brought Him before the people saying, **“Behold, the man!”** thinking by seeing Jesus in such a manner crowned with thorns, and bloody appearance, they would be moved with pity to release Him. But this could not change their wicked

minds. All these were the fulfillment of scriptures. Pilate confessed: “**for I find no fault in him.**” If he found no fault in Him, then, why did he scourge Him? Why did he suffer Him to be abused? Why did he bring Him out to His prosecutors and not immediately release Him? Pilate could not act upon his conscience. If he had acted on his own conscience, he would neither have scourged Christ nor released Him to be crucified. The fear of man brings one into bondage of not obeying God.

The fear of Pilate was increased when he knew he was dealing with the matter of deity. He, therefore, went in to ask Jesus “**whence art thou?**” Jesus gave no answer, not because He didn’t know what to say, but that the scriptures might be fulfilled. “**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth**” (Isaiah 53:7). “**Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?**” (verse 10). Pilate magnified himself and boasted of his authority to release Him. “**Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin**” (verse 11). Christ explained that he had no power over Him except it was allowed of God.

In summary of Christ’s reply, He told Pilate of his sin and the greater sin on the part of those that delivered Him to be judged. Why do they have greater sin? They had seen Christ’s miracles which Pilate had not seen. Caiphas, the high priest, had prophesied it and yet for fear of the people, was hasty to condemn Him.

Question 2: What lesson can youths learn from the statement of Jesus on those with greater sin?

Youths should know that they have greater condemnation for neglecting Christ after they have heard the word of truth several times. “**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him**” (Hebrews 2:3). In verse 12, Pilate took the response kindly and sought to release Him. However, he became threatened and withdrew because he wanted the favour of Caesar rather than obeying God.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF CHRIST (John 19:16-30; Matthew 27:33-54; Mark 15:22-39; Luke 23:33-47; Isaiah 53:5-10; 1 Peter 2:24; John 3:14-19)

“**Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away**” (verse 16). Pilate yielded to the fear of man and gave judgment against Christ by signing the warrant for His execution. He sinned against his conscience and condemned an innocent man to death. Christ was made sin for us in fulfillment of prophecy.

Question 3: How can Christian youths carry their cross and follow Christ?

“**And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha**” (verse 17). As part of His suffering, Christ endured the cross, despising the shame, God having laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24). Our Master hereby taught us that we must take up our cross and follow Him. Whatever cross we bear today in our career, commitment or any circumstances, we should know that He bore it first. He has made His yoke easy and His burden light for us. (Matthew 11:28-30).

He was taken out of the city, for He was crucified outside the gate (Hebrew 13:12), brought to the common place of execution, numbered among the transgressors in a place called Golgotha, the place of a skull.

“Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (verse 18). He died the death of the cross, a bloody, painful, shameful and a cursed death. He was nailed to the cross as a sacrifice bound to the altar. He was lifted up as the brazen serpent, between heaven and earth. His hands were stretched out as to invite and embrace us. He was crucified in the midst of malefactors (criminals) to fulfill the Scripture. **“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin”** (verse 19, 20). This writing generated both resistance from the Jews and testimony to Christ’s innocence. **“Pilate answered, What I have written I have written”** (verse 22). Pilate refused to be intimidated. When the Jews rejected Christ, Pilate, a Gentile, insisted that Christ is a King. Little did Pilate know that it was the Hand that framed the heavens and earth that guided his own hand to write this truth pointing to the Messiahship and Kingship of Jesus.

Jesus was stripped of His garment before His crucifixion. The Roman custom was that the clothes of victims of crucifixion were the fees of the executors for their job. The soldiers unconsciously fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy: **“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture”** (Psalm 22:18).

Question 4: What qualities of character did those who stayed with Jesus at death manifest?

In the midst of all the shame and suffering that surrounded the cross and Christ, some few people still held on to Him. These included Mary, the mother of Jesus, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. These people manifested fine quality of character which, the thought of the suffering, agony, shame and death which Jesus faced, could not put off. They determined to endure the public scorn and ridicule to which they were exposed and did not mind the personal danger to their lives as they publicly identified with Jesus, the crucified One. Christian youths should make up their minds to stand by Christ and draw closer to Him regardless of the prevailing situations. Those who stand by Jesus, anywhere and at anytime, will also have Jesus stand by them in time of trouble. **“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst”** (verse 28). While on the cross in deep agony, Jesus cried **“I thirst”**. This cry showed the humanity of Christ.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, **“It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost”**, summarising the perfect fulfilment of the predictions of the sufferings of the Anointed One. The obedience and humiliation of the Son of God were now finished. His obedience had commenced at His childhood (Luke 2:49), continued during His ministry (John 9:4; 5:30; Luke 22:42) and got perfected in His death on the cross (Phillipians 2:8). The work of redemption and salvation of men is finished. The ransom has been paid that salvation may now be made available to all mankind through the crucified Christ. The Author and the Finisher of our faith did finish the work on the cross at Calvary. Youths should, therefore, come boldly to Him for mercy, pardon and cleansing. Christian youths should continue to look **“...unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the**

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2), as they endure every trial and opposition of life.

THE COMBINED EFFORT ON THE BURIAL OF CHRIST (John 19:31-42; Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56)

Through suffering and death, Christ acquired a right to give salvation to all who believe. In order for the prophecy to be fulfilled, Roman customs were broken while the scriptures remain true. By this custom, the bodies of malefactors were left hanging till they are rotten by corruption or devoured by birds. Besides this law, for the Jews, the next day to the crucifixion was a special Sabbath day. The holy day was not to be profaned by the sight of a criminal hanging on a cross. The pretended sanctity of hypocrites is abominable. These Jews would be thought to have great regard for the Sabbath, yet had no regard to justice and righteousness. They supported in bringing an innocent Person to the cross to die yet were reluctant letting his dead body hang upon the cross to avoid being defiled on the sabbath day. For these considerations, the Jews therefore, **“besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away”** (verse 31). The Romans never knew that they were fulfilling prophecy (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9: 12).

Question 5: *What roles did Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus played in Jesus’ burial?*

In verses 38-42, God raised two men to give the body of Christ a befitting burial—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus hitherto had been secret disciples. They had the means to give honour to the smitten body of Jesus. Joseph gave Him a tomb and Nicodemus gave Him clothes to wear in the tomb. They both gave cheerfully and sincerely. We too should give our best to the Saviour who died for us on the cross. The question Christ has for you is **“I gave, I gave My life for thee, what hast thou giv’n for Me?”**

Lesson 413

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

MEMORY VERSE: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:6).

TEXT: John 20:1-10

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene

early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (John 20:1). At this time, Christ has been crucified and buried. Fear plagued the disciples. The disciples had listened to the words of life from the lips of Jesus, beheld the Light of the world and walked **“in the light of his countenance”**. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the sepulcher with sweet spices to anoint Him (Mark 16:1). They, being filled with thoughts of how to get to where the body of Christ was laid, asked **“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”** (Mark 16:3). They were not yet aware that the greatest miracle has taken place. **“And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great”** (Mark 16:4).

We, often, get discouraged whenever we seem to be hedged in by problems of life. The devil often tries to wage his fiercest battle against us at such times. He tries to make us believe that all hope is lost. He may even attempt to tell us to give up our faith in God. Christian youths should remember that it is always darkest before the dawn. Cheer up! It may be dark today but it will be bright tomorrow. Now, it may be nights of tears and sighing but keep on holding on to God. No matter how dark the sky is, there will always be a silver lining to cheer you. Your Saviour said: **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me”** (John 14:1).

SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT TO SERVE THE LORD (John 20:1,2; Luke 24:1-3,9,10; 2 Samuel 24:19-25; Esther 4:15,16; Romans 16:1-4,6).

“Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him” (John 20:2). The role played by women during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus remains a challenge today. We may think that since women (including girls) are weaker vessels, they could be excused from manifesting loyalty, devotion and sacrificial commitment to Christ and His Church. To the contrary, history is full of women such as Mary Magdalene and others. She was the first person to go to the sepulcher of the Lord. Also, she was the first person to see the Lord. It was an act of great and sacrificial commitment on her part to go to the sepulcher when it was still dark. There were risk but nothing could stop her. Her love carried her through a thousand and one barriers. Mary was indeed a woman of substance. She shone so brightly in her little corner that she

towers high today as a monument of devotion and commitment to the Lord. Just like David said, he will not offer to God that which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24), Christian youths should learn to be committed to the service of God sacrificially (1 John 3:16,18).

Question 1: What lessons can Christian youths learn from Mary Magdalene?

Christian youths, especially females, should learn from Mary who rose beyond the limitation placed on her as a woman and went all the way to practically demonstrate her love and zeal for her Lord. Like Mary, we should arise early to worship and serve the Lord. **“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them”** (Luke 24:1).

Question 2: What is the first spiritual exercise God expects Christian youths to do early in the morning?

“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalms 42:2). The spiritual exercise every Christian youth should perform towards God is Quite Time. Quite Time is the period set aside personally to praise and worship God, read and meditate on His word, pray for grace and make his personal requests to God on daily basis. Jesus has given us an example. **“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed”** (Mark 1:35).

“And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” (Mark 16:3). Mary and others were thinking of how to give the Lord honour and worship. They came with sweet spices to anoint Him (Mark 16:1), but the stone that was used to cover the tomb would be a hindrance to them. However, before they got there, **“there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door”** (Matthew 28:2). This was a great manifestation of the power of God. Figuratively, stone represent anything that can hinder us from receiving the best from God. It may include sin (Psalm 40:12; Isaiah 59:1,2), doubt (James 1:5-8), unbelief (John 11:39,40; Hebrews 3:12,18,19), unforgiving spirit (Mark 11:25,26), prayer that does not conform with the will of God (James 4:2,3), etc. All these can be removed by the Lord with your co-operation. **“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid...”** (John 11:41). After observing the empty tomb, the women went to inform Peter and John that the Lord have been taken away without knowing **“where they have laid him”**.

STEADFAST COURAGE AND UNITY TO SERVE THE LORD (John 20:3-6,8; Acts 4:31; Psalm 133:1-3; Romans 16:17,18; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:3-6).

“Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher” (John 20:3,4). It is interesting that as women are committed to the worship and service of the Lord, the men too are

courageous to do the same. This is a challenge to Christian boys and girls today. On hearing that the body of the Lord had been taken away, Peter and John ran towards the grave. In them, we see love and unity displayed. Each of them had his peculiarity yet they faced a common cause with one mind.

Question 3: What are the benefits of unity in our fellowship?

As Christian boys and girls, we are expected to be united in the service of God. **“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:27). When we are united, the Lord commandss His blessing upon us (Psalm 133:3). **“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed”** (John 20:8). John the beloved, the writer of the book of John, referred to himself as **“the other disciple”** (John 20:2; 13:23-25; 19:26,27; 21:7,20,24). He chose the pathway of humility. He also referred to himself as **“the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”**.

SUPERNATURAL CONFIRMATION OF THE SAVIOUR AS THE LORD (John 20:7-10; Psalm 16:10; 49:15; Matthew 16:21; 26:32; Luke 24:4-7; Acts 2:29-32).

“And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (John 20:7). The way napkin was described suggests that it was folded up, properly arranged, just as it was wound around the head. The graves clothes were not disarranged, they were lying still in their original folds. The clothes lay where the body had been while the napkin lay where the head had lain. Thus, we see God’s supernatural power at work. It becomes clear beyond every shadow of doubt that the Lord’s body had passed into a glorified state, leaving the grave clothes as a proof of His resurrection.

“He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee” (Luke 24:6). Satan thought he had done his worst. He thought that he could employ the power of the grave to silence the Lord of life. He was absolutely wrong. Jesus rose triumphantly and made an open show of the devil. He defeated and paralysed Satan and his hosts. As the Captain of our salvation, He wrought victory for all the heirs of salvation. Our Christian testimony, hope, confidence and the basis for our faith are all anchored in the resurrection of the Lord. The resurrection of the Lord also points to our victory in Christ.

Question 4: What are the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection?

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the

fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23). Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we receive salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), sanctification (1 Peter 2:24), supernatural healing (1 Peter 2:24), scriptural deliverance (Colossians 2:14,15), son-ship (Romans 1:4), scriptural hope (1 Peter 1:30) and spiritual and physical victory over all enemies. He is our Sin-bearer, Sanctifier, Supporter, Shepherd and Sufficiency.

“For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been prophesied in the scriptures and Christ Himself predicted it. On various occasions, He predicted His resurrection: **“Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day”. “But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee”** (Luke 9:22; Mark 14:28).

Question 5: What does the fact of Christ’s resurrection teach us as Christian youths?

The fact of Christ’s resurrection teaches us the following lessons: one, biblical prophecies are credible and dependable. We can rest assured that whatever God has predicted will come to pass. Two, Christ’s resurrection assures us of the certainty of our own resurrection. Three, death has no final power over believers in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Four, Christ’s resurrection confirms His claim to Deity, Messiahship and Lord.

The Bible says that John **“saw and believed”**. He saw the empty tomb and carefully placed clothes and he discerned what had happened. In a little second, he understood that the resurrection had taken place. He believed the fact of resurrection in his heart even though neither of them had yet known **“the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead”**. The Christian life is a life of faith. We must trust the Lord for our salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts. We must pray that the Lord should open our eyes, ears and hearts to understand His words (Psalm 119:17-19; 40:4-6; Acts 16:13,14). This was what the disciples later enjoyed from the risen Christ. **“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”** (Luke 24:45).

Lesson 414

REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “**And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold**” (Luke 19:8).

TEXT: Luke 19:1-10

Today's lesson exposes us to the encounter of a

notorious sinner called Zacchaeus with Christ. He belonged to the group known as publican. By profession, he was a custom collector for the district of Jericho. He was a rich man like other publicans through oppressing and extorting¹ money from the Jews. The activities of Zacchaeus, as a publican, made him to be despised by God, and also subjected to the ridicule of men (Luke 18:11). Zacchaeus, though sinful, took a wise decision to seek the Lord for the salvation of his soul. He had to overcome some hindrances on his way until he got the attention of the Saviour. His deeds and actions are subject of our consideration.

DECISION OF A SINCERE SEEKER (Luke 19:1-7; 15:17-21; 1 Samuel 7:5,6; Jeremiah 3:21, 22; Jonah 3:7-10; 2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus, in His daily business of seeking and saving those who are lost, was passing through Jericho. Zacchaeus heard He was passing, “**And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way**” (verse 4). He knew that it was an opportunity as Christ was passing through that way; which eventually led to the salvation of his soul.

Question 1: *What lessons can sinning youths learn from the action of Zacchaeus?*

Zacchaeus realised that life is short, and he could not tell when his end could be. So he used the only opportunity he had to seek Jesus till he found Him. What a great lesson for sinning boys and girls in the church today. They should use every opportunity of hearing God's word for the salvation of their souls. “**Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee...**” (Isaiah 49:8). Zacchaeus decision was very prompt. He did not delay. Today, many sinning youths are delaying the day of their salvation. They have been to Retreats, Success Camps, Combined Services, Weekly meetings in the church and heard striking messages of salvation. Yet they have not thought it necessary to surrender their lives to Christ. Like Zacchaeus, who defied all odds to come to Christ, youths are expected to do the same.

Question 2: What are some of the things that hinder the youths from coming to Christ for salvation and what are they expected to do?

Many things would have hindered Zacchaeus from coming to Christ at that time. One, the people were many so he could not find his way through “**the press**”. Two, “**he was little of stature**”. Three, His status: “**he was rich**”. Four, people’s view about him. He was a subject of ridicule as a publican. He was called a sinner. As for him, none of these bothered him. He decided he wanted to see Jesus; nothing could stop him from this sole objective. This is what the Lord expects from sinners. Many youths are in the broad way seeking after pleasure through evil friendship. They are seeking fame and worldly treasures. Their evil lifestyles in the name of civilization and socialization make it difficult for them to come to Christ. Learn from Zacchaeus and do not allow any of them to hinder you. Youths should not allow the status and pressure of their parents to hinder them from accepting Christ. Some youths think they are so bad that their sins cannot be forgiven. It is not so. “**Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool**” (Isaiah 1:18).

The people of Nineveh did great evil and God thought to wipe them out, but they repented in ashes and sackcloth and He forgave them (Jonah 3:7-10). His will remains the same. He does not delight in the death of sinners. “**The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**” (2 Peter 3:9).

Question 3: What then must sinning youths do to be saved?

Had Zacchaeus remained in one place, he would have not been saved. He came to Jesus, confessed and forsook his sins. Sinning youths must do the same.

DEEPER ACT OF A SERIOUS SEEKER (Luke 19:8; Genesis 20:7,14; Exodus 22:1-12; Acts 19:19).

“**And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold**” (Luke 19:8). The conversion of Zacchaeus was full of marks of genuine repentance. He repented fully and wholly. Genuine repentance is always followed with some evidences. One of these evidences is known as restitution.

Question 4: What is restitution?

Restitution is the act of restoring of anything: money, books, ill-gotten material, and clothing taking by force or trick to the rightful owners. It is also mending all the wrongs done in anyway against fellow youths, parents, neighbours, etc. Restitution has been in practice for a long time: before the law, God commanded Abimelech “**Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou**

restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife” (Genesis 20:7, 14). Also during the law, God commanded that restitution should be made. **“If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour; Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein: Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest”** (Leviticus 6:2-6). And during the time of the Prophets and the early church, restitution was made. **“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver”** (Acts 19:19).

Question 5: *Has restitution passed with time?*

Though many churches think that it is unnecessary to make restitution and do not emphasise it, there is danger in leaving out any part of the Bible. Restitution was practised in the New Testament like that which was made by Zacchaeus. Youths must also make restitution. Nevertheless, complicated restitutions must be made prayerfully with guided counseling from mature leaders.

DIVINE RESPONSE FROM THE SAVIOUR (Luke 19:9,10; John 6:37; 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; Jeremiah 50:20).

Jesus was named a friend of sinners. **“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner”** (Luke 19:7). He cannot ignore any plea of true repentance. He cannot cast out anyone that comes to Him in genuine repentance. Once any youth opens his heart to Him, He comes in and manifests Himself. **“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20).

Question 6: *What happens when a sinner wholeheartedly approaches Christ?*

When we go to Christ, He will do more than we expect from Him. Zacchaeus only sought to see Jesus but had Christ as a guest and eventually receive salvation from sin. **“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will**

receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18). Christ always transforms sinners that come to Him. He translates them from darkness into light and bestows on them unlimited blessings. He grants them peace, joy and justification. **“In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve”** (Jeremiah 50:20).

Lesson 415

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22)

TEXT: James 5:1-20

The moment a sinner turns to God in repentance

and faith in Christ, “... **he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new**” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He begins to live a life different from what he was living before his decision to follow Christ. (Acts 9: 20, 21). The people he had been working and walking with in the school or in the neighbourhood, begin to resent and oppose his present life and convictions because it is opposed to theirs (1Peter 4:3,4). This type of life, no doubt, would lead to suffering in different ways: scourging, ridicules, denial of right or even death (Matthew 10:17,18,21). This is what is called persecution.

Question 1: What leads to the persecution of the Christian youths?

“Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Timothy 3:12). The new life of Christian youths attracts persecution. Persecution is part of the Christian life. That was why Paul and Barnabas encouraged the Christians who were being persecuted. **“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22). Thus, it becomes very important today for the Church to keep encouraging the Christian youths that are being persecuted to endure in the time of persecution. **“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved”** (Matthew 10:22). Our text is very clear about the ungodly lifestyles of the persecutors. It also tells us the kind of life expected of a Christian in the time of persecution besides the fact that a Christian must continue praying, believing and fellowshiping with other saints during persecution.

CHRISTLESS CONDUCT OF THE PERSECUTORS (James 5:1-6; Matthew 5:10,11; 10:17-22; John 15:18,19; Acts 5: 40; 7: 54, 57-59; 8: 3; 26: 9-11)

“Go to now”. This statement actually means “Come now”. It was an appeal to arrest the attention of the oppressors. It was to call their attention to see how the people they oppressed felt. Usually, those who persecute others are insensitive to the feeling of pains of those they persecute. They delight in doing so because they believe they are doing what is right. This is because of their spiritual ignorance. **“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God**

service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me” (John 16:2,3).

Question 2: Mention other characteristics of the persecutors.

James said, **“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.** (James 5:4). The persecutors deny Christians of their basic rights. It could be the parents that stop paying the child’s school fees or stop buying things that are legitimate for the child. It could be the head of department sitting on the opportunity for scholarship. Besides, he says, **“Ye have condemned and killed the just...”** (verse 6). The persecutors will falsely accuse Christians so that they would suffer unjustly. (i.e. to suffer for what they did not do). Sometimes, like most of the apostles, they kill the saints. For this reason, it is written, **“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter”** (Romans 8:36; Psalm 44:22).

Further more, the persecutors revile and ridicule the Christians. They make uncharitable comments about their good deeds. If it is in their power, they will beat the Christian youth. The ridicule could be made public or the Christian youth called before the extended family. They manifest a very strong hatred such as can destroy the family tie so that **“the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child...”** A kind of hatred that will spread to the extend that **“ye shall be hated of all men”**. Also, the persecutors make all effort to intimidate the Christian youth not to preach the gospel. **“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go”** (Acts 5:40). Even when a Christian youth takes the courage to preach to them, they are violently resistant and would stop their ears from hearing the truth (Acts 7:54,57-59). The persecutors of the Christians can use their privilege of authority to punish them even when they have done nothing wrong. They try to force them to deny the Lord and blaspheme His holy name. God expects us that in all these, we should display a true Christian character of patience and meekness.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN PERSECUTION (James 5:7-12; Matthew 10:16-23; 5:10-12; Romans 5:3-5; 12:12; 1 Peter 3:14-18; 4:12-16)

“Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (James 5:6). To condemn and to kill the just implies making them to suffer even to the point of death. The Christians in our text who suffered such persecution did **“not resist”**. What a demonstration of total meekness and patience in persecution!

Question 3: What lessons can we learn from the attitude of these Christians in our text?

From these, we learn to be meek and quiet during persecution. **“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak”** (Matthew

10:19). We should not premeditate or rehearse how we are going to fight back in words or in actions. If necessary, the Lord will tell us what we should say. Our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us the example. Despite all the false accusations raised against Him, He answered none (Matthew 26:59-63; 27:11-14). The Scripture says, **“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth”** (Acts 8:32).

Question 4: *Mention other Christian conducts expected of a Christian youth during persecution.*

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7). The word of God encourages us to be patient in tribulation. Like a farmer that waits for **“the precious fruit”**, a Christian must have **“long patience”**. This means that the persecution may last for some time. It is only God that determines the length of time and the quality of what Christians go through. (1 Corinthians 10: 13). Hence, we must endure, **“for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”**. James gave examples of **“the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience”**. Those who endured were always happy at the end of the afflictions. Joseph, David and Job were in this category. The pity and the tender mercy of God preserved them.

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned...” (James 5:9). Some Christians blame the Church leaders for their miseries during persecutions. Some blame their friends who preached to them, counting that they would not have been suffering if they had not yielded to the gospel. The word of God says we should not grudge. That would lead to condemnation. Rather, we are to rejoice and glorify God. (1Peter 4:16).

Finally, **“But above all things, my brethren, swear not ... but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation”** (verse 12). A Christian should maintain an honest and straightforward conversation in times of persecution. He should not attempt to cover anything up by swearing, probably, in order to escape suffering (1Peter 2:12).

CHRISTIAN CONTINUITY DURING PERSECUTION (James 5:13-20; Daniel 6:10; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12-14)

“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray” (verse 13). Against the tendency that many give in to self-pity during persecution, the apostle encourages us to pray. We should not allow our persecution to destroy our prayer life. **“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime”** (Daniel 6:10). Daniel maintained his normal devotion to God even when he had persecutors all around him. Persecutions should not stop us from doing our quiet time. It is the time to say the **“the prayer of faith”** unto God. Prayer will give us supernatural strength.

Question 5: *Mention how Christians can continue with the Lord during persecutions.*

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). We should not keep away from other believers during persecutions. It is a time to be closer to other Christians who can share their own experiences to encourage us. All our past faults and negative ways in which we have handled persecution in the past should be confessed. In short, it should be a time of fellowship with people of like precious faith. (Acts 4: 23-33). We should not be like others who run away from the fellowship of God’s people because of persecutions (Hebrews 10: 25).

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him” (James 5:19). Persecution has led some youths out of the faith. They became cold and drew back completely. Therefore, we are to be close to those who are persecuted, and bring them back to the Lord (James 5:20). It is the will of God for us to minister to those who have fallen because of persecutions.

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22)

Lesson 416

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

MEMORY VERSE: “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9).

TEXT: Galatians 5:22,23; John 15: 1 -8

Among Christians, there is an emphasis on Christian character. The life of a New Testament Christian youth should manifest a Christ-like pattern of character like the Church at Antioch. Christ explains the expected fruit-bearing lifestyle of believers thus: **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”** (John 15: 3 – 5).

Question 1: *What do you understand by the fruit of the Spirit?*

The fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of a Christian’s transformed life. These true Christian virtues are collectively called the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a biblical term that sums up the nine visible characteristics which should be constantly seen in the life of a Christian and these are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance... (Galatians 5: 22, 23). We learn from scripture that these are not individual “fruits” from which believing youths can pick and choose. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit is one “fruit” that characterizes all who truly walk in the Holy Spirit. Collectively, these are the attributes or good virtues that all Christians should be producing in their new lives with Jesus Christ.

CONDITION FOR BEARING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (John 15:1-7, 16; Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 9:10; Psalm 92:13,14)

The fruit of the Spirit is called thus because it is given by the Holy Spirit. It might be helpful to note that Paul wrote “fruit” in the singular, indicating that we should understand that the fruit has a number of components, but at the same time, all of them will be produced within each person the Spirit leads. Paul pointedly drew attention to the source of the fruit as being “of the Spirit” to make us fully aware that these qualities do not flow from our nature. The vices or “works of the flesh” listed in Galatians 5:19-21 are the product of our human nature. But the spiritual fruit is produced by means of the influence of the Holy Spirit. This comes into the heart of youths after conversion. Conversion involves the transformation of the heart of a youth from being a sinful person to a saint.

Question 2: What are the steps required for a youth to be able to bear the fruit of the Spirit?

To qualify to bear the fruit of the Spirit, a youth needs to acknowledge his sinful state (Psalm 51: 1–3), believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (John 10: 7–9), confess his sins and forsake them (Proverbs 28:13), depend fully on God by reading and obeying His word daily (John 5:39), by praying to God in faith (1 Thessalonians 5:17), faithfully abide by the Spirit of God and ensure that he completely abides by His desires (Galatians 5:16).

COMPONENTS OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:22,23)

There are nine fruit of the Spirit. They can be split into three main groups, each consisting of three set of qualities. The first group of love, joy and peace shows a Christian's heart with special emphasis on his relationship with God. The second group: longsuffering (patience), kindness and goodness exemplify a Christian youth's social virtues relating to our thoughts and actions toward fellow men. The third group: faith (faithfulness), gentleness and temperance (self-control) reveals the internal attributes of a Christian youth and how he should maintain his spiritual and moral reliability.

Question 3: In your own words, describe the different fruit of the Spirit?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5: 22, 23). Each of these components of the fruit is a quality every Christian youth should desire, for without them, he cannot rightly reflect the mind and way of God. The fruit of the Spirit reflects the virtues God would manifest before mankind.

Love (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 5: 43, 44; 1 John 4:7 – 12; 3: 11, 18, 23). Love is defined as an unselfish, benevolent¹ concern for another. It is the self-denying, self-sacrificing, Christ-like love for the well being of others which is the foundation of all other graces. Conversion without love can be greatly questioned.

Joy (Jeremiah 15:16; Acts 8: 6 – 8; 1 Peter 1:8; Luke 10:17; John 16:22). Joy is defined as great delight; gladness of heart and that deep, abiding, inner rejoicing in the Lord. It is the happy state that results from a person being forgiven by and serving God. The joy of the Lord is the strength of every believing youth. Without it, Christianity would become a routine task and youths would start to withdraw from others and life in general. The joy of the Lord gives an incredible source of strength in your daily walk with God. This is different from happiness which only results from one being in a pleasant mood or situation.

Peace (John 16:33; Romans 5:1; Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3) It is defined as the sense of well-being and fulfillment that comes from God and is dependent on His presence. It is tranquility¹, rest, and harmony, the absence of agitation or discord. Without the peace of God operating in a Christian life, he could

become very easily, shaken, tormented and knocked off from the Lord any time adversity comes his way.

Longsuffering (1 Corinthians 13:4; Col 1:11; 2 Peter 3:9) is also called patience. It is highly needed in the face of aggression in the world in which we live today. It is patience, endurance and steadfastness under provocation. It sometimes entails forbearance under suffering in the face of adversity. It is the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment.

Gentleness (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11; 2 Timothy 2:24; Psalm 18:35; James 3:17) Gentleness is mildness combined with tenderness. It is the quality of being gracious, kind disposition and controlled strength. It is the disposition of controlled temper, balanced in spirit, and passions under control. It is exhibited in believing youths as a character that is reasonable, forbearing, moderate, fair and considerate. When one is gentle, he is willing to pardon injuries, correct faults and rule his spirit well.

Goodness (Genesis 45: 5–8,15; 1 Samuel 24:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15) Goodness is one of the key qualities an unbeliever will easily pick up on in a genuine Christian as it is what they easily admire and desire in a believer. It is defined as being benevolent, ready to do good and love in action. It is kindness in actual manifestation, virtue equipped for action, a bountiful tendency both to will and to do what is good. Goodness produces generosity and a God-like state or being. The word benevolent is the quality of being kind or doing good.

Meekness (Luke 6:29; 1 Peter 3:4; Galatians 6:1; Numbers 12:3; Zephaniah 2:3) Meekness can also be explained as being kind. Once the Holy Spirit starts to transmit His love up into a youth, the quality of his kindness will follow right along with it. It will become much easier for you to be able to be kind to others once the love of God starts to flow more into your personality. Kindness is the steadfast love that maintains relationships through gracious aid in times of need. It is defined as goodness of heart, serviceable, good, gracious, pleasant. It also includes love for mankind, hospitality, acts of kindness, readiness to help, human friendship, benevolence, taking thought of others.

Faith (1 Samuel 17:37; Psalm 37:3,5; Isaiah 26:3, 4; Psalm 125:1) Faith as stated here is faithfulness which means being trusted (trustworthiness). It is that which makes one true to his promise and faithful to his task. It is being steadfast, dedicated, loyal, unchanging, thoroughly grounded, dependable and worthy of trust.

Temperance (Titus 2:2; Proverbs 16:32; 2 Peter 1:5 – 7; James 3:2) Temperance is also called self-control. Even though it is the last, it is one of the most important virtues of a believing youth. It is to have sober, temperate and calm approach to life, having mastered personal desires and passions. It is to be well disciplined and to exercise restraint over one's behaviour

COMPENSATION FOR PERSISTENT SAINTS

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27; John 15:16,17; 2 Peter 1:5-11; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name...Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” Revelation 3: 11, 12; 1 Corinthians 15:58

Question 4: *What are some rewards for being steadfast?*

For Christian youths, who are able to be steadfast and bear the fruit of the Spirit, Jesus Christ promises that they will bear more fruits. For those who fail to bear the right fruits, there is condemnation and suffering. There are several crowns for those that remain faithful and they include the following: an imperishable crown, crown of rejoicing, crown of righteousness, crown of glory, crown of life. There are also other rewards both here and in eternity.

While here there is protection, provision and preservation from the Lord. It is, therefore, important that all youths show forth the fruit of the Spirit as that is the way they can truly show that they are converted and are born of God. **“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 1:10,11)