

**Youth
Search
the
Scriptures**

Vol. 37

CONTENTS

LESSON _____ PAGE

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

- 469 - THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE.....5
470 - THE DANGER OF EVIL ASSOCIATION.....11
471 - TEST OF OBEDIENCE AND HUMILITY.....16
472 - MOSES REHEARSES ISRAEL'S REBELLION.....22
473 - GOD'S LONGSUFFERING TOWARDS ISRAEL....28

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

- 474 - GENTILES RECEIVE THE GOSPEL.....34
475 - PETER'S DELIVERANCE AND HEROD'S DEATH..40
476 - THE COMMISSION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS...45
477 - PAUL ON HIS MISSIONARY JOURNEY.....52
478 - PERSECUTION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS.....58

SPECIAL STUDIES

- 479 - CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL VICES:
THE CHRISTIAN VIEW.....64
480 - THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND
COMING OF CHRIST.....71
481 - THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND
THE ANTICHRIST.....75

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

LESSON 469

MEMORY VERSE: “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (**Deuteronomy 6:5**).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 6:1-25.

In our last lesson in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses restated the ten commandments to the children of Israel. This was necessary so that they would not forget them and sin against God. Moses wanted them to be refreshed and renewed by this reminder.

Question 1: *What is the summary of the commandments of God?*

The summary of all the commandment of God is love for Him and our fellow men. “**Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets**” (Matthew 22:37-40). From our text today, Moses still stressed the importance of keeping all the commandments of God to the children of Israel. In this lesson, we shall consider Moses’ persuassion to Israel to be obedient to God’s command, perfect love for God and the danger of forgetting Him.

COUNSEL TO OBEY GOD (Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 17-25; Proverbs 3:20-23; 7: 2, 3; Deuteronomy 32:29; 1Samuel 15:22, 23; Matthew 7:24; James 1:22).

Moses opens this chapter by exposing to Israel the commandments of God using various names.

Question 2: *What are the other names for the commandments of God as seen in this chapter?*

The other names for God’s commandments are: “**the statutes, the judgments and his testimonies**” (verse 1, 19). He taught them as God commanded him. His goal was “**that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it**” (Deuteronomy 6:1). Youths of this generation should know that all that the church teaches are commands from the Lord. As our Pastor and other faithful leaders in the church teach us from time to time, we should take these words spoken from the Scriptures as God’s word. The goal of the church is to expose to all boys and girls the whole counsels of God so that they will do them whenever and wherever they are.

Question 3: What are the benefits of doing God's commands?

The desire of Moses, the shepherd, was that Israel might fear God. It is noted here that knowing God's commandments create the fear of God in one's heart. Therefore, every youth should read the word of God daily as it will enable them fear God and do all His will. The fear of God in the heart is a powerful tool to make the heart yield in obedience to God. The consequence of this is **"that thy days may be prolonged"** (Deuteronomy 6:2). Believers are to obey God's commandments all the days of their lives. Other benefits of obeying God's words are: (1) general well-being - **"that it may be well with thee"** (verse 18); (2) divine provision, protection and promotion (Mathew 6:33; Psalms 91: 2-8; Deuteronomy 28:13); (3) divine health and healing (Proverbs 3:7, 8; Isaiah 53:5); (4) divine victory over all enemies (verse 19); and (5) divine increase and progress (verse 19).

Moses conscientious¹ counsel to Israel was **"Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey"** (Deuteronomy 6:3). He also counseled them to diligently keep God's commandments and **"do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD"** (verse 17, 18). The life of Moses is a challenge to ministers in all generations! At this time, it was evident to him that he would not enter the Promised Land; yet, he was careful to ensure that the children of Israel made it into Canaan. He guided them through God's words and made them to know the beauty, glory and the riches of the land they were to possess. Youth leaders should follow his example as the church commits into our hands the total spiritual upbringing and upkeep of the youths. We should be careful to teach them the whole counsel of God as we have it in the Youth Home Success Fellowship Outline, Youth Search the Scriptures booklet and other materials. Our ministration to the youths and sinners should encapsulate¹ the heavenly bliss, peace, joy and glory to be gained when they fully repent.

COMPLETE LOVE FOR GOD (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 30:6; Mark 12:28-31; Psalm 18:1).

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). Israel had been exposed to various gods worshipped by the Egyptians and the Moabites while journeying into the Promised Land. The foundation of faith and obedience is that there is only one living God. He is but one God and no youth should desire to have any other.

Question 3: Answer True or False.

- 1. We have three different Gods in heaven which we must serve (God, Jesus, and Holy Ghost).**
- 2. There are three personalities making one indivisible God (Father, Son and Holy Ghost)**
- 3. The other gods sinners worship are messengers of God.**
- 4. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are members of the Godhead.**

We do not have three different Gods but three different personalities making one invisible God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (1 John 5:7). God is greater than all the gods of the world and possesses a supernatural power that is incomparable with these dead god (1 Samuel 5:2-4). He is Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. He should be loved above all. The Bible says: **“love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”** (Deuteronomy 6:5). The love of God, like the fear of God, should lead believers to obedience to God. This was made known by Christ when He said, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15). The love of God makes us teach others the word of God. Complete love for God makes us keep His words indelibly in our hearts. This contradicts the acts of some youths who **“profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, Being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate”** (Titus 1:16). Christian youths should love God wholeheartedly.

Question 4: How should Christian youths love God?

They are to love God with all their hearts, souls, and might. We should love God: One, sincerely- not in word and tongue only, but inwardly in truth. Two, strongly- He is our all, He must have our all and no one else but He alone. Three, supremely, we must love God above any creature. Four, superiorly- to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding, we must see good cause to love Him. Five, sacrificially- He that gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins, deserves selfless love from us. Our love for God must be complete in appreciation for all He has done for us **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8).

Question 6: How can saved and unsaved youths love God?

“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). Sinning boys and girls must first be born-again, while born again youths must consecrate, pray and have faith to be sanctified. It is at the point of sanctification that perfect love for God is attainable. The love for God brings about the love for fellowmen from a pure heart. **“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”** (1 John 4: 21).

CAUTION AGAINST FORGETTING GOD (Deuteronomy 6:10-16; 28:1,15; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Joshua 24:1-16, 20; Isaiah 65:11, 12; Revelation 21:7).

Moses assured the children of Israel that God would lead them into the Promised Land to possess the land with goodly things. **“And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full”** (Deuteronomy 6:10, 11). Christ also admonished the

Kingdom seekers, to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, with a promise to add all other things (Mathew 6:33). Moses did not leave his people without a warning. He said, **"beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage"** (Deuteronomy 6:12). He saw the possibility that israel would forget God.

Question 7: What are some of the things that could make Israel to forget God as stated by Moses?

Moses reminded the children Israel that they should beware of forgetting God. **"Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage"** (Deuteronomy 6:12). God did not want them to feel accomplished with worldly treasures. He desired that their dependence should be on Him, obeying Him and seeking to lay treasures in heaven.

Christian youths need to watch against allowing admission, graduation, marriage, material things, good jobs, travelling abroad, etc., lead them into backsliding. Forgetting God attracts His harsh judgment. Moses also warned them against tempting God, it leads to destruction. The way not to forget God is to set your mind always on the mercies and goodness God has bestowed on you. Fear God, read and meditate on His words. Be in constant fellowship with God and His people. Separate yourself from the world and worldly friends. Know that all that you have received are from Him. **"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"** (1Timothy 6:7). Every youth should take this counsel of God and make it a guide as they grow in every area of life **"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life"** (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Acts 15:1-12	Jer 4:1-31
TUE	" 15:13-29	" 5:1-31
WED	" 15:30-41	" 6:1-30
THUR	" 16:1-10	" 7:1-34
FRI	" 16:11-24	" 8:1-22
SAT	" 16:25-40	" 9:1-26
SUN	" 17:1-15	" 10:1-25

THE DANGER OF EVIL ASSOCIATION

LESSON 470

MEMORY VERSE: “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly” (**Deuteronomy 7:3, 4**).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 7:1-26.

Moses continued in his farewell message to Israel by

reminding them of the charges, counsels and the commandments of the Lord. As a father, a leader and a shepherd, his concern was how the children of Israel would get to the Promised Land. His passionate desire was how they would dispossess the inhabitants, inherit the land and preserve it for their descendants through holy living. He firmly assured them of the ability of God to give them the land as promised. He warned them also of the danger of compromise with its grave consequences. As he rounded off his message in this chapter, he made it clear that God’s mercy and faithfulness to His oath made to Abraham earn them such divine favour. **“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations”** (Deuteronomy 7:9). His intention was to make them humbly walk with God - holily serve and heartily keep His commandments in the land of Canaan so they could keep the blessings of God.

THE ASSURANCE OF CONQUERING MIGHTY NATIONS THROUGH GOD (Deuteronomy 7:1, 2, 17-19, 21-24; Acts 20:7; Romans 8:37; Isaiah 54:17; Jeremiah 1:19; 15:20).

As Moses rehearsed to Israel their past experiences as they journeyed through the wilderness, he deliberately gave words of encouragement to them. He observed that some of them were afraid because they were defeated by the Amorites who were more experienced in battles. Some of them were also afraid, knowing that Moses would die soon. His presence had signified the presence and power of God to them. Moses, knowing that they needed to be reassured of the continual fulfillment of the promises of God, said, **“the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them”** (Deuteronomy 7:1, 2).

Question 1: What should be the attitude of Christian youth leaders to the youths they are leading when on transfer, admission or relocation?

Committed and consecrated *Christian* youth leaders ought to be loving mentors to their youths. Therefore, when leaving them, they should endeavour to inform them of the plan to leave and give reason for doing so. They should not just abscond¹ without due information. Apostle Paul informed and admonished the church at Troas when he wanted to depart (Acts 20:6,7). Youth leaders should not only encourage their youths, but solicit for their cooperation with and acceptance of his successor as God's plan for their spiritual perfection (1 Samuel 17: 20 – 22).

Moses emphasised God's determination to give them the land. **"When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them"** (Deuteronomy 7:1, 2). These nations were accounted mightier than Israel but with God's power, they would be subdued and conquered. For them to be fully assured, he encouraged them to set their minds always on the mighty acts, wonders and signs of God over Pharaoh and the Egyptians to effect their freedom from the land of slavery (verse 18, 19).

Question 2: What other lessons can Christian youths and their leaders learn from the encouragement of Moses to the children of Israel here?

Christian youths and their leaders should be very close to those godly youths who are discouraged and encourage them. There would be need to tell them of some of the challenges of life which believers in Christ must pass through and the assurance of victory by the unfailing and faithful God. **"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"** (Romans 8:37). As we journey towards heaven as born again youths, we will come across diverse negative occurrences. Satan may stir up people to fight against us. No need to fear, our victory has been won by Christ upon the cross of Calvary. All we need to do is to have faith in God's word and He will take over our cases.

EVIL ASSOCIATION BY ISRAELITES FORBIDDEN BY GOD (Deuteronomy 7:3-6; Proverbs 1:10-19; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Psalms 1:1).

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly" (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4). As Moses continued in his final charge to Israel, he warned against compromise, irregularity and deviation in their walk with God. He realised that the Israelites were most times unstable in nature. Therefore, he cautioned them against the temptation to go into compromise in marriage and how to respond to it. He did not only warn them but made them know what the reaction of God would be if and when they get involved in evil association.

Question 3: What are the major areas of evil association Moses warned the children of Israel against?

The two areas Moses warned them against are: marriage (verse 3, 4) and idolatry (verse 25, 26). They were warned not to inter-marry. Reason for this is that,

“they will turn away thy son from following me that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly” (verse 4).

Question 4: In what way are Christian youths warned against evil association today?

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Proverbs 1:10). God is interested in the progress of youths and wants all unsaved youths to be saved and thereafter desist from evil associations. However, some youths are still engaged in evil enticement, murder, immoral friendship, robbery, smoking, drunkenness, gangsterism, cultism, etc. God’s command is: **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:”** (2 Corinthians 6:14). Friendship with corrupt youths will **“corrupt good manners”** (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Question 5: How can youths who are currently engaged in evil association come out?

“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 6:16-18). The desire of God is to make all youths His sons and daughters. Therefore, He warns them against touching the unclean thing. For those whose hands are soiled already, they need to come to God in repentance. There will be need for an urgent reconciliation with God through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Also, there is need for them to come out of evil friendship and be separate. They also need to make friends with the godly youths and constantly be in fellowship with the people of God. **“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful”** (Psalms 1:1).

AFFECTION TOWARDS ISRAEL IN FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE MADE BY GOD (Deuteronomy 7:6; Romans 5: 28).

There is always a problem when an individual or a group of people think that God has special interest in them. This leads to spiritual pride which might lead into a careless walk with God. This was the case with the children of Israel. Keeping God’s word made them special because God has great delight in anyone that keeps His commandments. Scripture enjoins us saying; **“...be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves...For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”** (James 1:22; Romans 2:13).

The Israelites did not understand that what made them peculiar, precious and special people than other nations is the law of God they had. This gave reason for their chastisement, rejection and dejection whenever they forsook the law of God. Moses had to admonish them to avoid this spiritual pride. He made it clear to them why God had shown so much love to them in order to fulfil His promises to them. **“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers,”** (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8). The youths will obtain and retain God’s love and favour only when they are surrendered and submitted to His commands. **“Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes,**

and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them” (verse 11). Moses revealed some of the manifestations of God’s love they will receive as they maintain a perfect walk with God.

Question 6: What are the manifestations of God’s love for Israel?

“Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee”

(Deuteronomy 7:12-15). The manifestations of God’s love for them are: diverse blessings of God, fruit of the womb, good health, victory, deliverance and destruction of the enemies. All these abound for the faithful youths today. Finally, they will inherit everlasting life and heavenly bliss.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

MON

TUE

WED

THUR

FRI

SAT

SUN

EVENING

Acts 17:16-34

“ 18:1-17

“ 18:18-28

“ 19:1-10

“ 19:11-22

“ 19:23-41

“ 20:1-12

Jer 11:1-23

“ 12:1-17

“ 13:1-27

“ 14:1-22

“ 15:1-21

“ 16:1-21

“ 17:1-27

TEST OF OBEDIENCE AND HUMILITY

LESSON 471

MEMORY VERSE: “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (**Deuteronomy 8:2**).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 8:1-20.

The love of God for the children of Israel was expressed

in His plan and purpose as we shall see in our lesson today. From our text, God stated reasons for giving them His commandments. He, therefore, expected that the benefits expressed in His word should motivate them to obey all the commandments given to them by Moses the man of God. These benefits include preservation, protection and provision (verses 4-13). He further stated that what happened to them during the forty years in the wilderness was to prove whether they would be obedient and humble themselves.

Question 1: State the commandment we must first obey, in order to enable us obey God acceptably?

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). The commandment to obey which will enable us to obey other commandments acceptably is the command to repent. To repent means turning away from sins (as the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sins through the word of God) to Christ by faith. It involves a change of mind, direction and attitude towards sins. This is necessary to receive salvation in Christ by faith. This divine change brings grace into our heart. This helps us to obey God’s commandments with humility.

SPIRITUAL FOOD OF THE REDEEMED (Deuteronomy 8:1-3,6; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:4-6,61,86,115,128,172; Ephesians 6:1-3; Luke 4:1-4; Psalm 19:7-11; John 6:51,57,63).

“All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers” (Deuteronomy 8:1). The word of God is a spiritual food that strengthens, satisfies, stabilises, sanctifies and supplies conviction, commitment and consecration which builds our spiritual lives (verse 3). We are to obey this word. The Lord called the children of Israel to obey all the commandments He gave them. For Christian youths today, it includes the command to repent (Acts 17:30), be sanctified (1 Peter 1:15,16), baptised with the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 5:18), pray (1 Thessalonians 5:17),

read and study the word of God (John 5:39), preach the gospel (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4: 1,2), work (study) (2 Thessalonians 3:7-12), free from worldliness (1 John 2:15-17), worship and serve God (Psalm 45:11; Revelation 22:8,9; Hebrews 12:28) and prepare for the coming of Christ (Matthew 24:42,44; Luke 12:40). Simply, the whole Bible contains the commandments of God. We should pray for grace to obey its contents because the **“commandment is exceeding broad”** (Psalm 119:96).

Question 2: From verses 1 and 6 of our text, what are the benefits of obeying the commandments of God?

“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him” (verse 6). The benefits of obeying the word of God cover both spiritual and physical. They include preservation of life (verse 1), progress (verse 1), possession of the Promised Land (verse 1), ability to walk with God (verse 6) and maintaining the fear of God (verse 6).

From verse two, the Lord wanted the children of Israel to remember that all that happened to them during the forty years wandering were to prove their obedience and humility. The test of obedience will always come to us. We should be like the sons of Jonadab who performed the commandment of their father (Jeremiah 35:12-19).

“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:3). The goodness of the Lord was great towards the children of Israel. He fed them for forty years with manna (angels’ food) (Psalm 78:24,25). However, He wanted them to know that as physical body requires physical food, the soul also requires spiritual food. This spiritual food is the word of God that nourishes the soul. We should desire and study it. **“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food”** (Job 23:12).

Question 3: What are the profits of taking the word of God as spiritual food?

The profits of taking the word of God as spiritual food are: (1) conversion (Psalm 19:11), growth (1 Peter 2:2), cleansing (John 15:3), sanctification (John 17:17), protection (Ephesians 6:17) and overcoming temptations (Luke 4:3,4). It is our responsibility to read, study, hear, accept, meditate on, believe and practise the word regularly. In summary, the instruction of God to every Christian youth is: **“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him”** (verse 6).

SPECIAL FAVOUR FOR THE REDEEMED (Deuteronomy 8:4,5,7-17; Psalm 91:1-6; Deuteronomy 6:10-15; 28:4,7,48; 32:15-19; Psalm 78:15-37; Hosea 13:6-8; Luke 12:16-21; Revelation 3:14-21).

“Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years” (Deuteronomy 8:4). The children of Israel were the redeemed

of the Lord (Deuteronomy 7:8). Despite their short-comings in the wilderness, He still showed them special favour.

Question 4: From verses 4-9, enumerate special favour God showed to the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness.

The Scripture says: **“It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness”** (Lamentations 3:22). God’s special favour for His people Israel include: (1) preservation of their clothes (verse 4); (2) preservation of their body (verse 4); (3) profitable correction when they did evil (verse 5); (4) promise of abundant provisions in the land of Canaan (verses 7,8); and (5) promised prosperity in the land of Canaan (verse 9). In God’s plan, His children should **“eat bread without scarceness”**, and lack nothing (verse 9). Today, Christian youths have unlimited special favour in Christ (Philippians 4:19). Our prayer should be: **“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come”** (Psalms 102:13). However, as the blessings of God increase, we should beware of not forgetting the Giver.

Question 5: State two possible outcomes when the blessings of God increase.

“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:” (Deuteronomy 8:10,11). The two possible outcomes are: one, to praise God for His goodness. This is the positive outcome expected from the recipients of God’s blessings (Psalm 103:1-5). Two, to forget the Lord, the Giver of blessings. God, who knows everything from the beginning to the end, had warned the children of Israel against forgetting Him as a result of prosperity. Later in their history, they forgot the Lord after being filled with His blessings. **“According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me”** (Hosea 13:6). As obedience and humility are partners, so prosperity may lead to pride. Hence, the Lord expressed His mind this way: **“Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;”** (Deuteronomy 8:14). The Lord warned them of saying: **“My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth”** (Deuteronomy 8:17). Therefore, all the blessings we receive are from God who gives us all things to enjoy and we are to use them for His glory. **“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”** (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

SAINTS’ FAITHFULNESS TO THE REDEEMER (Deuteronomy 8:18-20; Nehemiah 7:1,2; 9:7,8; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2; 7:25).

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 8:18). The precaution for not forgetting the Lord is to remember Him always as the one behind all blessings. This is the only way the children of Israel could show their appreciation, loyalty and faithfulness to their Redeemer who brought them out of bondage. As children of God, we are to be faithful to the Lord in everything we do (1 Corinthians 4:1,2). One of the ways we can do that is to remember Him and His word faithfully. Examples abound in scriptures of those who were faithful to the Lord. Some of them were Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; 4:7), Onesimus (Colossians 4:9), Silas (1 Peter 5:12), Paul (1 Timothy 1:12) and Antipas (Revelation 2:13).

Question 6: What does it mean to “remember the LORD thy God”?

To remember the Lord means to remember the following: the Creator (Ecclesiastes 12:1); the Day of the Lord (Exodus 20:8); the day of your redemption (salvation) (Exodus 13:3; Deuteronomy 16:3); the commandments of the Lord (Numbers 15:39; Malachi 4:4; Matthew 26:75; Acts 20:35); the works of the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:12; Psalm 105:5); the judgment of God (Deuteronomy 24:9); and the death, resurrection and Coming of Christ (2 Timothy 2:18; 1 Thessolians 5:1-6). The commandment of the Lord, to all saved youths, is: **“Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind”** (Jeremiah 51:50). Examples of those who remembered the Lord in the Bible are David (Psalm 63:5-7), Jonah (Jonah 2:7) and Peter (Luke 22:61). There are great blessings when we remember the Lord. Some of them are: victory over sin (Exodus 20:20); promotion and provision from God (Isaiah 58:13,14); prosperity (Psalm 1:2,3); preservation from evil; wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6; 2 Timothy 2:7) and increase of faith (Joshua 2:8-11).

“And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish” (Deuteronomy 8:19). As remembering God attracts His blessings, so is forgetting Him brings His punishment (Isaiah 17:9-11).

Question 7: What are the consequences of forgetting God?

Individuals or a group of people who forget God have the consequences of being consumed by God (Deuteronomy 4:9,23,24), living without hope in God (Job 8:11-14), punishment in hell (Psalm 9:17), destruction from God (Psalm 50:22), lack of provision and satisfaction (Isaiah 65:11-14), being forgotten, forsaken and reproached (Jeremiah 23:39,40) and being rejected by God (Hosea 4:6). The Lord said as He punished those nations that lived in the land before them, so would He do to those who forgot Him and disobeyed His word. **“As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God”**

(verse 20). The only solution is to repent, be humble and obey the word of God now.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Acts 20:13-27	Jer 18:1-23
TUE	“ 20:28-38	“ 19:1-15
WED	“ 21:1-16	“ 20:1-18
THUR	“ 21:17-26	“ 21:1-14
FRI	“ 21:27-40	“ 22:1-30
SAT	“ 22:1-10	“ 23:1-22
SUN	“ 22:11-23	“ 23:23-40

MOSES REHEARSES ISRAEL'S REBELLION

LESSON 472

MEMORY VERSE: “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).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 9: 1-29.

The book of Deuteronomy, as we have earlier been told, is a summary and explanation of the law as given by God to Moses. This book does not include any addition or subtraction of the laws as there was no need because God has given the laws completely and perfectly. The book is highly necessary because, some of this generation of people who were to enter the Promised Land, were not part of the people who were at Sinai and in the first part of the journey where the law was given. Hence, Moses needed to ensure full comprehension of the laws before his death.

Question 1: *How should believing youths today act towards the word of God?*

Unlike the children of Israel who rebelled against the Word of God, attitudes of godly youths should be that of obedience. In our text today, Moses reminds the children of Israel of God's promise to give them victories in various battles which were ahead of them. He did not want them to claim the glory for the victories in those battles neither did he want them to ascribe it to their righteousness. He encouraged them to always remember God and His Word. He did not want them to do as they had done in Horeb when they brought God's wrath upon themselves. Then, Moses prayed for them and for Aaron who should have died.

GOD'S PLAN IN SPITE OF REBELLION IN ISRAEL (Deuteronomy 9:1- 6; Genesis 17:1-8; Psalm 78:32-39; Hebrews 11: 1, 6, 8 - 10).

Moses rehearsed to the children of Israel the challenges facing them from the enemy who they were to dispossess as they took over the Promised Land. The enemies, at this time, were the children of Anak and the nations surrounding them. They were described as “**...nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims...**” (Deuteronomy 9: 1, 2). These enemies were such that the children of Israel on their own could not withstand; for Israel was afraid of them. This was because they were mighty warriors and experienced in battles. Moses stated to Israel that they were “**whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak**”.

Furthermore, he explained to Israel, that if left to their evil ways and unbelief, God would not have given them the land to possess. Many youths today rebel against God's plan for their lives by remaining in sin. God is interested in the affairs and progress of all who walk with Him. However, he desires that the youths live righteous lives. “**Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have**

separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59: 1, 2). The way of escape is for youths to flee from all forms of unrighteousness and walk in truth with God.

Question 2: Why did God still fulfill His promise of giving the children of Israel the Promised Land despite their unrighteousness?

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). God keeps His promises if the conditions attached to them are met by man. God had promised Abraham saying: **"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly... And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God"** (Genesis 17: 1, 2, 8). The children of Israel possessing the land was, therefore, in fulfillment to the promise God gave to Abraham. Abraham fulfilled his own part (Hebrews 11:8). God, therefore, needed to fulfill His part of giving Israel the land of Canaan and her environs as a possession. Moses explained this to Israel, so that they would not think they were given the land because of their righteousness. He told them that, in spite of the dangers ahead of them, God was going to empower them to drive the inhabitants of the land away and destroy them. He warned them not to say that **"For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land"** but for the wickedness of the people and in fulfillment to His promise. God keeps promises and if He has given you any promise today, He will fulfill them all.

Question 3: Does God have any plan for rebellious youths?

There are many youths who still act like the children of Israel against God in various ways. Yet, God has a plan for such youths because of His love. **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Romans 5:8). God's love made Him give Jesus Christ as the sacrificial lamb on Calvary for all who desire to take advantage of the plan. He wants all men to be saved and be a partake of the Promised Land in heaven (2 Peter 3:9). If you are still living outside the plan of God, today is the day of salvation. Come into God's plan and you will be able to dwell with Him in heaven.

GRIEVOUS PRACTICE OF REBELLION BY ISRAEL (Deuteronomy 9:7- 24; Exodus 32: 1 - 23; 17: 1 -7; Numbers 11: 1-3; 13: 28 - 32).

Israel had been rebellious and stiff-necked people. They had severally grieved the Lord for the forty years they travelled from Egypt to the present place where they were at the brink of crossing Jordan. Moses rehearsed to them the acts of their fathers saying: **"Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD"** (Deuteronomy 9:7). They had provoked God so much that it was a miracle of mercy that they survived as a nation and were not all destroyed in the wilderness. God once told Moses saying **"Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they"** (Deuteronomy 9:14). Moses had to plead for

Israel and God spared them and allowed them to continue with Him. This plea and pardon did not stop Israel as they coveted the things they had left behind in Egypt. This made God to decide that none of those who came out of Egypt from twenty years old and above, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, will see the Promised Land.

Question 4: *Mention ways in which ungodly youths display rebellion to God today.*

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (1 Timothy 3:1– 5). We are in the last days concerning which scriptures explain that iniquity shall abound. Ungodly youths are involved in all the evils mentioned above in addition to the following: joining of cults, smoking, drinking, attending parties, wearing ungodly body-revealing cloths, singing of uninspiring and unedifying songs, hatred, fightings, rioting, tribalism, segregation, immorality, abortions and many others.

Question 5: *Is there any punishment for rebellion?*

There are youths who are still involved in sin in spite of various and consistent warnings. We have some youths whose parents have brought to the church and they attend all the meetings yet they continue in their sinful ways. However, youths should know that continuity in sin would only result to suffering here on earth, premature death through diseases and life in hell fire. Christian youths should flee from all appearances of evil and ensure that they ask for grace to remain in the will of the Lord.

GREAT PRAYER FOR THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (Deuteronomy 9: 25 – 29; Job 42:7,8; Psalm 51:1-19; Daniel 9:2-19; Luke 22:31,32).

Moses remembered his plea with the Lord for mercy for the children of Israel whom God had said He wanted to destroy. His passion for the survival and continuity of Israel is a challenge to all Christian youth workers today. Moses was not interested in building up a personal empire for himself even when God made an offer to make Moses a great nation (Exodus 32:9 – 12). Moses reminded the Lord of His promises. The prayers of aged Moses is a model worth emulating. Moses knew God and understood that He willingly forgives repentant people. He therefore ensured that he pleaded for forgiveness for Israel whenever they grieved God.

Question 6: *What do we learn from Moses’ prayers?*

We learn the following from Moses’ prayers in verses 25 to 29:

- a. **“...I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights... because the LORD had said he would destroy you”**. The gravity of the offence made Moses go through another forty days and nights of prayers and fasting. As Christian youths, we may sometimes need to add fasting to our prayers (Mark 9:29).
- b. **“Thus I fell down before the LORD ... as I fell down at the first, ... I prayed therefore unto the LORD”**. Moses pleaded with God for forgiveness. He knew that

before asking for any mercy, he needed to ask for cleansing of Israel. God does not hear the prayers of the unrighteous except they ask for forgiveness. Sinners need to pray for forgiveness before asking God for other benefits.

c. **“...destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand”** Moses recalled the past wonders of God. Many youths today pray without appreciating God for what He has done. A song writer says

*“Count your blessings, name them one by one,...
and it will surprise you what the Lord has done”.*

We should learn to show gratitude to God for He inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3).

d. **“Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...”** Moses reminded God of His promises to their forefathers. He knew God is always faithful to His promises. Hezekiah, a king in Judah, also did the same thing and his life was extended (2 Kings 20: 2 – 6). When we pray, we should not use any prayer book but with the promises of God as detailed in the Bible.

e. **“...look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin”.** Moses pleaded with God not to base His actions on the acts of Israel. He was pleading for a miracle of mercy and not merit. As Christian youths, we are saved by grace and not by our own righteousness. We should, therefore, come before God in prayers asking for miracles of mercy both for ourselves, our school fellowships, the church and our land.

f. **“Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them”.** Moses was seeking for the glory of God. He explained to God what the people would say about Him if the children of Israel whom He had earlier given the promise should fail to get to the Promised Land. When we seek for God’s glory, we would be able to get better results in prayers (John 12: 32).

g. Finally, Moses rededicated Israel and her rulers to the Lord saying, **“...they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm”** (Deuteronomy 9:29). Moses was telling God that their lives and all that they had is submitted to God. God desires our lives to be in full yieldedness to Him. **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). Is your life dedicated to God? Are you walking in His ways? Are you living a life that pleases Him? Are you ready to do all to His glory? God is interested in our lives, therefore, let us please Him in all things.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Acts 22:24-30	Jer 24:1-10
TUE	“ 23:1-11	“ 25:1-26
WED	“ 23:12-22	“ 25:27-
38		
THUR	“ 23:23-35	“ 26:1-24
FRI	“ 24:1-16	“ 27:1-22
SAT	“ 24:17-27	“ 28:1-17
SUN	“ 25:1-11	“ 29:1-3

GOD'S LONGSUFFERING TOWARDS ISRAEL

LESSON 473

MEMORY VERSE: “Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 10:15).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 10:1-22.

In the previous studies, we saw God's warning to the children of Israel on the danger of joining with the infidels in the land they were going to possess. Besides, He told them the possibility of becoming proud of the material things they would possess, neglecting the fact that it is the Lord that gives the power to get wealth. He made it clear that whatever they enjoyed was not based on their unique righteousness but on His mercy and longsuffering. **“Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people”** (Deuteronomy 9:6). As a result, through Moses, God began to recall to them how stubborn and stiff-necked they had been since their freedom from Egyptian bondage till this point in their life. With all these, He was telling them that all they enjoyed from Him was due to His mercy, love and longsuffering.

Today, we will consider how God practically demonstrated longsuffering to His people. The two tables that were broken by Moses, if not replaced, would have made Israel remain lawless. But God replaced them. As they continued their journey to Mosera, Aaron died and his son took his place. But God's longsuffering did not end there. It continued due to the effectiveness of a human instrument. We are going to see the human instrument that God used to show mercy on the Israelites and how he was able to achieve that. Finally, we will consider God's requirement for us to partake of and keep enjoying His longsuffering.

REWRITING OF THE LONG-LASTING SCRIPTURE (Deuteronomy 10:1-5; 4:1, 2; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17; Revelation 22:18, 19).

“At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark” (verses 1, 2). Moses had gone to the presence of God earlier, to receive the two tables on which God had written the laws which He gave the Israelites on Mount Sinai. But, while he was there, the Israelites went into idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of any other god than the living and true God. Some people worship wooden,

metallic, golden or plastic images while others worship pictures, inanimate objects or trees. God became very angry as Israel worshipped the molten image created from their jewelry. He hurried Moses out of His presence to go and meet his people. Moses, on getting there, was very upset with the people that he forgot himself. He threw down the two tables and they were shattered (Deuteronomy 9:9-17). But God, having forgiven them, said, **“And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest”**. (verse 2).

Question 1: *What challenge do we have from how God re-wrote His commandments on the tables?*

The interesting thing about this writing is that God would write **“the words that were in the first table”**. Why did God not change to something probably easier seeing that the people were stiff-necked? The word of God is unchanging and it is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 119: 89). This is a challenge to all preachers of God’s word. The perceived unwillingness among the congregation should not make them change the content of God’s message. Those who change the content of God’s message are compromisers and false teachers. We can learn from the example of Moses the preacher to the people. He said, **“And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments ... and the LORD gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me”** (verse 3-5). Regardless of how the children of Israel had behaved, he still gave them the word as God gave it to him. Our God is unchanging! **“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”** (Malachi 3:6). Unlike the changing season, time and variation we experience in the daylight, our God remains the same. What He said was wrong in the years gone by, He still considers wrong today. Also, Jesus Christ His Son is unchanging. Thus, all who claim to associate with God should be unchanging in their conviction of the word of God. **“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor”** (Galatians 2: 18)

Question 2: *What is the danger of changing God’s word?*

Anyone who alters God’s word stands the danger of eternal suffering and punishment. **“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”** (Re 22:18, 19).

REQUEST OF A LONGSUFFERING SERVANT (Deuteronomy 10:6-11; Genesis 18: 20-25; 19: 27-29; Deuteronomy 9: 19, 20, 25-29; Jeremiah 29: 7; Luke 18: 1-7; 1Timothy 2: 1-3).

After the Lord gave them the law and reconciled with them, they continued in their journey **“from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest’s office in his stead”** (verse 6). Immediately after the death of Aaron, God gave them a replacement as He never wanted His people to lack a leader at any time. When Moses died eventually, he gave them Joshua. God always make provision for a successor, to ensure continuity in leadership. As a leader in the fellowship, should there be a necessity for you to leave the fold you oversee, may be because you have got admission, it is very important that you give room for a replacement as approved by your leader.

Question 3: *What should be the attitude of God’s servant towards making material gain?*

From Mosera the Israelites journeyed to Gudgodah and then to Jotbath. **“At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day”** (verse 8). The Levites were also ministers in God’s house. They were to minister to Him all the time. They were to be dedicated to Him such that they were not to be cumbered with the thought of gathering material things. For as many of us that want to serve God effectively, we should not let our concentration be on worldly things. All the pursuit of earthly things that could weigh us down should be shed off.

“And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also, and the LORD would not destroy thee. And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give unto them” (verses 10, 11). We see Moses standing as an intercessor for this people that God should not destroy them. He had gone to the mount for them forty days and forty nights before. But now they had sinned again. He had to go again for forty days and nights. He did not mind the inconsistency of the people. He was long-suffering. It was this persistent and long-suffering attitude in prayer that God reckoned with and did not destroy the people. **“For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time”** (Deuteronomy 9:19, 20).

Question 4: *What is our responsibility towards erring members of the church and the sinners around us?*

All Christian leaders have a responsibility of prayer for their erring followers and sinners around them. We see Abraham praying for his nephew (Lot) that he would not perish with the sinners in Gomorrah. God spared him because of the intercession of Abraham. The peace of our country and the people we live with depend on our prayers for them. Our prayers must be consistent and importunate. When we are patient and suffer long in prayer for the sinners, God can work-out salvation in their lives. God can even spare them from dangers they would have entered into. He can do the work of restoration in backsliders.

REQUIREMENT FROM A LONGSUFFERING SAVIOUR (Deuteronomy 10: 12-22; 6: 24; 8: 19, 20; Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14; Isaiah 66: 1, 2).

God referred to Himself as the Saviour of Israel and the people admitted it. **“For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee”** (Isaiah 43: 3). And now, He made a requirement from the Israelites. **“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”** (verses 12, 13). With all that God has done to Israel, there is only one thing He required from them: To keep His commandments. This is the whole duty of man on earth.

Question 5: *Identify the commandments of God in this text.*

The commandments in this text include the following: One, fearing the Lord. When we fear Him, we would depart from all evil. Two, walking in all His ways. Three, loving and serving Him with everything within us. Four, circumcision of foreskin and being not stubborn. This is synonymous to getting sanctification experience. Five, being kind and fair to those who are helpless- the fatherless, widows and strangers. They should consider how they felt when they were in such situation.

“Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day” (verses 14, 15). They should not attempt to replace genuine deed of kindness with some sort of superficial giving. God owns everything in the world and would not be moved by them. Besides, His choice was because of His love for them. It was not because they had done anything special to merit it. All He is asking from them is the practice of righteousness (Amos 5: 14, 15, 21-25).

Question 6: *Why should we serve and obey God?*

When we keep the commandment of God, it is for our own good. So, **“keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good”**. If we do otherwise, it is to our own hurt (Deuteronomy 6: 24; 8: 19, 20). We are to serve and obey God because He has been good to us. He is the reason for our happiness. **“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen”** (verses 20, 21).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

MON	Acts 25:12-22	Jer 30:1-24
TUE	“ 25:23-27	“ 31:1-21
WED	“ 26:1-18	“ 31:22-40
THUR	“ 26:19-32	“ 32:1-24
FRI	“ 27:1-20	“ 32:23-
44		
SAT	“ 27:21-44	“ 33:1-26
SUN	“ 28:1-15	“ 34:1-22

GENTILES RECEIVE THE GOSPEL

LESSON 474

MEMORY VERSE: “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

TEXT: Acts 11:1-30.

Our last study, in the book of Acts of the Apostles, focused

on the conversion of Cornelius, the centurion (a military ruler) in Caesarea, and his household. The angel of God had appeared to him and instructed him to send men to Joppa to call Peter. He was told that Peter would tell Him all he needed to know about the way of salvation. Unfortunately, when the vision about the invitation from this Gentile ruler came to Peter, being a Jew, he would have rejected it. But the Spirit of God told him to go with the men without doubting. On getting to Caesarea, in Cornelius house, he found many people waiting to hear the gospel. He preached to them and **“God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost...”** (Acts 15:8).

This conversion of the Gentiles led to misunderstanding among the believers. In attempt to resolve the misunderstanding, Peter explained all that happened. The people were pleased with Peter’s explanation and rejoiced in the Lord for the salvation of the Gentiles. The Antioch church, the first Gentile church, was founded and Barnabas was sent to consolidate the life of the believers there.

CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES (Acts 11: 1-18; Matthew 5:13-16; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 15:1, 2).

“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them” (verses 1-3). After the conversion of the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house through Peter, there was an argument as to why he went in to them, to eat and mingle with them. This opposition is not unconnected with the strong Jewish religious background of many of these believers. Long ago, God had told the children of Israel, through Moses, that they should have nothing to do with all the Gentile nations within their land or in the surrounding. This was to prevent them from being negatively influenced. **“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they**

may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly” (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

Question 1: *Should watchfulness against bad influence hinder us from preaching to sinners?*

This mindset had affected the children of Israel largely. The complying Jews adhered strictly to the letters of the law and actually had nothing to do with any Gentile citizens (John 4:9). When Jesus sent out His disciples to preach, He said: **“...Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not”** (Matthew 10:5). Complying with the law of Moses and utterances of their teachers, they avoided any dealing with the Gentiles. But God wants us to influence others including sinners, positively. However, Jesus had said, just before His ascension that we should go and preach to every creature in all nations (Acts 1:8). Our watchfulness should not make us to exclude any sinner. Even those ones that we cannot reach directly because of how sensitive and peculiar their situations are (the harlots, drug addicts etc.) can be reached through printed materials.

Question 2: *How should misunderstanding be handled in the church?*

This case of misunderstanding was handled in a beneficial way to the church. It is worthy of note to say that the brethren ,who had an opinion against Peter, went to him directly to express their views. They did not begin to gossip what they did not have any idea of. When we feel someone has done something we are not comfortable with, instead of backbiting and creating a slander out of what we do not have full understanding of, it is important that we go to the concerned person. The person may be apparently wrong but we should first approach him (Matthew 18:15). If we cannot resolve the matter amicably, then we are to call in other believers with the aim of settling the matter peacefully or call in leaders if that fails (Matthew 18:15-17). On the part of Peter, he did not become defensive when called to explain his action. He owed them the responsibility to explain what he did and why he did it.

The explanations cleared the mind of the people of all grudges and rancor. Later, they glorified God for what He did in the lives of the Gentiles. **“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”** (verse 18). Besides, this led to active supportive mission to the Gentile world. There were other cases of misunderstandings in the New Testament church that yielded peaceful results because they were addressed properly (Acts 15:1, 2, 22-31; Galatians 2: 11-14).

CHRIST-LIKE COMMITMENT TO THE GOSPEL (Acts 11: 19-26; 8:14, 15; 14:1-3, 21-23; 15:36; 16:4, 5; 1Corinthians 3:6,7).

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.” (verse 19). Those believers that were scattered upon the death of Stephen were scattered abroad. They had gone far from Jerusalem before this event that opened the eyes of the church to minister to the Gentiles. Hence, they could not do otherwise but travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but to the Jews only. That was how much they knew and God worked with them. The disciples were committed to the gospel. They did not allow the persecutions or pains to halt their zeal for the Lord. But

some of them, when they got to Antioch, preached the gospel to some Grecians. **“And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus”** (verse 20).

Question 3: Who were the “Grecians”?

The “Grecians” or “Hellenists” was a term used to identify the group of Greek speaking Jews or Jews who were foreigners in other places and those Gentiles who became converted to Jewish religion. No doubt, the Antioch church comprises both Jews and Gentiles- circumcised and uncircumcised (Acts 15: 1). God recognized their work, backed them up and many believed in Christ. **“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord”** (verse 21). This information got to the church in Jerusalem. At this time, they were more liberal to the Gentiles. They sent a matured leader, Barnabas, to go and strengthen the work of the Lord in that city. **“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch”** (verse 22).

Question 4: What is the role of the church in the life of newly converted believers?

Immediately he got there, he began the work of follow up through exhortation. **“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”** (verse 22). The church should make conscious effort to help those who are just getting converted. This could be done by sending converted youths who are already matured to encourage the newly converted ones. Our gospel task does not end with preaching to the souls; it includes follow – up to ensure the saved ones remain in the Kingdom.

Question 5: What should we do to have effective follow up activity?

Besides the exhortations used by Barnabas, his spiritual life also had impact on the people. He lived a very good life which was controlled by the Holy Spirit and faith in the word of God. **“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord”** (verse 24). Besides those who were already converted, much people were added to the Lord. If our efforts, to mature young converts, would be fruitful, we must lead a good life. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Barnabas also got Saul involved in his ministry. **“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”** (verse 25, 26). Saul had always had vision for the Gentile from the Lord (Acts 9: 15; Galatians 1:15-17). We can then say that Barnabas got a man of like mind involved in the work of follow up. To carry out effective follow up, if we are choosing a partner, we need to associate with the people who have the same vision. It is important to note that the work so prospered that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Those converts lived according to the teaching of Christ they were taught. We also should pattern our lives towards the teaching of Christ so that we can have an unquestionable Christian identity.

COMMENDABLE CHARITY AND GIVING BY THE CHURCH (Acts 11:27-30; Proverbs 29: 18; Acts 21: 8-11; Luke 6:38).

“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (verse 27, 28). As Barnabas and Paul laboured among the people, some ministers (prophets) came from Jerusalem to visit them. One of them named Agabus stood up and prophesied that there would be economic problems throughout the world. This was not a mere psychological prediction but an inspiration from God so that the people of God could know what to do. The confirmation was its fulfillment. **“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he”** (Proverbs 29:18). Understanding of what lies ahead prepares us to either seize opportunities or avoid dangers. Before the arrest of Paul, God had used the ministry of the prophets to inform and prepare him for the challenges ahead of him (Acts 21: 10,11). We need the inspired teachings, directions and counseling through our leaders in order to be adequately prepared for the future.

More than hearing the teaching, acting positively on what we hear is very important. **“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”** (verse 29, 30). When the disciples heard of what was ahead, they sent relief to those who might negatively and adversely be affected. When God’s word comes to us, it is so that it can impact us positively and make us have an impact that might affect the life of others in a good way.

Question 6: In what ways are Christian youths expected to show love?

Youths are expected to show love to others by giving. We are to give from what we have to encourage others to get closer to God. We should also share our knowledge by teaching difficult subjects to those who have challenges. When we care and share, God will bless and increase us. **“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again”** (Luke 6:38).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Acts 28:16-31	Jer 35:1-19
TUE	Romans 1:1-17	“ 36:1-32
WED	“ 1:18-32	“ 37:1-21
THUR	“ 2:1-16	“ 38:1-28
FRI	“ 2:17-27	“ 39:1-18
SAT	“ 3:1-20	“ 40:1-16
SUN	“ 3:21-31	“ 41:1-18

PETER'S DELIVERANCE AND HEROD'S DEATH

LESSON 475

MEMORY VERSE: "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12:11).

TEXT: Acts 12:1-25.

The Acts of the Apostles contain several challenges faced by the disciples. The believers at that time faced serious persecutions. Some were beaten, imprisoned and killed. In spite of the onslaught of the devil against the church, the disciples remained undaunted and resolute in their decisions not only to follow the Lord but to also bear reproach for His name. Today's lesson is a continuation of one of such wicked move against the church and the ministers of God by godless personalities. We are going to look into the martyrdom of James, Peter's arrest, his imprisonment and deliverance and the death of Herod.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES: THE LORD'S DISCIPLE (Acts 12:1,3; Mathew 20:20-23; Isaiah 53: 7-10; Romans 8:35,39).

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword" (Acts 12:1,2). James the son of Zebedee, one of the Apostles of Christ was killed by Herod. The situation surrounding his arrest was not given but his death was recorded. His death was a fulfillment of prophecy which came directly from Christ (Mathew 20:20-23).

Question 1: *What was the reaction of the early church to the maltreatment and martyrdom of some of the members?*

Peter and John were arrested, imprisoned and beaten. Many faced diverse persecutions and Stephen was slain. The apostles and other members of the church found it joyful to suffer for Christ and they bore all for God (Acts 5:41). They knew it was also the path to a rewardable and glorious end. Notwithstanding, the living members were not relenting efforts in preaching and confessing Jesus for which cause they had suffered many things. Their love for their Master Jesus did not diminish as they refused to allow anything to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. They knew it to be a joyful thing to be reckoned with Christ in His death. Not everybody can drink and be baptized with the baptism that Christ was baptized with. The best way for a preacher of the gospel to die is to die serving God.

THE MIRACLE OF PETER'S DELIVERANCE (Acts 12:3-19; Luke 11:48-51; Mathew 14:10-13; 16:18 Psalm 91:11).

“And because he (Herod) saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also” (Acts 12:3). Herod had just killed James the brother of John and saw that no one reacted; he proceeded to lay his hand on Peter. Apostle Peter was arrested and imprisoned, with Herod planning to kill him also. He secured the prison **“and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people”** (Acts 12:4). Though men may have their evil plans against a child of God, but **“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...”** (2 Peter 2:9). In this case, the church prayed **“without ceasing”** (Acts 12:5) to God for Peter and the Lord acted to accomplish the church's desire by delivering Peter.

Question 2: What is the result of the prayer of the church on behalf of Peter?

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). It is good we search the Scriptures to know what has been ordained of God so that we will not think certain incidence in our life is God's will, less Satan take undue advantage over us.

Question 3: What can the youths learn from the manner with which the church prayed for Peter's release?

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). Christian youths have lessons to learn from this. When we encounter a problem, God's expectation is that we pray. We should pray in faith without doubting. We are not supposed to complain or compromise. We should go to God who will make all things to work together for good to them that love Him. Youths should also be willing to attend vigil whenever they are organised in the districts. Another thing to learn in this place is that they realised that Peter's case was a life-threatening one and needed urgent attention. They resolved to pray ceaselessly till they receive answer to prayer. God waited till the last night when Peter would have been killed the next day. When we pray, it may seem we are being denied. However, God is never late, He acts just in time. If you are going through a challenge presently and have prayed, wait for God's intervention.

Question 4: How did Peter's release happen?

Peter's release was a supernatural act of God. He sent down His angel, to release Peter from prison in the midst of four quaternions of soldiers. **“And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me”** (Acts 12:7, 8). What a supernatural power! The power that woke Peter up and prepared him for an escape at the same time smote the guards with deep slumber! The same power is available for all the living saints. **“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways”** (Psalms

91:11). When God wants to act, no man, authority or power can stop Him from executing His divine counsels. The chain and the gates all fell of their own accord, as the power of God overwhelmed the fortified security. As these were happening, it seemed as a dream to Peter. Of course, the Bible says, **“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream”** (Psalms 126:1). When Peter passed through the second gate and the angel departed, then he came to himself. Immediately, he decided to go back to the church which was a divine directive. The church had been praying for him and the time for the testimony to their prayer had come. He got to the door of the gate and knocked. There came a damsel called Rhoda, who in joy, ran back to tell the good news of Peter’s presence. The church did not believe that Peter was released. We thank God for being the God of impossibility. The church received him after opening the door for him. He told them what happened and they were very glad (Acts 12:17). It is always good to be wise. Peter, knowing that it was not God’s will for him to die at this time, had to escape into another place. Our Lord Jesus Christ did the same thing after John the Baptist was beheaded; He went into the desert (Mathew 14:10-13). He did so because He knew that His time to die for the sin of the world was not yet. For some of the brethren facing life-threatening persecution, anytime God makes a way of escape, they should not fail to use it. **“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”** (Mathew 10:16).

THE MANIFESTATION OF PRIDE AND HEROD’S DEATH (Acts 12:18-25).

“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode” (Acts 12:18, 19). God does not only know how to turn the counsels of the wicked to naught but knows how to confound and confuse them. The soldiers were amazed with what had happened. With their experience and vigilance, with the chain and the two gates, they could not tell what happened to Peter. Herod examined the keepers who did not have enough evidence to prove their innocence on what had happened. He, therefore, commanded they should be put to death. It is dangerous to agree with the wicked to fight against God, His ministers and faithful children. **“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”** (Acts 9:4, 5). The Bible says, **“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered”** (Proverbs 11:21). To partake in other men’s sin attracts the judgment of God. When God wants to execute His fierce anger against sin, He judges all the people involved in furtherance of the evil. Therefore, the soldiers received the just recompense of reward for their part in the fight against God’s minister.

The Scripture must also be fulfilled **“Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him”** (Proverbs 26:27). The day comes when Herod who had been displeased with the people of Tyre and Sidon who were in his jurisdiction, and **“they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king’s chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king’s country”** (Acts 12:20). On this occasion, proud Herod came to address the people and spoke distinctly. Those in attendance were pleased with his oratory **“And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the**

voice of a god, and not of a man” (Acts 12:22). He was ascribed the honour due to God by the people and did not reject it. **“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost”** (Acts 12:23).

Question 7: What did the judgment on Herod reveal about God’s nature?

God is a jealous God who will not share His glory with anyone. He is a God of judgment who will always visit the iniquity on the disobedient. He hates pride and will always abase the proud in heart. Sinning youths should hasten to repent and turn from their sins. God’s judgment will soon be revealed **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrew 9:27). Tomorrow might be very late. Herod did not know that he had just few minutes left for him to die. People hardly ever know when death will come knocking. Jesus is coming soon, so repent and remain rapturable for the coming of Christ. After this, the church had peace.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Romans 4:1-12	Jer 42:1-22
TUE	“ 4:13-25	“ 43:1-13
WED	“ 5:1-11	“ 44:1-30
THUR	“ 5:12-21	“ 45:1-46:28
FRI	“ 6:1-14	“ 47:1- 48:27
SAT	“ 6:15-23	“ 48:28-47
SUN	“ 7:1-6	“ 49:1-22

THE COMMISSION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

LESSON 476

MEMORY VERSE: “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

TEXT: Acts 13:1-14.

The commission of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Ghost

resulted into the first missionary journey of Paul. This commission set forth as a fulfilment of Christ’s prophetic instruction to the disciples before his ascension. **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). The early Church had fulfilled the Great Commission in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14), Judea (Acts 8:1), Samaria (Acts 8:5,14,15) but were yet to witness to **“the uttermost part of the earth”**. Also, this commission brought the fulfilment of the prophecy that related to the salvation of the Gentiles (Isaiah 11:10; 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; Jeremiah 16:19). Furthermore, this commission was the beginning of Paul to specifically carry out his ministry as was revealed by the Lord on the day of his conversion. **“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”** (Acts 9:15). From the beginning, it had been known that Paul would be used of God to carry the gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the children of Israel.

From our text, the Church in Antioch had grown both spiritually and numerically. She had developed her membership so that some could become missionaries. Despite the great fellowship going on in Antioch, the Holy Spirit preferred reaching out to souls dying in sins in both the home and foreign missions. In this first missionary work, we could learn the pattern, programme, principles, problems and prospects facing soul-winners on the mission field. The soul-winners in our text give us examples of the power of unity and the place of the Holy Spirit in confronting the devil and his agents while preaching the gospel. In addition, Saul’s name was changed to Paul by God (Acts 13:9). This is what the grace of God could accomplish in the life of a man like us (1 Corinthians 15:10).

DEVELOPING SAINTS FOR SOUL-WINING AND SERVICE (Acts 13:1-5; 11:19-26; Ezra 7:10; Micah 3:5-8; 6:2-5; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; John 3:1,2; Acts 3:22; Matthew 5:1,2; 7:28,29; Colossians 1:28; Amos 3:7,8).

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul” (Acts 13:1). Antioch was the capital of Syria and was situated on the Mediterranean sea. The Church in this city consisted of notable Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene. Barnabas was sent by the Church at Jerusalem to oversee the

young Church at Antioch (Acts 11:22-24). As the work prospered in Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul to this city. This was where disciples were first called Christians; which means followers of Christ (Acts 11:25,26). With scriptural and balanced teachings of the word of God, this Church became a central point of spiritual activities where believers were discovered and developed for soul-winning and service. In this Church, there was a concentration of prophets and teachers like Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul.

- Question 1: a) Who are prophets and teachers?**
b) Does the Church need prophets and teachers today?
c) What are the responsibilities of prophets and teachers?

A Bible-based prophet is a person who acts as a spokesman between God and men. He is a spokesman for God. A prophet declares and predicts the mind of God (Micah 3:8; Acts 3:19-26). A teacher of the word of God is a person who teaches, explains, interprets, applies and presents clearly and correctly the word of God to His people in a balanced manner (Ezra 7:6, 10; Nehemiah 8:1-8). Today, the Church is in need of prophets and teachers from God to declare the word of God without favour and fear. Timothy was instructed to “**teach and exhort**” (1 Timothy 6:2), commanded to teach (1 Timothy 4:11), appoint leaders who are “**apt (able) to teach**” (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24), commit to faithful men “**who shall be able to teach others also**” (2 Timothy 2:1,2) and women were to be “**teachers of good things**” (Titus 2:3). Also, in the teaching ministry, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are involved (Exodus 4:12; Isaiah 28:26; Ephesians 4:20,21; Luke 12:12). The plan and purpose of God is: “... **I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go**” (Isaiah 48:17).

The responsibilities of a true prophet of God include: one, to pray and intercede for the people (Genesis 20:7,17; Jeremiah 37:3; 42:1-4; 27:18); two, to preach or declare the word of God faithfully to the people (Jeremiah 23:28; Micah 3:8; Acts 21:8,9); three, to lead the people of God in obedience to the word of God and holiness (Micah 3:3-5); four, to direct the people of God from danger (2 Kings 6:8-12); five, to bring back backsliding people to God (Judges 6:7-10); six, to give the knowledge of salvation to the people (Luke 1:76-78; 2:36-38); seven, to lead people in the way of God (Psalm 77:20); eight, to exhort and confirm saints in the Lord (Acts 15:32); nine, to perfect and edify the saints (Ephesians 4:11-14); and, ten, to bring solutions to the challenges of life from God to the people (1 Kings 17:8-24; 2 Kings 5:1-4,13,14; 7:1,2,18-20; Acts 11:27-30).

As the ministry of a prophet is necessary in the Church, so is that of a teacher of the word of God. Paul the apostle said: “**Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity**” (1 Timothy 2:7). The duties of a teacher from God are to ensure the people understand the word of God (Nehemiah 8:7), explain distinctly the word of God (Nehemiah 8:8), teach with the wisdom of God (Colossians 1:28), develop and mature saints (Ephesians 4:11-14), teach all the counsels of God (Matthew 28:20), show the way to the people on how to walk with God and work for God (Exodus 18:20), and diligent in the things of the Lord (Acts 18:24-28). Our prayer should be that our teachers should not be removed to a corner (Isaiah 30:20). To function effectively and efficiently as prophets (prophetess) and teachers of the word, we must discover and develop the gifts of God in us (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”

(Acts 13:2). While the fellowship and ministry characterised with teaching and prophetic gifts were going on; the Holy Spirit revealed God's will regarding the missionary call of Barnabas and Saul. Interestingly, none disputed, doubted or despised the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Church simply prayed, fasted and laid their hands on them, signifying their support and cooperation.

Question 2: What lessons can we learn from the response of the Church in Antioch to the directive of the Holy Spirit concerning Barnabas and Saul?

One, as we behold the early Church sending out missionaries, we see orderliness, carefulness, gravity and spirituality attached to their mission activities (1 Corinthians 14:40). Two, matured men were released for the work of soul-winning. Matured men for missionary work should come from a spiritually revived Church (Acts 11:22-26). Three, the prayer, provisions and support of the Church is needed for success in the mission work. Four, the qualities of the missionaries are worth noting. They were selfless, mission-minded and compassionate. Five, they were converted, called and commissioned for this great work. Six, they were led by the Holy Spirit to where the word would be preached (Acts 13:4,5). Seven, they focused on the souls without distractions. However, as students, we are to wait till we complete our studies and mature both spiritually and physically before we launch into mission work.

“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus” (Acts 13:4). Paul and Barnabas left Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch and sailed to the Island of Cyprus and landed at Salamis. They went into the synagogues and **“preached the word of God”**. The church today should learn from this first missionary journey in terms of the pattern, principles, plan, and programme for mission work. With the aid of technology and modern equipment, much could be achieved in reaching more people with the gospel of Christ. The same command that was given to them, is giving to us: **“... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

DISCOVERING SATAN'S STRATEGIES AGAINST SOULS (Acts 13:6-8; Nehemiah 4:1-23; 6:1-14; Acts 8:9-24; 16:16-24; 19:13-20).

“And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:” (Acts 13:6). In Paphos, Barnabas and Paul met two notable people. The first was Bar-jesus, a false prophet, who opposed the missionaries. Bar-jesus is a type of foe with whom Christianity has to contend with. His purpose was to turn souls from the Christian faith. Today, we may face or meet youths who act as Barjesus to divert, drown or despise the truth impressed on the minds of people who desire to hear the gospel.

Question 3: What activities and strategies that Satan and his agents are using to hinder the salvation of souls?

“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). The Devil is the great enemy of God, Christ, Spirit of God, ministers of God and the children of God. He always attempts to hinder the plan, programme and progress of God and His Kingdom. The Christian youths should not be ignorant of his strategies and devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Some of his activities and strategies against the salvation of souls include: (i) blinding the minds of sinners against God and His word (2 Corinthians 4:3,4), (ii)

hindering ministers from reaching out to souls at a suitable opportunity (1 Thessalonians 2:17,18), (iii) seeking to destroy souls (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8,9), (iv) causing evils and withstanding the word of God (2 Timothy 4:14-18), (v) introducing bad examples to influence the fellowship negatively (Matthew 13:19), (vi) stirring up persecution against ministers and Christians (Acts 16:19-24) and (vii) seeking to corrupt the Church (Acts 5:3-11). In all these, we must not be terrified by the adversaries (Philippians 1:28).

The second person was Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country. He was a Roman official and the governor of the Island. He was a prudent man, who “**desired to hear the word of God**”. But Elymas the sorcerer withstood Barnabas and Paul and “**seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith**”. Preaching the gospel is fighting to deliver souls from Satan who hates them. We must “**Fight the good fight of faith**” and “**earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (1 Timothy 6:12; Jude 3). This is the time the Christian youth should arise with the Songwriter by saying:

“See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on:
Mighty men around us falling,
Courage almost gone!

See the glorious banner waving!
Hear the trumpet blow!
In our Leader’s name we’ll triumph
Over every foe!”

We must pray to dislodge and defeat all Satan’s devices now!

DELIVERING SOULS FROM SINS BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 13:9-14; 1:8; Luke 4:16-19; Acts 8:20-25; 16:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Ephesians 6:10-20).

“**Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,**” (Acts 13:9). Paul, was formerly called and known as Saul; but his name was changed by the Holy Spirit. Other people whose names were changed either by God or men are: Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Sarai to Sarah (Genesis 17:15), Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28), Daniel to Belteshazzar, Hananiah to Shadrach, Misheael to Meshach and Azariah to Abednego (Daniel 1:6,7). However, when there is need for change of names, legal processes are necessary in order to render documents in the names to be changed valid. When faced with the challenge of Barjesus, Saul (i.e. Paul) maintained his spirituality and filled with the Spirit power, he confronted the Devil and his agents.

Question 4: Why should believers be filled with the Spirit’s power for greater effectiveness in soul-winning and service?

In the face of the contest from the enemy, Paul who had been “**sent forth by the Holy Ghost**” and now “**filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him**”. The Holy Ghost gave him the boldness, courage and forthrightness in dealing with the sorcerer. In denouncing Elymas, Paul pointed to the secret root of evil in the false prophet’s life. He called and described him as “**full of all subtilty and all mischief**”, a “**child of the devil**” and “**enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?**” (verse 10). Hence, Paul pronounced judgment upon Bar-jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit of God by saying: “**And**

now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:11). Through the demonstration of the power of God upon Bar-jesus, the deputy received the Lord. **“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord”** (verse 12). The miraculous manifestation broke the spell and exposed falsehood. The miracle proved to be the key to the heart of the deputy and the heathen nation. Nothing would have opened the way of the gospel more than the manifestation of God’s power. This is one of the purposes of miracles in ministry. When the deputy saw the sure and immediate judgment of God upon his former spiritual adviser, he recognised the truth preached by Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, this miracle enabled the gospel to penetrate the Gentile city faster. It also proved that they were sent and directed by the Holy Spirit.

“Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem” (verse 13). We also observed that through this act, Paul received greater approval upon his ministry and became the leader of the missionary team (verse 13). A change in the order of names from Barnabas and Paul to Paul and Barnabas was effected Acts 11:30; 13:2,7; 14:12,14; 15:12,25; 13:43,46,50; 15:2,22,35). He was now the new leader and chief speaker with a new name and approval of greater ministry (Acts 14:1,12). While the missionary team made progress from Paphos to Perga, John Mark who was their minister (verse 5) departed and returned to Jerusalem.

“But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down” (verse 14). Although the missionaries achieved great success at Paphos, yet, they still launched out to Antioch in Pisidia. They had the same vision and passion like Jesus their Master who declares: **“... I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee”** (Luke 4:43,44). They truly **“seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). May the Lord give us youths like them in our generation to preach the gospel to our dying generation (Amen).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Romans 4:1-12	Jer 49:23-39
TUE	“ 4:13-25	“ 50:1-20
WED	“ 5:1-11	“ 50:21-46
THUR	“ 5:12-21	“ 51:1-19
FRI	“ 6:1-14	“ 51:20-40
SAT	“ 6:15-23	“ 51:41-64
SUN	“ 7:1-6	“ 52:1-23

PAUL ON HIS MISSIONARY JOURNEY

LESSON 477

MEMORY VERSE: “**And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned**” (Mark 16:15,16).

TEXT: Acts 13:15-52.

Earlier in this chapter, while the church activities

continued normally in Antioch, the Holy Spirit had said “**Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them**” (verse 2). Immediately, the church readily released them and they also surrendered their lives to the mission work. As they were commissioned, they departed to Seleucia, then to Cyprus, to Salamis where they had an encounter with a sorcerer, to Paphos and then to Perga in Pamphylia. “**But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down**” (verse 14). Today, our study is based on certain activities that happened in Antioch of Pisidia.

Question 1: Were Paul and Barnabas commissioned from Antioch of Pisidia?

It is important to note that Antioch was a name of two different cities which were founded by the same person, Seleucus Nicator, who called them after the name of his father Antiochus. The Antioch from where Paul and Barnabas were commissioned was the metropolis of Syria, about twenty miles away from the mouth of river Orontes. That was where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). The second Antioch is attached to the province of Pisidia in Pamphylia. They were several miles away from each other.

Paul and Barnabas, despite the return of John Mark to Jerusalem, continued in their missionary outreach. At Antioch of Pisidia, they went into the synagogues of the Jews. After sitting for a while, they were given the chance to give the word of exhortation. “**And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on**” (verse 15). Paul took an advantage of this opportunity to teach the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the attendant salvation for those who believe it, whether Jews or Gentiles. This message filled the proselytes (Gentiles converted to be Jews) with so much joy that they desired to hear more of it the next Sabbath day. On the other hand, the Jews were filled with envy and indignation. Hence, they started persecuting the ministers who preached the truth. When they were hardened in their own way, Paul and Barnabas left the city and “**shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium**” (verse 51).

THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (Acts 13:15-37; 1Corinthians 3:10; Acts 17: 22-34; 26: 1-8, 19-28; 8: 35; John 4: 7-29; Matthew 28:18-20).

“And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it” (verse 15-17). Paul knew the kind of congregation he had: a combination of the Jews, who naturally would make their boast of everything God could give to Abraham and his descendants (Romans 2:17-20). The Gentiles might have been subdued in the inferiority complex imposed on them by the boastful Jews. This informed how he presented his message without starting off in an offensive way. So he started and prepared the mind of his audience by keeping the prestige of the Jews in the congregation, altogether without offending or disregarding the Gentiles in that congregation. He portrayed the Jews as being chosen and exalted by God. They were specially attended to and delivered by God from Egypt. Then he traced their history in the wilderness to the time of the kings and prophets to sustain the attention of the Jews. **“And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years”** (verses 18-21).

Furthermore, he spoke about the birth of the Messiah, a Saviour of Israel, through David. **“And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus”** (verses 22, 23). They were all captured by the presentation of the history that they could not stop it. Then he began the gospel preaching. He exalted Jesus and presented Him to the **“children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever”** was among them (all Gentiles). He began to talk about the suffering and the death of Christ. After that, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This he called the good news. **“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”** (verses 32, 33).

Question 2: What important attribute do we need to successfully preach the gospel?

Paul was able to make his audience listen to the gospel with the help of the wisdom that the Holy Spirit gave him. He even regarded himself as **“a wise masterbuilder”**. His approach to the preaching of the gospel was not to deliberately give offence in anything. He always tried to start his message from a point acceptable to his audience (1Corinthians 9: 19-23). This wisdom we can also see in our Lord Jesus Christ and the early soulwinners. To be a successful preacher of the gospel, we need wisdom. The Bible makes it clear that wisdom is necessary if one

must be an effective soulwinner (Daniel 12:3; Proverbs 11:30). Starting the gospel with condemnation and accusation is counter-productive.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (Acts 13: 38-43; Romans 1: 15-17; 1Thessalonians 1: 5; Hebrews 2: 1-3).

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (verses 38, 39). Paul preached that the forgiveness and the complete justification which the men had long desired, for which they had always made several sacrifices, can only be obtained in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel has a unique and uncommon power. To this effect, Paul was not ashamed of declaring it. **“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1: 15, 16).

Question 3: Enumerate what the gospel can do.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus has great power and can do many things in our lives. One, the gospel is the anchor and the hope of the poor (Matthew 11: 5; Luke 4:18; Colosians 1: 23). All sinners are spiritually poor. They are filled with miseries and glooms of the world to come. But, when they yield to the gospel, it gives hope and repentance. Two, the gospel stimulates faith (Acts 15:7). Unlike our academic subjects we studied which cannot produce faith to please God, the gospel can. No matter how much of arithmetic you know, it never gives you the confidence to pray or draw near to God. But, the moment someone hears and responds to the gospel, he begins to have the faith that he belongs to God. Three, through the gospel, we receive the power to be saved from sin and to live a righteous life (Romans 1:15-17; 1Corinthians 4:15). Four, the gospel brings grace and light into our lives (Acts 20: 24; 2 Corinthians 4: 4). Five, our lives and services become acceptable to God the moment we begin to live by the gospel (Acts 10: 1-6, 34-38; Romans 15: 16). Six, the gospel brings us into fellowship with God’s children (Philippians 1: 5; Philemon 13). Nobody who has truly accepted the gospel would like to be an object of offence to other members of the body of Christ. Seven, the gospel launches us into the abundance of God’s blessings (Romans 5:29; Ephesians 3:6). The gospel is the only link between man and God - the temporal and the eternal (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Finally, the gospel is the reference point on the judgement day (Romans 2: 16; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7, 8).

Question 4: What is the danger of neglecting the gospel message?

Therefore, there is warning for those who have the tendency not to accept the gospel. **“Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you”** (verses 40, 41). He said that those who despise the gospel, those who hear of and see the work of God but would not believe, would perish. It is unfortunate that they would not perish for lack of preachers but for their own stubbornness.

This message had much effect on the audience that they wanted to hear more. As a matter of fact, many of the Jews, together with the Gentiles, believed on the gospel preached by Paul. **“And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God”** (verses 42, 43).

THE PERSECUTION OF THE GOSPEL MESSENGERS (Acts 13: 44-52; 14: 1-6, 19; 16: 19-23; 17: 5-10).

“And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming” (verses 44, 45). The preaching of Paul charged the whole atmosphere in Antioch such that the whole city came together to hear the word of God. This angered the Jews because they had lost their authority over the people. Besides, they had not been able to gather so much people to hear their doctrine as much as Paul and Barnabas had done. So, they began to envy them.

Question 5: *What is envy?*

When we are dissatisfied with the success and the progress of others, we are being envious. It is a mark of the unregenerate mind (Romans 1: 29-32; Titus 3: 3). This envy made the Jews to contradict and blaspheme the preaching of Paul. Most times, gospel preachers are faced with persecutions for what they preach. Our friends persecute us because they envy the kind of life that we live which they have not attained. They start calling us names.

However, it is important to see that Paul and Barnabas were very courageous. **“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth”** (verses 46, 47). This looked like an encouragement to the Gentiles. They were filled with joy (verse 48). The result of this bold and brave stand was the progress in the work. **“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region”** (verse 49). The Jews did not relent but **“...stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts”** (verse 50). These preachers continued the preaching in another place instead of giving up. When we are being persecuted for the preaching of the gospel, God wants us to stay on. He has promised to be with us and to strengthen us when persecuted (John 17:15; Matthew 28:20). Our courage and steadfast spirit will lead to the progress in the work. The Scripture says: **“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”** (1 Corinthians 15:58)

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

MON	Romans 7:7-52	Jer 52:24-
34		
TUE	“ 8:1-17	Lam 1:1-11
WED	“ 8:18-30	“ 1:12-22
THUR	“ 8:31-39	“ 2:1-16
FRI	“ 9:1-16	“ 2:17-22
SAT	“ 9:17-33	“ 3:1-18
SUN	“ 10:1-15	“ 3:19-39

PERSECUTION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

LESSON 478

MEMORY VERSE: “**But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God**” (Acts 20: 24).

TEXT: Acts 14: 1 - 28.

Paul and Barnabas had just finished their preaching at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14). While at Antioch, they had passed through the opposition of the Jews who were not happy that they had, through the preaching of the gospel, drawn many people to Christ. This persecution did not deter¹ Paul and Barnabas from preaching, rather they “... **were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost**” (Acts 13:52). They continued their missionary journey to Iconium despite the pains of the previous journey and the knowledge of the possibility of the Jewish continuous resistance to their message. The details of their journey in Iconium, the impact of their message, the persecutions they faced, sign and wonders that followed their preaching and their relentless efforts to established souls in the Kingdom are what we would be studying in this lesson.

CONVERSION AND HEALING THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF PAUL AND BARNABAS (Acts 14: 1 – 18; Matthew 4: 17; 28: 18 – 20; John 8: 30 – 32; Acts 2: 37 – 42; 8: 4, 12; 17: 30; 1 Corinthians 2: 1 – 4).

Paul and Barnabas were dedicated to the work of soulwinning in spite of various persecutions and difficulties they faced. The divine mandate for all believers by Christ is: “**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth**”

(Acts 1: 8). In fulfillment of this divine injunction, they went about preaching the gospel to all sinners they met. In our study today, they first went to Iconium. At Iconium, they preached to the Jews and Gentiles telling them about Christ and “... **a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed**” (verse 1). This made the unbelievers in Iconium to be bitter and angry at the disciples and their preaching. They, therefore, sought out ways to discredit them. Iconium was one of the capital cities of ancient Lycaonia. This was the first time it was visited by Paul and Barnabas from Antioch in Pisidia during Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:50, 51). While the unbelievers were seeking out ways to discredit Paul and Barnabas, they still remained there for a long time “... **speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands**” (Acts 14:3).

Question 1: Why did the believers have to flee from the city of Iconium in verse 6?

However, after serious persecutions, the city became unsafe for them as they became aware that the rulers and the unbelievers decided to “**use them despitefully, and to stone them.**” (verse 5). Having obtained this knowledge, they had to leave the city and go over to Lystra to continue preaching the word of God. It is important to note that they afterwards returned to Iconium, and encouraged the church to continue in the faith (Acts 14:21, 22). Iconium is the modern Konieh, at the foot of Mount Taurus, about 120 miles inland from the Mediterranean. Lystra, was a town in Lycaonia, in Asia Minor. It was a wild district and among a rude population. Here, Paul preached the gospel after he had been driven by persecution from Iconium (Acts 14:2-7). Also, he healed a lame man who never walked from his mother’s womb through faith. The ignorant and superstitious people were so impressed that they took him for Mercury, because he was the “**chief speaker**” and his companion Barnabas for Jupiter. They were ready to offer sacrifices to them. Paul earnestly addressed them and turned their attention to the true source of all blessings.

Question 2: How can youths ensure the divine instruction in Acts 1:8 is fulfilled?

Today, there are various ways youths can preach the gospel. Paul and Barnabas used mass and personal evangelistic methods. Saved youths can also use similar methods to preach the gospel to the other youths still lost in sin. Personal Evangelism is one of the most potent form of preaching. It gives you the opportunity to speak one on one with the person, while also affording you the privilege of knowing sincere seekers. Personal Evangelism can be complimented by literature evangelism, cassettes and other media evangelism, sending of evangelistic text messages, inviting youths to the school fellowship and church services.

CONSPIRACY AND PERSECUTION AGAINST PAUL AND BARNABAS (Acts 14: 2,5,6,19,20; 2 Timothy 3: 12; John 16: 31, 32; 1 Samuel 30: 6; Daniel 3: 9 – 30; Mark 15: 20 – 30; Hebrews 11: 32 – 38).

But soon after, through the influence of the Jews from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium, more persecutions came the way of Paul as they stoned him and left him almost dead (Acts 14:19). On recovery, he left for Derbe; but soon returned through Lystra, encouraging the disciples there to be steadfast. However, Paul's missionary journey in Antioch was a very fruitful one for "**... when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed**" (Acts 13:48). A church was established at Antioch before the malicious Jews who were feeling threatened as a result of the conversion of some of their followers convinced the rulers and honorable in the land to expel¹ the disciples from the land.

These malicious Jews were angry at the boldness of the disciples who still went about preaching, and also discovered that the land of Iconium had received Christ with joy. Hence, they conspired with their fellow unbelieving Jews in Iconium to come and stop the gospel in Lystra. They devised a means of publicly disgracing the disciples and killing them if possible, and discouraging them from preaching the gospel. Stoning had been an age-long practice among the Jews. It was a form of punishment (Leviticus 20: 2; 24: 14; Deuteronomy 13:10; 17:5; 22:21) which was prescribed for certain offences such as that of Achan (Joshua 7:25), Naboth (1 Kings 21) and Stephen (Acts 7:59)). The Jews used stoning as a mark of public disgrace so that others, who may be involved in similar practice, were warned. Hence, Paul was stoned to make other believers stop preaching the gospel.

Question 3a: *Mention other believers who have been persecuted, yet remained uncompromising.*

(b): *Should persecutions make us stop preaching the gospel? What are we to do when persecuted?*

Many believers before us had been persecuted, yet stood their grounds and remained uncompromising despite the plans and conspiracy of the wicked. Elijah, Daniel, Shadrach, Mesach, Abednego, Stephen, Peter, James, John and so many others remained steadfast through persecutions. Our Lord Jesus Christ was also persecuted and He paid the ultimate price of death. Paul did not give up the preaching of the gospel as a result of the stoning. Believers should know that "**... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**" (2 Timothy 3:12). Persecutions should not discourage us but rather motivate us to preach the gospel. Also, in many countries today, where the preaching of the gospel is not allowed, believers in those lands are facing severe persecutions which require prayers. Youths should spend time praying for missionaries and believers in countries and lands where Christians are passing through difficult times. God is always with us regardless of the trials and persecution we pass through. He says, "**...lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen**" (Matthew 28: 20).

CONFIRMING SOULS THROUGH VISITATION BY PAUL AND BARNABAS
(Acts 14: 21 – 28; 15:36,40,41; John 5:14).

Paul was an evangelist who knew the importance of follow-up and visitation after the preaching of the gospel. He knew that, after a sinner gets saved, the convert needs to be established in the truth and the church. Those

who preach the gospel need to ensure the continuity in Christ of the souls they have rescued from the claws of Satan. Paul went back to the places where he preached earlier to confirm the souls of the saved ones and to mature them. Paul lived by example and that was why he was able to boldly tell people to be “...**followers of me, even as I also am of Christ**” (1 Corinthians 11:1). His life, utterances, comportment, actions, speech, work and walk with God were worthy of emulation. He was a real mentor and he taught the people the word of God without compromise.

Question 4: *How can a Christian youth follow up souls won to Christ during evangelism?*

Follow-up is not a complex assignment. It is a simple task which requires commitment by soulwinners. It involves the following: (1) Edifying the Saints - Follow-up time is a time of exhorting and edifying of the saved souls with words that make them remember that their living on earth is temporary. Hence, we are to live with heaven in view (1 Corinthians 15: 51 – 58); (2) Explaining Scriptures - It is a time to explain scriptures to the converts, to ask them for passages of the scriptures which they had problems to understand and with the leading of the Spirit of God, expound scriptures to them; (3) Evaluating Situations - During follow-up, the believer doing the follow-up needs to check where the converts reside, the distractions and persecutions they are facing; (4) Exposing Satan-inspired Strategies - Paul explained that after a soul winner leaves the converts, some satan-inspired detractors may seek for ways to draw the convert back. The strategy of the devil is still to draw converts back and he tends to achieve this using people and demonic forces. Saved youths involved in follow-up should expose the works of the devil to the converts and pray for them; (5) Enlisting Soul-winners - Saved souls are expected to preach the gospel. New converts should be trained to go and tell others about Christ; and (6) Encouraging the Sick and Suffering - There are times that some of the converts are sick or passing through some difficult times. The follow-up time should be a time of praying for and encouraging the sick and suffering. The challenge before us today is to emulate the life of Paul and ensure that we preach the gospel to the lost and follow-up the new converts effectively.

Question 5: *What lessons do we learn from Paul's and Barnabas's missionary journeys to Iconium and Lystra?*

We learn several lessons from Paul and Barnabas as they preached through the cities of Iconium and Lystra. (1) Paul and Barnabas had a singular goal of winning souls to Christ. They utilized every opportunity to achieve this goal. (2) They were wise in running from life-threatening danger when faced with it so that they could have more opportunities to preach the gospel. (3) They were resolute and determined. They did not let the persecutions give them an excuse not to preach the gospel. (4) They were not seeking their own glory. When they were strangely exalted by the superstitious men of Lystra as gods, they quickly restrained them and directed them to give all glory to God. (5) Paul and Barnabas did not hate their persecutors. They still searched for opportunities to preach the gospel to them again. (6) God's promises are always true. Christ promised signs and wonders to follow when we preach the gospel.

As Paul and Barnabas went about preaching the gospel, miracles happened and souls were saved. (7) As a result of the empowerment of the Holy Ghost, the disciples preached. **“Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands”** (Acts 14:3). Believers today need the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to convincingly preach the gospel with power to a world that is complicated with diverse type of sins and wickedness.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
MON	Romans 10:16-21	Lam 3:40-54
TUE	“ 11:1-10	“ 3:55-
66		
WED	“ 11:11-24	“ 4:1-10
THUR	“ 11:25-36	“ 4:11-22
FRI	“ 12:1-21	“ 5:1-22
SAT	“ 13:1-14	Eze 1:1-14
SUN	“ 14:1-13	“
	1:15-28	

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL VICES: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

LESSON 479

MEMORY VERSE: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

TEXT: Romans 1:18-27; Philippians 4: 8, 9; 1 Peter 1: 6-11.

Since the fall, Adam and all generations after him

have become easily influenced by evil imaginations and actions. Through the ages past, mankind had shown the evil traits in many different ways. Modern youths live in a world that invents evil things. Man himself has a sin-generating mind. He has the capacity to generate or create sin and sinful entertainment. Sin, in itself, is inexhaustible. It is brewed in the depth of human heart. Man’s craving for evil and vices are insatiable. He ever craves for innovation of sin. Therefore, the contemporary youths –boys and girls, rich and poor, educated and illiterates, restricted and free - have some newly devised set of evil.

Question 1: What do you understand by contemporary vices?

These are present day evil practices in the society. “**And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**” (Genesis 6:5). Since the flood, the heart of man has always been evil. God saw the whole imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart, and concluded that it was evil continually - every hour, every day, every year, every moment. He hardly deviated into good. Such is the authentic account of the whole race of mankind. Such were all men before God brought the flood upon the earth. And strange enough, the scriptures do not give us a reason to think otherwise of youths today. The mind of the modern youths is a sin-generating machine. Increase in technology meant increase in evil. The advent of the television, video, mobile phone, internet and the computer and their potential of conveying thoughts in picture, colour or language motion is accompanied by increased engagement in sinful entertainments and pleasures. The television, for instance, impresses some vices on the mind of youths and make light of violence, hooliganism, murder and assault. Therefore, to live a victorious Christian life today, we must seek the Lord daily for His grace and strength.

DESCRIPTION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL VICES AMONG YOUTHS
(Romans 1:18-32; Genesis 6:1-6; Deuteronomy 22:5; Micah 2:1-3; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ... (Romans 1:29,30).

Question 2: *What are the common contemporary social vices that a Christian youth should guide against?*

Drug addiction, a practice found among teenagers and students in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, is a vice that ranks very high in contemporary times. Some freely say that scriptures do not say anything about the use of drugs. Yes, but it does warn us against defiling or, in modern usage, destroying the temple of the Holy Ghost which we have in us. **“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”** (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The use of hard drugs is a contemporary vice and its effect on the life of its users is quite heavy. Hard drugs inflame the mind, sedate the heart and make the soul to feel “high”. Its end is more dangerous and deadly than the beginning. It leaves its victim a wretch and a danger to others. Closely related with drug addiction is involvement in cults among students in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. Cults, these days, pretend to be a social club but when its activities are closely examined, it is revealed as the breeding ground of all contemporary vices - wild life, drug addiction and immorality. In recent times, dangerous weapons like life ammunition, machetes, spears and arrows are found among the members of cults in schools. This is a modern trend and it comes with every conceivable danger to lives and properties.

Another contemporary social vices is betting and pools-staking. The bottom line and motive in engaging in this practice is covetousness. An attitude to get-rich-quick and laziness is the driving spirit behind this practice. It is sad to see this creep into the midst of some believers years after they have claimed to be converted.

Common among students who are desperate to excel without corresponding input of labour and diligence is examination malpractice. In contemporary times, this has reached some level that frightens constituted examination bodies, school authorities, students who have the fear of the Lord and, of course, Christian parents. This practice looks like a contemporary vice that has come to stay in most societies. But its permanence or rationalisation does not make it right. It remains essentially evil and vicious.

Contemporary youths are unduly exposed to the practice of pornography. The evil sight that stirs up the base nature of man through pornography has a demonic hold on youths. Some Christian youths cannot stand or continue in the faith because of pornography. Illegal sensual pleasure is basically sinful. Closely allied to pornography are the unclean practices of lesbianism and homosexuality. These are rampant practices among students in boarding schools and higher institutions. Some of them are found in religious circles.

From the days of old, music has always been a spiritual and edifying medium. The Scripture exhorts us to “**admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord**”(Colossians 3:16). David’s songs and playing on the harp had great spiritual and soothing impact on Saul. Elisha called for a minstrel under whose ministrations he received inspiration (2 Kings 3:15). Indeed, hymn-singing is a great inspiration to those who preach; just as good singing and music precede most of all preachings today. In heaven, music continues. “**And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps**” (Revelations 14:2). Such is the traditional and even future use of music. But in contemporary times, music has been perverted from its original spiritual, inspirational and edifying context. Sensational music, which in the past was one exclusive of sinners in brothels and pleasure-mad houses, has now been brought to the Churches. Most churches have lost the solemnity, inspiration, freshness, and refreshing that come with God-glorifying music in the Bible. Contemporary youths are besieged by rock and roll, noisy music, drumming and tunes which are very much akin to those that obtain in heathen shrines. Secular music has a strong appeal which makes the mind stray away from the Kingdom. Contemporary pseudo-Christian music is a vice which believers must reject.

Finally, the use of slang and gutter language is another contemporary vice. The Bible says: “**Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt**” (Colossians 4:6). Christian language, as salt, should do five things. First, it should sweeten, edify the heart and mind of the hearers. Second, it should purify, not defile or offend; whiteness of salt symbolises purity. Third, it should preserve the hearers from decay and spiritual decomposition. Fourth, it should be pervasive in its influence, no matter how few the words are, just as a pinch of salt would pervade a whole meal. Fifth, it should be known for its characteristic. The Bible says “**... a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words**” (Ecclesiastes 5:3). The Christian’s use of slangs sourced from brothels, drug addicts, “heroes” in boxing, sports and theatre makes a believer to minister to sinners. And the Bible asks: “**...Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?**” (Luke 6:39). The Scripture says: “**Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch**” (Matthew 15:14).

DANGER OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL VICICES AMONG YOUTHS (Romans 18,21,24,26,32; Genesis 6:5-7; Ecclesiastes 12:1,2,13,14; Zephaniah 1:8; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 3:16,17; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).

“**Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them**” (Romans 1:32). The danger of contemporary social vices among youths affects its victims now and in eternity.

Question 3: What are the dangers of contemporary social vices among youths?

Some of the dangers of contemporary social vices among youths include: (1) destruction of internal organs of the body of those who used hard drugs; (2) making one an enemy of God (James 4:4); (3) backsliding and compromise; (4) hinderance to one's education and progress in life; (5) exposure to deadly diseases such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS); (6) dishonour to God and brings shame to His church; and (7) finally, eternal punishment in hell-fire. **“And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him”** (Luke 12:4,5).

DECISION FOR CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF YOUTHS (Mark 1:14,15; Isaiah 1:16-20; Philippians 4:8,9; 1 Peter 1:5-11; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

There is no sitting on the fence for Christian youths. Christian youths cannot afford to pitch their tents with Sodomites and Gomorrhites and still claim to know Christ. The vices, known in contemporary times, are deceitful, but no Christian should be deceived. The Bible has given enough guides to Christians as to the position they must take on these issues.

Question 4: *How should a Christian assess any practice or conduct that looks like a source of temptation?*

As a Christian daily faces temptation and allurements from any of these vices, he needs to ask some questions. First, does it glorify God? Would God behold it with joy? Can I do it in the presence of the Lord? Can I do it or talk about it without any shame or contradiction before the saints of God in the Church of the living God? Second, does it edify the saints of God? Does it provoke the brethren to love (Hebrews 10:24). Is it worth emulating? Third, does it point the sinner to Calvary? Is the practice of pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, smoking, involvement in cult, sensational music, drug addiction, use of gutter language, gambling, betting and pools staking capable of gaining a soul for the Kingdom or challenging the sinner on the need for the salvation of his soul? Fourth, does the practice harm the temple of the Holy Ghost, whose body you are? Does it not weaken my frame, enlarge my heart, enfeeble my mind, waste my resources and enslave me for the rest of my life? Fifth, does it make me an example to believers? **“Be thou an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”**(1 Timothy 4:12). it is important for a Christian to always ask himself before embarking on any action: Does it draw me nearer to heaven? Does it enhance my preparedness for heaven? Does it make me rapture- ready? Sixth, will the practice, language or lifestyle earn me a smile of approval from my Lord and Saviour? Finally, is the issue under consideration true, honest, just, pure and lovely, of good report? If it is not, a Christian's position is a firm No!

Question 5: *What is the way out of these contemporary social vices?*

Victims of contemporary vices need a release. The vices are yokes and like every yoke, they must be broken. Whoever has slipped into them should go back to the Lord in repentance and call on the Lord for salvation or restoration. Repentance is followed by a return to the Lord (Isaiah 55:7). To return implies one has felt some brokenness and contrition and to such the Lord is very much keen to save and deliver. **“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”**(Psalm 34:18). After repentance, returning and restoration, it becomes very necessary to practise the abiding presence of the Lord. Imagine the Lord is ever by you and do only those things that He would approve of. **“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”** (Philippians 4:8-9).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING	
MON	Romans 14:14-23		Eze 2:1-10
TUE	“ 15:1-21	“	3:1-27
WED	“ 15:22-33	“	4:1-17
THUR	“ 16:1-27	“	5:1-17
FRI	1 Corth. 1:1-17		“ 6:1-14
SAT	“ 18:1-31		“
	7:1-27		
SUN	“ 2:1-16		“
	8:1-18		

THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

LESSON 480

MEMORY VERSE: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-11.

In the studies of the last days’ events, the Rapture of the saints and the Second Coming of Christ are parts of the events that will take place. The Second Coming of Christ is divided into two phases. The first phase is the Rapture of the saints which will take place before the Great Tribulation. The Second phase is the Second Coming of Christ or the Second Advent of Christ, which will take place after the Great Tribulation.

Question 1: Distinguish between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ.

One, the Rapture will happen before the Second Coming of Christ. Two, at the Rapture, Christ will appear in the air while at the Second Coming, His feet will rest on the Mount of Olivet (1Thesoloians 4:17; Zechariah 14:4). Three, at the Rapture, Christ is coming **for** the saints while at the Second Coming, He will be coming **with** the saints (John 14:1-3; Jude 14,15). Four, at the Rapture, all eyes will not see Him while at the Second Coming, all eyes will see Him (Revelation 1:7). Five, the Rapture will take place “**in the twinkling of an eye, ...**” while at the Second Coming, “**... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**” (1 Corinthians 15:52; Matthew 24:30). The Rapture is the present expectation of the saints in Christ. It is the next event in the programme of God for the Church age. Therefore, we must be prepared!

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-31
Corinthians 15:51-58).

“**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord**” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). The Rapture is the greatest event of all ages that the Church is waiting for. Rapture is the catching away of all true believers in Christ to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Question 2: When will the Rapture take place?

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36). The time of the Rapture is unknown. The Rapture will be heralded by the voice of the archangel and the blowing of the trumpets signalling the end of the Church age (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15). The Rapture was a mystery, unknown to the Old Testament saints and prophets. However, God had illustrated this great event in two different ways in the Scripture to assure us of its certainty.

Question 3: Mention three people that have tasted the Rapture in the Bible.

The event was illustrated by God for Enoch, Elijah and Jesus Christ. The first two represented living saints at the time when the rapture takes place while the last represented saints who had died but will resurrect at the Rapture (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11,12; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). The purposes of the Rapture are to: (1) resurrect all just and righteous people who have died (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; Revelation 20:4-6); (2) change the bodies of living saints from mortality to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20,21); (3) take all living saints out this evil world before the Great Tribulation (Luke 21:34-36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,7,8); (4) take the saints to Himself (John 14:1-3; Ephesians 5:27); (5) gather all saints together to partake in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:1-11); and (6) give all the saints their rewards for all they did for Him on earth (2 Corinthians 5:8-10).

The Rapture can take place any moment from now. There is no sign for the Rapture but many signs of the Second Advent are already fulfilled (Matthew 24:3-14). Are you ready?

THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST’S SECOND COMING (Matthew 24:3-14,29-31; Daniel 7:13,14; Acts 1:9-11; Jude 14,15; Revelation 1:7).

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:29,30). A study of the scriptures shows that certain prophecies concerning Christ and some future programmes of God are not yet fulfilled. Some of these events will be after the Rapture. The events are the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Reign, the Great White Throne Judgment, etc. The scriptures assure us of the certainty of the Second Coming of Christ. However, the signs preceding the Second Coming are being fulfilled daily.

Question 4: Mention the signs of the Second Coming of Christ as stated in Matthew chapter twenty-four.

From Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus stated that there will be deceptions (Matthew 24:4,5,11,24), false christs (Matthew 24:5,23-26), wars and rumours of wars (Matthew 24:6,7), famines (Matthew 24:7), pestilences, earthquakes (Matthew 24:9), offences (Matthew 24:10), betrayals, hatred, false prophets (Matthew 24:11), lawlessness, increase in iniquities (Matthew 24:12), selfishness and lukewarmness (Matthew 24:12), etc. Furthermore, He said the impact of the Second Coming will be as universal as when **“the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth**

even unto the west; ...". It would make **"all the tribes of the earth mourn, ..."**. There shall be deep spiritual lethargy and indifference as was in the days of Noah (Matthew 24: 27, 30, 37).

Question 5: Why will Christ come the Second time after the Great Tribulation?

Apart from the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Christ, other divine purposes which the Second Advent would fulfil are to: (a) comfort the Church (John 14:1-3; 16:20-22); (b) restore Israel to her sovereignty (Isaiah 32:18; 33:20-24); (c) judge the world (Revelation 20:11-15; John 5:22); (d) renovate the earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22); and (e) restore all things as God wants it (Jeremiah 12:4,11; Romans 8:20-23). Since Christ said the **"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away"**, be wise now and prepared (Luke 21:33).

READINESS FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10; Matthew 24:42-51; 25:1-13; 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-32).

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (Thessalonians 5:1,2). Almost all the signs preceding the Second Advent of Christ are fulfilled, it is a clear indications that the Coming of Christ is very close. Hence, the time of the Rapture is much closer. Knowing that the Rapture will occur unannounced and it is very imminent, we must fully be prepared and ready.

Question 6: How are we to prepare for the Coming of Christ?

Sinners and saints are called to prepare for this great event. Sinners are to repent and come to Christ before the day of the Lord comes unaware upon them (John 3:1-7). Saints are called to be ready, holy, spotless, watchful, prayerful and busy preaching the gospel of Christ (Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Ephesians 5:25-27). The charge and challenge from your Creator is: **"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).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

MON	1 Corth. 3:1-23	Eze 9:1-11
TUE	" 4:1-21	" 10:1-22
WED	" 5:1-13	" 11:1-25
THUR	" 6:1-11	" 12:1-28
FRI	" 6:12-20	" 13:1-23
SAT	" 7:1-16	" 14:1-23
SUN	" 7:17-24	" 15:1-16:14

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE ANTICHRIST

LESSON 481

MEMORY VERSE: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21).

TEXT: Matthew 24:14-30; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 6:1-17; 13:1-18.

The teaching on the Great Tribulation and the Antichrist is an important event in the study of the last day's events known as Eschatology. It will lead to the Second Coming of Christ, which is the second part of His coming.

Question 1: *Why do we study the period of the Great Tribulation since Christian youths will not take part in it?*

The study of the Great Tribulation is important to believers because it is to give warning on the sufferings that await careless Christian youths. Secondly, it will move youths to rise up and rescue the perishing boys and girls around them. Thirdly, it enables Christian youths to prepare daily and diligently for the rapture of the sanctified saints. The question for all youths today is, do you want to face the Great Tribulation or go in the rapture?

Question 2: *In your own words, what is the Great Tribulation?*

The Great Tribulation is a period of unparalleled sufferings, woes and destruction. It is a time of universal trouble, yet it will centre upon Jerusalem and Palestine. It will be the climax of God's judgment upon the whole world. This period is the time when God's wrath and judgment will fall upon the earth. It is also a time when Satan and the Antichrist will unleash woe and wickedness upon the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 6:2-9).

PROHECIES CONCERNING THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Matthew 24:14-20; Daniel 9:24-27; Jeremiah 30:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12).

The period of the Great Tribulation falls within Daniel's seventieth week. Daniel's prophecy spans a period of seventy weeks. In Scripture, a week stands for seven years (Genesis 29:27,28). Therefore, a week in Daniel's prophecy means seven years. Daniel's seventy weeks means four hundred and ninety years.

Question 3: *Identify the three periods in Daniel's seventy weeks?*

The seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy is divided into three. (1) 7 sevens or 49 years is for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). (2) 62 sevens or 434 years is from the completion of the building to the time the Messiah is revealed (Daniel 9:26). (3) The last one week is the seventieth (70th) week, that is, the Great Tribulation period (Daniel 9:27).

Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventy weeks shows the accuracy and correctness of Biblical revelation. In the first seven weeks or 49 years, Jerusalem was reconstructed. After the next sixty-two weeks or 434 years, the Messiah was cut off (died or crucified). Again, it was prophesied that the people of the (wicked) prince shall come and destroy the city of Jerusalem. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Romans soldiers under the leadership of General Titus invaded Jerusalem. On the whole, sixty-nine weeks were to cover between the period of the edict to rebuild Jerusalem and the first advent (coming) of the Messiah. This prophecy was exactly fulfilled.

Sixty-nine weeks out of Daniel's seventy weeks have been fulfilled while the last week or seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled. The age in which we live now is known as the Church Age. This age covers between the time of the Messiah's cut off (sixty-nine weeks) and the Rapture. It is important to note that the Church age was not directly predicted in the Old Testament. The Scripture calls it a mystery (Ephesians 3:5,6; 5:32; Colossians 1:25-27). It was hidden from the people in the Old Testament.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that predicted the two advents (comings) of Christ without throwing any light on the Church age (Zechariah 9:9,10; 12:10-14; Isaiah 9:6; 7:14; 26:19-21). However, this does not make the Church age less significant. This age is significant in the mind of God and it is known to Him from the foundation of the world (Acts 15:18). During this Church age, God will bring His programmes with the Church into fulfillment which will end at the time of the Rapture. However, His programme with Israel will continue until the end of the Great Tribulation. Note that the Church will not partake in the Great tribulation. Therefore, it is clear that the Church age will usher in Daniel's seventieth week. That is, the Rapture will usher in the period of the Great Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist. **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders"** (2 Thessalonians 2:7-9).

Question 4: *What lessons can we learn from the exact fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies?*

The prophecy concerning the rapture will certainly come to past since all the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming have been fulfilled.

THE PERIOD OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Matthew 24:21-26; Revelation 6:1-17; 13:1-18; Isaiah 26:20,21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

The period of the great tribulation will be the darkest hour in human history. The man of sin will be allowed to do his worst before God's day of holiness, righteousness and glory comes. The Lord will catch away His people before the Great Tribulation begins. The Church will not pass through the Great Tribulation period. **"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain"** (Isaiah 26:20,21). God will not allow His children to suffer during the period of the suffering, its judgment and destructions. He saved Noah (a preacher of righteousness) and his family before destroying the world with flood (Genesis 6:8-10; 7:1-13,16-24; 8:15-22). He rescued Lot and his family before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah with fire (Genesis 19:10-29). He preserved the children of Israel in Egypt while there was judgment on the Egyptians (Exodus 8:20-24; 9:22-26; 10:21-23; 11:4-7). So will God take away His children before the great tribulation (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The Great Tribulation will last for a period of seven years. At the beginning of the seven year tribulation period, the Anti-Christ will enter into covenant with Israel. In the middle of the period, he will break the covenant (Daniel 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11), then, the great tribulation will start in earnest. The Beast will then persecute the Jews during the great tribulation period for three and half years.

The Great Tribulation is described as the **"... time of Jacob's trouble"** (Jeremiah 30:7), **"great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"** (Matthew 24:21), **"... the day of the Lord"** (Joel 1:15), **"... A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness"** (Joel 2:2), **"... a day of wasteness and desolation"** (Zephaniah 1:14,15) and **"... a time of trouble"** (Daniel 12:1). Also, the period is described as being full of woes, judgments, famines, bloody wars, explosions, terror, anguish¹, earthquakes, wrath, indignation², trial, destruction, darkness and punishment. It will be a time when every body on the face of the earth, including youths, will be calling on the mountains to fall on them but it will not be possible (Revelation 6:15-17).

Question 5: What is the purpose of the Great Tribulation?

The purpose of the Great Tribulation is to make Israel suffer so that they can desire strongly and be ready to receive their Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ whom they, at present, reject) to come back to them. It is also to judge unbelieving people including youths of their evil ways (Zechariah 12:10,11; 13:1-13; 14:12,13).

Question 6: Who is the Anti-Christ and what will be his activities during the Great Tribulation?

The Anti-Christ, called the Beast, the king of the north, the man of sin, the prince that shall come, a king of fierce countenance, the son of perdition and that wicked one empowered personally by Satan, shall bring destruction on the people during the Great Tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Revelation 13:1-

18; 14:9-11). Furthermore, the false prophets and the Devil will also bring terrors on the earth (Revelation 16:2-12; 19:20).

During the Great Tribulation, no one will be able to buy, sell or earn a living without accepting the mark of Anti-Christ. All will submit themselves before him in wonder of great miracles he is going to perform. The great tribulation will be a time of intense persecution for Israel and those who will stand for God and against the Beast. The Anti-Christ will be the great personality behind the Great Tribulation. **“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”** (Revelation 13:2). Any body who accepts the mark of the Beast (666) will be lost forever (Revelation 13:18).

PREPARATION TO ESCAPE THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Matthew 24:12-14, 27-30; 25:1-13; Mark 13:31-37).

The sufferings of the great tribulation period will be so great that no believer should pray to go through it. However, the Bible teaches that backslidden and careless believers who would miss the rapture will go through the great tribulation. Although the great tribulation saints will eventually be saved, they will have to endure untold sufferings. **“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”** (Revelation 7:14).

While terrors are unleashed on the earth, saints will be receiving rewards (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), rejoicing and feasting at the Marriage Supper in heaven (Revelation 19:6-9), worshipping God with the angels (Revelation 7:9-17) and preparing for the Second Advent with Christ (Revelation 19:11-14).

True believers will not be present on the earth when the Beast arises in full terror of his satanic dictatorship. We are not looking for the coming of the Anti-Christ but the coming of Christ. The end of the world is at hand. When sin has run its course, when mankind's cups of iniquity has become full, when Satan has done his worst, then God will unleash fiery judgment on all workers of iniquity and the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God.

Question 7: What steps should sinners, backsliders and saved youths take to escape the great tribulation?

The sinners, backsliders and saints are called to prepare for this great event. The sinners and backsliders are to repent and come to Christ before the day of the Lord. The saints are called to be ready, holy, spotless, watchful, prayerful and busy preaching the gospel until Christ comes. Youths, this is the time to prepare for the Rapture.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

MON	1 Corth.	7:25-40	Eze	16:15-34	
TUE	"	8:1-13			" 16:35-47
WED	"	9:1-14			" 16:48-63
THUR	"	9:15-27			" 17:1-24
FRI	"	10:1-13			" 18:1-32
SAT	"	10:14-33			" 19:1-14
SUN	"	11:1-16			" 20:1-32