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Lesson 378

JOURNEYING TO A RESTING PLACE

MEMORY VERSE: “And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days’ journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them” **(Numbers 10:33).**

TEXT: Numbers 10:11-36

The Israelites had encamped at Mount Sinai for a long time and it was time for them to continue their journey to Canaan. God did not intend that they make the plains of Mount Sinai a permanent home, in spite of its favourable climate. Our focus is drawn on their departure from Mount Sinai in continuation of their journey to the Promised Land. God had promised Abraham that He would give Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey to them as a national heritage (Genesis 15:13, 14; Exodus 3:8). It was now time for Him to fulfil the promise, and He would not allow the convenience of the plains of Mount Sinai to distract them from the fulfillment of the promise. He wanted to take away their better in order to give them His best.

Question 1: *How does the believer enjoy God’s best?*

God is faithful to His promises. He wanted to fulfil the promise He had made to Abraham centuries earlier. This attribute of God’s faithfulness is seen throughout the scriptures. God always has the best for His children which He gives through His promises. But the believer who hopes to enjoy the best of God’s promised provisions must learn to obey Him in all things, develop his faith and discipline his passions.

ISRAEL’S DEPARTURE FROM MOUNT SINAI (Numbers 10:11-28, Deuteronomy 1:6-8,21; Exodus 14:15;

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Timothy	6	Ezekiel	3-4
TUE	2 Timothy	1-2	“	5-6
WED	2 Timothy	3-4	“	7-8
THUR	Titus	1-3	“	9-10
FRI	Philemon	1	“	11-12
SAT	Hebrews	1-3	“	13-14
SUN	“	4-5	“	15-16

THE MIXED MULTITUDE

MEMORY VERSE: “And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (**Numbers 11:4**).

TEXT: Numbers 11:1-35

Israel was a nation highly favoured by God, and still is. In fulfilment of His promises to Abraham, the Lord was willing to make them a peculiar people. They had come a long way from Egyptian captivity under the watchful eyes of the Lord, and had enjoyed His miraculous provisions, protection and guidance. In testifying to God’s goodness to Israel, Moses invited his brother-in-law saying, “**We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel**” (Numbers 10:29).

Up to this time, things had gone pretty well in Israel; there had been little or no interruption to the methods of God’s favour to them since the matter of the golden calf. The people appeared teachable in assembling and purification of the camp; the princes had shown devoutness and generosity at the dedication of the altar, and with the hope that soon they would be in Canaan.

Unfortunately, however, this chapter begins a melancholic scene: God turned to be their enemy, and fights against them as a result of sin. They had gone into the evil of murmuring and complaining against God regardless of His mighty acts of deliverance among them.

Question 1: *How can believers avert God’s displeasure?*

the children of Israel wept again”. The word “**also**” means that the Israelites joined in the murmuring. This action came as a result of the ignoble emulation of the attitude of the mixed multitude. The Bible says, “**evil communications corrupt good manners**” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Question 2: *Who were these mixed multitudes and what reasons can you advance for their presence among the Israelites?*

Apart from the miracles which they saw, some other people joined Israel because they were afraid to remain any further in a land of declining economy, a land so sorely afflicted with divine judgments. Likewise in the church today, we have the presence of the mixed multitude because of

miracles, marriage relations, attempt at escaping poverty in a declining economy and unbroken tie with things and people of the world. Let us note that it was not long before the mixed multitude became a torn in the flesh of Israel.

Question 3: *How can the mixed multitude influence the present day church and what should be the attitude of believers towards it?*

The mixed multitude influenced Israel to desire the presumed pleasures of Egypt, thus bringing God's displeasure on the congregation. Though they lived among the children of Israel, they retained their contaminating and contagious nature of sin. We need to understand that the presence or integration of the mixed multitude among the congregation of the Lord has been the bane of God's saints in every age. It is the source of their weakness, lowering of God's standard and backsliding. Because of this, Paul wrote, **"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"** (2 Corinthians 6:17).

In most of the Christian assemblies today, we still see the influence and effect of this mixed multitude.

They account for the dilution and perversion of the gospel message; they bring worldliness, compromise and politics into the church of the living God. Worldly dressing, crave for ungodly amusements, love for pleasure, insensitivity to the great commission, tribal bigotry, class distinction, struggle for position, "god-fatherism", outright rebellion and opposition to constituted authorities, are offshoots of the mixed multitude's influence on the church today. These cankerworms eat up the spiritual fabric of the church and weaken its foundation of holiness. The church today got into this through wrong intermarriages, unhealthy friendships and associations, compromised business partnerships, and unholy affinities in fellowship. What then should be our attitude as believers towards guarding against this influence of the mixed multitude? First, we should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14,17). Second, we should move and fellowship with people of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1). Third, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the truth, and avoid them (Romans 16:17). Meddle not with them that are given to change (Proverbs 24:21). Fourth, always remember God's goodness and express your gratitude to Him at all times (Psalm 34:1; 2 Corinthians 2:14). Fifth, duties and responsibilities should be committed to those with firm convictions in the word of God (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 5:22).

EXPECTED LEADERSHIP RESPONSE TO A DISGRUNTLED CONGREGATION (Numbers 11:10-15; 23:19; Philippians 4:19).

Earlier in Exodus, Moses had declared God's goodness and preparedness to make Israel a peculiar treasure (Exodus 19:4-6); and the people responded positively **"and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD"** (Exodus 19:8). Not long after making this commitment, Israel relapsed into unbelief and murmuring. The people wept for want of flesh saying, **"Who shall give us flesh to eat?"** They have forgotten

the power of the God that delivered them from Egyptian captivity, preserved them from being hurt by the rampaging armies of Pharaoh, divided the Red sea for them to pass on dry land and provided for their sustenance in their journey.

Apart from mixing with the worldly, when believers forget past deeds of the Lord, unbelief will eclipse their faith in God. Then, they begin to complain and ask ungodly questions that provoke the Lord and increase the burden of leadership. In the face of seeming economic hardship, or apparent unfulfilled desires, believers should not lose sight of God's unchanging promises (Philippians 4:19). Even when we do not know what the future holds, we know who holds the future.

Murmuring and complaints do no one any good. Rather than murmur, we should make our requests known to God through prayer **"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"** (Philippians 4:6). Our Saviour and Lord instructs us: **"murmur not among yourselves"** (John 6:43). Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians charged them to **"do all things without murmurings and disputings"** (Philippians 2:14).

Apart from incurring the wrath of God, murmuring and complaints bring discouragement to leaders. Moses, in our text, was affected to the extent he became discouraged. Interestingly however, he turned his complaint on the burden of leadership to God. From his complaints, Moses revealed that his commission was to **"Carry them in [his] bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which [God] swarest unto their fathers"** (Numbers 11:12).

The leadership in Christ's church today is saddled with the same responsibility of care for the flock of God (Acts 20:28). We observe that Moses used the same words his father-in-law used earlier while giving him counsel to delegate responsibilities to his subordinates so that they could bear the burden of leadership with him. He said: **"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me"** (Numbers 11:14). It is

obvious that God does not equip any leader He chooses with the strength to do all things in his appointed ministry. Anyone who seeks to fulfil his ministry all alone is ignorant of the word of God and will, in his self-sufficiency, fail at a critical time.

DIVINE INTERVENTION IN LEADERSHIP AND PROVISION (Numbers 11:16-30; Luke 10:1, 17-20; Acts 6:1-7; Exodus 18:17-26; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)

God responds to His people's problems and needs. He commanded Moses to select seventy men who were elders and officers, and known to him. He was required to use his discretion in accordance with divine prescription. After the selection, he was required to come to the tabernacle of the congregation where God was to take of the Spirit that was upon him and put on the seventy elders.

There are a number of lessons we learn from this; one, God does not choose strangers to lead His people. Two, anointed leaders are instruments God uses to select and appoint other leaders to serve with them. Three, God equips everyone He chooses into leadership position with the grace, strength, wisdom and ability with which to serve. Four, offices of helps and governments are very crucial in every living church of God. Five, everyone in God's service must desire to be filled with the Spirit of God. Six, we need to follow scriptural precedents and methods in solving problems and propagating the gospel. Seven, we need to pray for burden-bearers and co-labourers, not loafers, in the service of God.

God also instructed Moses to tell the people to sanctify themselves in preparation for divine supply of meat. He, not minding their ingratitude and dishonour, still upheld His promise to guide and feed them because of His faithfulness and compassion (Psalm 145:8). God granted their request by sending quails from the sea. **“And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the**

camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp” (Numbers 11:31,32). Here is an eloquent demonstration of God's immutability and power to glorify Himself and provide for His people. God is still the Jehovah-Jireh (the God that provides) today; He provides for the need of His people. The people gathered so much quails that they stood up all day, and all night, and all the next day (verse 32).

God provided for His people though Moses could not naturally fathom how that would happen. God is great and strong to fulfil His promises even when there are no signs of any possible fulfilment. If He spoke the whole world into existence, by the same words and promises He has made in the Scriptures, He is able to make impossibilities possible. But we need to be careful not to envy those God has chosen and blessed with His gifts or try to

stop the operations of the Spirit of God in the lives of other people. Moses presented the selected seventy leaders before the Lord and the Spirit of God came upon them and they did prophesy (Numbers 11:25).

Question 4: *What lesson can we learn from Moses' reaction to the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in the camp?*

In the meanwhile, it was reported to Moses that two of the nominated elders (Eldad and Medad) who went not out unto the tabernacle, were in the camp prophesying. The people saw it as an aberration and even Joshua, persuaded Moses to forbid them from prophesying. But for Moses, it was a thing of joy that the Lord had lessened his burden, and would wish that everybody prophesied; **“And Moses said unto him, enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD**

would put his spirit upon them” (Numbers 11:29). We learn that, (a) we must not be hasty in condemning those that differ from us (Mark 9:38,39). But it does not mean we should join affinity with any group we see mentioning the name of Christ (1 John 4:1). (b) the manifestation of God’s gift and power is not an exclusive preserve of any particular group of people. God gives gifts liberally according to His desire. (c) The baptism in the Spirit is for service and not for self-promotion. God anointed the seventy elders to help Moses in daily ministration (1 Corinthians 12:7). (d) Leaders should recognize and accommodate the gifts of their subordinates and see them as partners in progress.

Eventually, the people’s request was granted and food was provided for them, but God sent leanness into their soul because they asked out of lust” (Psalm 106: 15).

DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR MURMUR AND DISCONTENT (Numbers 11:16,33; Leviticus 10:1,2; Psalm78:30,31)

“And the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost part of the camp” (Numbers 11:1). The fire of judgment came upon them as a result of their complaints against God. One would ordinarily think that the people would have learnt their lesson from the past but they did not. Their complaints and murmurs amounted to speaking against God and an outright rebellion. They abhorred God’s way and were like children who love to have their own way (Jeremiah 6:16). Nevertheless, God let gave them their request but they paid dearly for it. This is a lesson for those who always want to have their own way instead of submitting to God’s will and being grateful for His provisions.

Question 5: *How can leaders avoid making mistakes through the pressure of the people they are leading?*

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Question 5: How can leaders avoid making mistakes through the pressure of the people they are leading?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING			
MON	John	7	Genesis	38		
TUE	”	8	”	39-40		
WED	”		9	”	41	
THUR	”		10	”	42	
FRI	”	11	”	43		
SAT	”	12	”	44-45		
SUN	”	13-14	”	46		

Lesson 380

SEDITION OF MIRIAM AND AARON

MEMORY VERSE: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (**Proverbs 18:21**).

TEXT: Numbers 12:1-16

ur text exposes the depth of human depravity as two eminent leaders - Miriam and Aaron, a prophetess and a high priest respectively are seen entangled in the web of murmuring in the camp of Israel. It also reveals the inner quality of Moses as a true shepherd and helped confirm his call and spiritual leadership.

Miriam and Aaron spoke disparagingly against Moses concerning his marriage and his supposed monopoly of leadership. Their unjust critical comments were heard by the Omniscient God, who reacted swiftly in defence of His servant. The sudden summon and rebuke of Miriam and Aaron, the infliction of leprosy on her, the repentance and the plea of Aaron, the fervent intercession of Moses, and the suspension and restoration of Miriam, present to the church invaluable lessons.

Question 1: *What central lesson does the believer learn from the murmuring of Miriam and Aaron?*

The whole episode teaches that believers should resolutely bridle their tongue and refrain from speaking evil of anyone (Psalm 39:1; Titus 3:2; James 4:11). This is because the wrong use of the tongue violates Christ’s law of love and God’s sovereign authority and right to judge. It needs be emphasized that a disciplined and controlled tongue is essential to Christian maturity, spiritual victory, holy living and peaceful co-existence.

THE SIN OF MURMURING AMONG GOD’S PEOPLE (Numbers 12:1-3; 16:1-11; Acts 6:1; Jude 15,16; 1 Corinthians 10:1-10).

“And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman” (Numbers 12:1). The marriage of Moses to Zipporah, an Ethiopian, which took place before the commencement of his ministry was the real cause of the murmuring of Miriam and Aaron. They cast aspersions on his leadership authority and accused him of monopolizing his office (verse 2). The Hebrew word translated Ethiopian means Cushite or a descendant of Cush, a son of Ham (Genesis 10:6-8; 1 Chronicles 1:8-10). The land in which the descendants of Cush lived was called Ethiopia. Zipporah was considered a Cushite or Ethiopian because she dwelt in the land of Cush in the same sense that Paul called himself a Roman (Acts 22:25-28).

The sin of murmuring is a secret, quiet talk to express annoyance, unhappiness, anger, discontent, dissatisfaction, disagreement, opposition and rebellion. It is an ungodly attitude, unbecoming of God's children. Murmuring alongside lust, idolatry and fornication were the deadly sins that caused the overthrow and destruction of many Israelites on their way to the Promised Land (1 Corinthians 10:1-10).

Question 2: Suggest scriptural attitudes Christians should imbibe instead of murmuring?

There can be no justifiable reasons for murmuring among God's people as it exposes the offender to God's fiery indignation and judgment (Jude 15,16). The response of a Christian in the face of dissatisfaction, discontent or perceived injustice is to rely on God and His promises to take care of him; pray for leaders and members alike; rejoice in the hope of heaven where there shall neither be injustice nor misunderstanding; renew his decision to continue with the Lord irrespective of what may happen (Job 13:15); re-examine his position or desire whether they are carnally or spiritually motivated (Psalm 139:23,24); recognise God's invisible hand at work for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Going the way of Miriam and Aaron, Korah and his company or Absalom is absolutely dangerous and destructive (Numbers 12:1-16; 16:1-35; 2 Samuel 15:1-4).

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Moses did not take steps to defend or vindicate himself and shows why God promptly intervened. Possessing godly character does not secure a person from being spoken against, even by their near relations. Who would have thought that Miriam and Aaron would champion rebellion against Moses? Believers should follow the example of Christ (1 Peter 2:21-23).

GOD'S ATTITUDE TO SIN (Numbers 12:4-9; Psalm 106:13-18,24-27; Numbers 14:26-39; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Matthew 10:26; Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 11:21; 29:1; Isaiah 65:1-7; Numbers 32:23).

Question 3: What lessons do you learn from God's swift response and rebuke of Miriam and Aaron?

“And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out” (verse 4). The Lord heard the murmuring of Miriam and Aaron and summoned them to the tabernacle for accountability. Here we learn that God is jealous for the reputation of His servants. He honours those who leave their defence in His hands. Second, God did not only vindicate His servant, but also praised him. He proved to Miriam and Aaron that Moses was more than an ordinary prophet (Numbers 12:6-8; Deuteronomy 18:18,19). He was a man of proven integrity and fidelity.

Third, there ought to be orderliness in the house of God. The mention of the name of Miriam before Aaron in verse one denotes usurpation, while the order in which God called the three siblings in verse four represents the correct hierarchy of leadership in the camp. This definitely cancels their claim of equality with Moses (verse 2). The Scripture condemns inordinate ambition and carnal comparison among believers (2 Corinthians 10:12,13,17,18).

Fourth, God does not gloss over sin; it follows therefore that true Christians should not. When sin is discovered, Christian service and activities must be suspended until it is dealt with in order to protect God's honour and retain His presence (Joshua 7:10-12). Miriam and Aaron could not be allowed to continue with the divine service among God's people without necessary and appropriate correction. Human labour without divine support and approval will be fruitless, unprofitable and vain (Psalm 127:1).

Fifth, God is no respecter of persons and is of purer eyes than to behold evil (Habakkuk 1:13). He judges sin wherever it is found no matter the personality involved. There are no favourites or untouchables when it comes to matters of maintaining the standard of God's word and holiness in the church. Sixth, there is no greater way God shows His displeasure to His children than the withdrawal of His presence (verse 9; Deuteronomy 23:14; Joshua 7:10-12).

Seventh, the departure of God's presence leaves behind great distress and sometimes grievous diseases (verse 10; 1 Samuel 28:15).

SICKNESS, SHAME AND STAGNATION THROUGH SIN (Numbers 12:10-16; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21; 2 Kings 5:20-27; Proverbs 6:26-33; 5:22; Genesis 49:3,4; I Peter 2:1,2; Hebrews 6:6).

Miriam was smitten instantaneously with leprosy and she became as white as snow. Aaron the high priest diagnosed Miriam as leprous, but instead of pronouncing her as unclean, he pleaded guilty and asked Moses for forgiveness, being conscious that it was the bitter fruit of their murmuring against him. Others who were so punished by God were Gehazi for lying and King Uzziah for proudly intruding into the priest's office. Sin is deadly, no matter the form, shape or size in which it is pictured.

Question 4: *Identify the right attitude and the only option available to sinners and backsliders inside or outside the church?*

The timely surrender, submission and confession of Aaron represent the right attitude and only option available to sinners and backsliders. Instead of advancing reasons for his action like king Saul or endeavouring to cover up like David or becoming proud and angry like King Uzziah, sinners and backsliders must promptly realise their sinful condition (Psalm 51:3), repent of their evil ways (Proverbs 28:13) and quickly return to the Lord (Isaiah 55:6,7; Luke 15:17-24).

Question 5: *What challenge does the response of Moses to the confession and plea of Aaron pose to believers today?*

“And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee...” (verse 13). Moses did not only manifest the spirit of meekness in the face of bitter opposition, but also the virtues of mercy and forgiveness. Like Moses, believers should obey the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to: **“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you”** (Matthew 5:44).

Question 6: *What lessons can Christians learn from the way God delayed the healing of Miriam and ordered her to be shut out from the camp for seven days?*

“And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again” (verse 14). God’s immediate answer to the prayer of Moses exemplifies the efficacy and dependability of a righteous man’s prayer of faith (James 5:16). However, God’s explanation of the delay of Miriam’s healing and her suspension from the camp of Israel for seven days is highly instructive for all Christians, parents and Church leaders in understanding the operations of divine mercy and justice (Psalm 101:1; Hosea 12:6; Micah 6:6-8; Zechariah 7:9; Matthew 23:23). The fact that there is forgiveness or mercy with God does not cancel His righteousness or justice. Though Miriam would be healed, she was to be **“shut out from the camp seven days”**. This was to make her show true penitence for her sin, and make her punishment public so as to serve as a deterrent to others (1 Timothy 5:20).

However, when an individual under discipline shows evidence of genuine repentance, he should be received again to fellowship, lest such a one should be overwhelmed with much sorrow (Numbers 12:14; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Question 7: *Explain how sin can hinder the spiritual progress of a believer or church?*

“And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again” (verse 15). Nothing hinders a Christian’s progress in the way to heaven as sin does. Sin is the greatest and most potent force of stagnation and retardation ever.

A cursory look at scriptures will prove this assertion beyond reasonable doubt. Sin often robs its victims of their birthright (Genesis 49:3,4; 1 Chronicles 5:1,2; Hebrews 12:16,17); hinders spiritual growth, progress and fruitfulness (Hosea 6:4; Numbers 14:33); destroys perseverance, an essential ingredient for spiritual excellence (Genesis 49:3,4); breeds and brings defeat to individuals, families and even nations (Joshua 7:10-12; Psalm 78:9); raises dangerous, contrary storms in the sea of life (Jonah 1:4,11-13); defiles the whole body; is harmful to man and hateful to God.

It is wisdom, therefore, to fear God and depart from evil (Proverbs 3:7).

LESSON 381

TWELVE SPIES SENT TO CANAAN

MEMORY VERSE: “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (**Hebrews 10:38**).

TEXT: Numbers 13:1-25

God, in our text, commanded Moses to send twelve Israelites, heads of the tribes, to go and spy the land of Canaan before their entry and possession of it. This expedition was aimed at encouraging and stimulating the people’s faith on the reality and prospect of Canaan. Well-intentioned, this was a divine strategy that was to be employed to usher in the Israelites into their promised possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, which the scripture calls the “**glory of all lands**”.

Question 1: *Why does God give instructions and strategies to His children?*

God is holy; and He has good purposes for giving us instructions and strategies. “**For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end**” (Jeremiah 29:11). His instructions, guidance or rebuke, when accepted, are to make us continue to discover His faithfulness, omnipotence and other attributes from time to time in different situations. Such revelations or discovery are to edify and strengthen our faith and dependence upon Him. He does not ask man to do anything that will result in his downfall much as He does not want His children to live without stretching

their faith to obtain whatever He has promised them (Ezekiel 36:37; Hebrews 6:12). It is unfortunate, however, that God’s good purposes do not always yield the expected results as we would see in the outcome of this divine assignment in chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Numbers.

THE SELECTION OF TWELVE SPIES (Numbers 13:1-20; Deuteronomy 1:19-40; Numbers 32:8-13; Joshua 2:1).

Question 2: *What lessons can we learn from God’s command to Moses to send spies to Canaan and Moses’ response?*

Here is an account of sending out twelve spies to go and search out the land of Canaan. The commission was an express command and not a sight-seeing event. If God has any assignment to be carried out, He knows whom to send. Wisdom demands that we make ourselves ready for His use. However God does not send strangers to His covenant of promise to carry out His holy purposes. To qualify for His use therefore requires that we turn away from sin unto righteousness.

Question 3: What quality of character is expected of those charged with important responsibilities in the Church?

Those who were chosen for this service were “**rulers among them**” and “**heads of the children of Israel**” (verses 3,4). From each tribe one person was taken. There was good intention in selecting such calibre of people for this important and sensitive assignment. It was intended to give the best result and in accordance with biblical pattern of choosing leaders, such as missionaries, pastors and representatives to take up responsibilities. Nominations should always come from among mature, qualified, tested, proven and trusted hands who have been able to distinguish themselves in previous occasions. Those who lead should not be novices “**lest being lifted up with pride he falls into the**

condemnation of the devil” (1Timothy 3:6; 3:1-13; Acts 6:3-6; 13:1-4; Titus 1:5-9; Exodus 18:21-26).

The prompt submission of those who were selected for this assignment is commendable. All true servants of God bear this essential, indispensable and unmistakable characteristic of prompt, implicit or unquestioning obedience. This is the hallmark of true servanthood. The attitude of struggling with God’s will and word or obeying with reluctance is alien to Christianity. Those who claim to be stubborn children of God and even pride themselves in that appellation are obviously none of His (John 10:27). It is the attitude of prompt and implicit obedience that endears us to God, makes our lives and services pleasing to Him and grants us access to the riches of His grace (Genesis 22:1-3,9-12).

SPIES SENT FORTH WITH A SOLEMN CHARGE (Numbers 13:17-20; 21:32; Joshua 2:1; 7:2; Judges 1:24; 18:2; 1 Samuel 26:4; 2 Samuel 15:10; Luke 20:20; Galatians 2:4; 2 Kings 6:13).

The terms of reference, scope of work or mission statement for the spies was clearly defined and delineated. They were sent into the land of Canaan to “**see the land, what it is**”, that is, to ascertain its present state. Their assignment fell into two main areas of survey; one, to enquire concerning the land itself - whether it is good or bad, and to enquire about the inhabitants - their population, stature, strength and their mode of dwelling. That faith does not necessarily depend on facts does not imply that there are no facts to back up or prove faith. There are innumerable facts and evidences to substantiate our faith. Faith is verifiable. The onus is on doubters and skeptics to come, “**taste and see that the Lord is good**” (Psalm 34:8).

Finally, Moses gave a parting charge to the spies to “**be of good courage and bring of the fruits of the land**” (Numbers 13:20b).

Question 4: What principle is depicted in Moses’ parting charge to the twelve spies and how can we apply it to daily Christian living?

This charge shows that he expected that they should bring back a positive and an encouraging account to the people. In a similar way, believers and ministers of God are expected always to walk by faith and not by sight and to put a positive construction on the most gloomy situations and experiences of life. Mountains are to be seen as miracle opportunities, stumbling blocks as stepping stones, trials as testimony indicators and every cross as a crown in disguise. This is the spirit that conquers which is required for a victorious Christian life (2 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Kings 4:23-26).

All believers do have a commission and charge from the Lord to carry out. Ours is a charge, not to spy any inhabited lands to be physically possessed through physical warfare, but to win souls of men in every land.

Long after Christ ascended to heaven, Paul, the apostle reiterated this charge to Timothy and by extension to every believer as a duty that must be carried out. **“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”** (2 Timothy 4:1,2). If we have tasted of the grace of God and are true children of His, we must believe as well as accept this divine directive.

Accepting the charge to win souls is an evidence of faith in the existence of heaven. Note, however, that we do not need the services of spies to strengthen our faith in the existence of heaven. Heaven is a place Christ has gone to prepare for the redeemed. Apart from His own teaching on heaven, the abiding Spirit of God in us is the earnest of our inheritance. He assures of heaven and sometimes grants us a glimpse of its beauty as described in the holy writ. It is the blessed, eternal abode of God and all blood-washed saints. Hell, on the other hand, is the place of eternal torment for all men who refused to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord.

This was not the first time spies were sent out in scriptures. Moses, Joshua and David used spies as means of investigation (Number 13:1-33; 21:32; Joshua 2:1; 1 Samuel 26:40) while others like Absalom used them to hatch the dethronement of his father. The Pharisees sent spies to entangle and arrest Christ; and false brethren in the Galatian church served as spies to enslave true believers (2 Samuel 15:10; 17:1-17; Luke 20:20; Galatians 2:4).

THE SEARCH OF THE LAND (Numbers 13:21-24; Deuteronomy 1:24,25; Matthew 10:6-11; Acts 26:16-20)

Question 5: *Point out the challenges and encouragement soul-winners can receive from the spies.*

The spies went forth with great zeal and commitment to search out the land. They went through the land from Zin in the south and came to Rehob, near Hamath in the north. From there they came to Hebron, an old city where the burying place of the patriarchs, is situated. They eventually came to a particular brook where they cut a bunch of grapes and other fruits of pomegranates and figs as evidence of the richness of the land and

the faithfulness God. The place was called the brook of Eshcol or “**valley of the cluster**” because of the cluster of grapes which they cut down from there. Their example is a challenge to believers on how to be zealously and enthusiastically committed to our own commission of preaching the gospel. The early disciples also obeyed the great commission with great exactitude. Paul, for instance, declared that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19).

Like these early believers, we need to carry out the great commission with unflagging zeal and commitment. The cluster of grapes and other fruits brought from Eshcol remind believers of the ripened field for harvest and the acute need for harvesters (Matthew

9:36-38; John 4:34-38; Revelation 14:15-18). Like our Master and perfect Example, Jesus Christ, we must be about our Father’s business of soul-winning. We must work while it is day for the night comes when no man can work. Our meat must be “**to do the will of him that sent [us], and to finish his work**” (John 4:34; 9:4; Luke 2:49).

The manner in which they carried out the assignment revealed that Moses’ instruction was clear and well understood. Leaders should learn to communicate divine imperatives to the people in simple, understandable language. Subordinates also should be willing to receive instructions and carry them out.

“**And they returned from searching of the land after forty days**” (Numbers 13:25). Some people are fond of disappearing after tasks assigned to them have been accomplished. They do not see any need to give account of their stewardship to their leaders. But the truth is, the church needs both oral and written reports of its activities for planning and projections. Christians therefore should learn to give reports of assignments and responsibilities given to them.

THE EVIL REPORT OF THE TEN SPIES

MEMORY VERSE: “And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature” (**Numbers 13:32**).

TEXT: Numbers 13:26-33

This study focuses on the evil report of ten of the spies commissioned to preview the land of Canaan, when they returned from Kadesh-Barnea. It took the twelve spies forty days to finish their mission. On their return, they gave report to their leaders, in the presence of the entire congregation of Israel. We notice their exemplary promptness in reporting to their leaders. This is a biblical practice that is characteristic of all true servants of God, both in the Old and New Testaments. This is a challenge to Christians and workers who delay the submission of their reports to the appropriate leaders. Prompt submission of report is a mark of faithfulness, probity and accountability in ministry (1 Corinthians 4:1,2; Matthew 25:14-23).

THE VERACITY AND INFALLIBILITY OF GOD’S WORD (Numbers 13:27; Daniel 7:9; 1 Kings 8:56; Psalm 36:5; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23; Revelation 19:11).

Question 1: *What can believers learn from God’s faithfulness to His Word and what should be our attitude to His promises?*

The report of the spies shows that everything God had told them about the land of Canaan was true. Their uniform testimony was, among other things that “**surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it**”. The cluster of grapes they brought back was a proof of the truth of God’s word. Hundreds of years have passed since He gave “**all the land of Canaan**” geographically described “**from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates**” to Abraham and his seed for “**an everlasting possession**” (Genesis 12:7; 15:7; 17:8; Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 6:10; 31:20). And even when they were in bondage in Egypt, He reiterated His unchanging purpose of setting Israel free and making them to inherit the best of lands. “**And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey...**” (Exodus 3:8). Believers need to realize the fact that even if they are embroiled in a difficult situations and solution is not forthcoming immediately, God still has the best of plans for them. He has a fruitful land, a prosperous business, lucrative job for His children to discover. No matter how long or delayed His promises may seem, He will surely fulfil them at the appropriate time.

When we get to heaven, we shall discover that all that the Bible says concerning the city of God is true (1 Corinthians 2:9).

THE EVIL REPORT OF TEN SPIES (Numbers 13:25-33; Deuteronomy 1:25-33; Luke 10:17-20; Mark 6:30,31)

Question 2: What are the pitfalls believers should avoid from the evil report of the ten spies?

Though they confirmed that God's promise concerning the land was good and that it was flowing with milk and honey, the majority harped on the difficulties they discovered. They considered the walled cities, the giants, and the terrain which they claim "**eateth up the inhabitants thereof**". Thus, ten of the twelve men exaggerated the difficulties and under-estimated God's omnipotence, faithfulness and ability to fulfill His promises. Their evil report brought discouragement to the entire congregation of Israel. They soon forgot all the miracles that God wrought in

the past - the plagues upon the Egyptians, their deliverance and redemption out of Egypt, parting of the Red sea and other miraculous provisions, signs and wonders. Such spectacular and supernatural manifestation of God's presence, power and providence ought to have built in them implicit trust and confidence about what God can do.

The danger of divergent convictions and opinions among believers, especially leaders in the church is underscored here. Just as their evil report dissuaded the people from going on to possess Canaan, unwholesome use of the tongue, especially among leaders can weaken the resolve of members to serve the Lord. Only two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, were courageous enough to challenge the people to move forward. They perceived with eyes of faith that victory was sure, and that they had the Almighty for their defence.

The Bible charges us to be of the same mind and be united in the faith. Caleb and Joshua represent an uncompromising stand for the true faith in the midst of a decaying religious world. They show us that true Christians must dare to stand and be separate from the world. He should not follow the multitude to do evil. His motto must be: "**Others may, I cannot**". The Church must not compromise with the world.

The subtle process of unbelief and the destructive effects of working by sight are all too obvious in their evil report. The problem of the ten spies had to do with what they saw, felt, thought, concluded and confessed. Their confession here is a contradiction of their foregoing witness to God's faithfulness (verse 27). Walking by sight tends to becloud and belittle our vision of God's power while it magnifies our vision of the little problems on the way. Granted that they saw correctly as men, they had no excuse for their unbelief.

There were other more obvious facts which they could have considered to stimulate their faith and banish unbelief and fear. These are: the great number of effective and united men that constituted the large hosts of Israel; the presence of Moses their wise, brave and divinely anointed leader and commander-in-chief; the tokens of God's presence with them; the great manifestations of God's power among them against their enemies; the peculiar promises of victory and success

made to them in their wars against the Canaanites (Genesis 15:18; 17:8; Exodus 33:2; 23:30).

Even if the Canaanites were actually stronger than they, they would not be stronger than the God of Israel. Though their cities were walled against Israel, they were not walled against heaven. The Egyptians, the Amalekites and other nations that were mightier had before this time been defeated and discomfited by the God of Israel. How would He not assist them now to defeat the Canaanites?

There is need for wisdom, tact and caution in leadership. The gathering of the whole congregation to listen to the report of the spies on their return was quite untactful on the part of Moses their leader. Had they been called apart to rehearse their findings and experiences on the field, just as Jesus did when the apostles returned from their mission field, the ugly scenario created with its unmitigated evil consequences could have been avoided. Moses would have most likely contained and resolved the contradictory reports behind doors than he unsuccessfully tried to do publicly.

Question 3: *What lessons can we learn from the attitude and lot of the spies that brought the evil report?*

This attitude and lot of the ten spies teach believers some important lessons: one, when God appoints the way of duty, we must beware of allowing our minds to dwell on the difficulties to be encountered. Two, we must be careful not to underestimate God's promise and ability to aid us in the course of His service. To be negative, cold, faithless or fearful because of difficulties has the capacity to weaken the hands and cripple the feet of both the leaders and the laity. Three, we should avoid exaggerating the true position of problems or issues. Four, we should develop the habit of confronting and countering negative or challenging situations by faith.

We see also the folly of the erroneous doctrine of eternal security which falsely teaches that once saved always saved. The spies were selected originally as faithful men, but the majority of them later proved unfaithful. That is why every leader is called upon to take heed unto himself first and to the doctrine. **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"** (1 Corinthians 10:12). This was the secret of Paul's success, safety and security in the faith and in ministry (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Preachers also need to understand that the truths of Scripture have to be carried out with faith, not unbelief. While the ten spies concentrated on the problems they saw with their physical eyes, Caleb and Joshua repeatedly referred to the word and promise of God. The first group believed in the conquering power of the enemy as their confession revealed and were conquered while the minority of the faith-filled believed in the infallibility and omnipotence of God and they overcame and possessed the land. The difference is that the first group was empty of God's word and promises while the second had it. The first group walked by sight having forgotten the past deeds of the Lord.

THE GOOD REPORT OF THE TWO SPIES (Numbers 13:30; Hebrews 11:1; Romans 10:10; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Romans 4:17; 2 Corinthian 4:18)

Question 4: *What lesson can the believer learn from the life of Caleb?*

Faith, the opposite of fear, is **“the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”**. Joshua and Caleb were people of faith; and it showed in their positive confession challenging the multitude to act on God’s age-long promise by possessing the land of Canaan. They sought to overwrite unbelief and negative impressions on their minds with confession of faith. **“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it”** (Numbers 13:30). It is so unfortunate that people who have been suffering through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, **“through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt”** (Jeremiah 2:6) have come to birth and there is no strength (of faith) to bring forth. If this is the picture of your life, receive the challenge of faith in God and His promises from Caleb. Just as unbelief is revealed in a man’s confessions so also does our confession betray our faith. With the heart man believes but with the mouth faith is confessed

Romans 10:10). Caleb considered and set his heart on the promises and power of God rather than on the facts they saw in Canaan. He counted on God’s faithfulness in the past and was strongly persuaded that He was able to do it again. He relied on God’s own ability as the basis for their own ability. He called those things that be not as though they were (Romans 4:17). He did not keep quiet and allow the clamour of unbelief to silence the voice of faith. He spoke and shouted out his faith to stop the mouth of the gainsayers and skeptics (2 Corinthians 4:18). We must earnestly contend for the faith. Let the world know where you stand!

We see how faith distinguishes a man. The faith of Caleb and Joshua marked them out as unique and extraordinary. By faith, they pleased God and obtained a good report that they wholly followed the Lord (Hebrews 11:2, 6; Deuteronomy 1:36). In a world of unbelief and ungodliness we can stand out as a special stock through our faith.

Question 5: *Who are the real “giants” and “grasshoppers” today?*

The ten spies were so chicken-hearted and fear-filled that they described their enemies as more powerful than they were. **“And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight”** (Numbers 13:33). It was an act of cowardice for them to confess that their enemies were giants while they were grasshoppers that can be trodden under the feet. This self-defeat is a product of the blindness of unbelief in the omnipotence of God. This negative example of Israel in the story is so monumental that allusions are made to it severally in scripture (Deuteronomy 1:19-40; Psalms 95:7-11; Hebrews 3:7-11).

Believers must be careful and watchful to draw the line between words of faith and those expressing unbelief in God. We must be wary of the kind of words we hear, the kind of preachers we listen to, the kind of books we read so that our faith is not destroyed while our hearts are infected and contaminated with unbelief. As faith comes by hearing the word of God, unbelief also comes by hearing the words of men.

Question 6: *Point out some instances in the Bible where promises of God have been fulfilled and the lessons believers can learn from it?*

Some people have taken it upon them to preach and write about the impossibility of being born again, sanctified, and living a holy lifestyle. Much as they are guilty of adding and subtracting from the Word of God and would suffer divine judgement, those who believe them and fail to possess these requisite spiritual experiences will suffer the same fate with them. All spiritual experiences promised in the Bible can be obtained through prayer and faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. **“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”** (1 Thessalonians 5:23,24). God’s promise to the believer of entering the promised land is sure. So, be prepared. Repent of your sins, receive Christ as Saviour and Lord and live a prayerful, watchful and holy lifestyle to qualify to spend eternity with God in heaven. While waiting for Christ’s return, we must be careful with the confessions of our mouth. This is because **“death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof”** (Proverbs 18:21).

THE PLOT TO ARREST CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: **“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed...”** (Psalm 2:1,2).

TEXT: John 11:47-54

Our lesson introduces us to the diabolical plot of the chief priests and the Pharisees to arrest and kill Christ. This wicked plan stemmed from the miracle which Christ performed at Bethany when He raised Lazarus from death. On hearing the account of this miracle from some informants, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in council to consider what to do with Christ. Not even the prophetic statement of Caiaphas, the High Priest, on Christ’s sacrificial death for the nation of Israel and, by extension, the whole world could dissuade them. Christ, upon learning of their evil intention to put Him to death before His appointed time, withdrew to a solitary city of Ephraim where He continued with His disciples.

Question 1: *What lessons do we learn from the rising up of the Jewish religious leaders against Christ and His ministry?*

The possibility of our suffering similar opposition is clear as the disciple is not greater than His Lord. Christ’s response in this situation presents useful patterns for believers who face persecution, opposition, ridicule and threat to their lives. Besides, there will never be a time when we shall be able to please everybody. Therefore, wisdom demands that we seek to please God rather than

men. And just as Christ continued with His soul-saving ministry in spite of the persecution He suffered, we should not be surprised, disappointed or cease to do right when our good deeds are misunderstood or repaid with evil.

PLAN TO HALT CHRIST'S PROGRESS (John 11:47,48; 5:16; 7:25-30; Luke 4:28-31; Mark 3:1-7; Matthew 12:14, 15; Psalm 2:1,2).

“Then gathered the Chief Priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? ... if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him ...” The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was fast gaining ground and His fame spreading abroad much more than the sects that existed before His advent. Right from the time of John the Baptist the testimony of the gospel is that **“the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it”** (Luke 16:16). The raising of Lazarus from death after four days in the grave had also turned Mary's house into a religious tourist attraction where many of the Jews who went there to confirm the miracle themselves also believed on the Lord. Indeed, the impact of the gospel of Christ had spread round the entire regions of Judea and Jerusalem and the authorities were no longer comfortable with the emerging new faith. As a result, they consulted together to try to destroy the arrowhead of the revival. These religious bigots did not know however, that God was no longer pleased with their hypocrisy and false worship and had come down to save and deliver His people. How foolish they were! They thought that they could curtail the spread of the gospel that did not originate from man. Gamaliel was later to tell us that it was an impossible task to try to hinder the preaching of the gospel. At the Sanhedrin, he said, **“Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men... Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God”** (Acts 5:35,38,39).

When Saul began to persecute the church in an attempt to hinder the spread of the gospel, Christ, the Owner of the message, confronted him on the way to Damascus and **“said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”** (Acts 9:5). Eventually, he got converted and became a preacher of the same gospel he tried to hinder. The joy of the believer then is that Christ is indomitable and His gospel irresistible!

As the news of Christ's prominence filtered into the ears of the Jewish religious lords, they quickly gathered a council. This presents a picture of what religious leaders and people still do. They call meetings to deliberate on how to oppose or contain the spread of the pure gospel. Such meetings are held out of fear of the outcome of the effects of the truth which are: one, the gospel has a liberating effect on people. It sets men free from the bondage of ignorance. Two, it opens the eyes of those who are spiritually blind, making them wise unto salvation. Three, it delivers people from slavish fear and religious dogma. Four, it sets men's feet on the path of scriptural conviction.

Question 2: What challenge can the believer receive from the plot to arrest Christ?

The action and confession of the Jewish leaders in summoning the council is quite instructive. They said: **“if we let him thus alone, all men will**

believe on him” (John 12:48). This is an acknowledgement of the power of the gospel message: that it can make all men believe. An attempt to exclude anyone or group of people from hearing the gospel for whatever reason is tantamount to belittling the power of the gospel. The Scripture declares that the gospel **“is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”** and that God **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (Romans 1:16; 1 Timothy 2:4). But Satan will not sit idly and allow soul-winners snatch his children without any form of resistance.

The drive and commitment with which these Jewish religious leaders went about their action and conviction are quite challenging. Believers should sacrifice more for the spread of the gospel than unbelievers are willing to sacrifice to hinder its spread.

Question 3: Identify the two primary concerns of the Jewish religious leaders that informed their gathering a council. What was their main objective?

These Jewish leaders had two primary concerns: one is religious and the other political. They wanted to guard their religious position which was in danger of being eroded as Christ became more prominent and accepted by the common people. They also feared that they may lose their nation to the Romans if their citizens embraced a gospel which advocated peace and love for enemies rather than force and violence. Propelled by these two concerns, they gathered a council for the sole objective of getting rid of the Messiah and halting His message. In this, we find that workers of darkness would always oppose the children of light. Those who profit from sin and deception would do everything possible to truncate the advance and progress of the truth. Therefore, the righteous should not count it strange when they are persecuted or opposed by the unrighteous. The Scriptures rightly declare that, **“he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now”**. **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (Galatians 4:29; 2 Timothy 3:12). It is certain that since the world antagonized our Master, they will do the same to us (John 15:18-20).

Instances of persecution of the righteous because they attempted to turn men from institutionalized falsehood abound in the scriptures. The silversmiths in Ephesus moved the whole city into an uproar against the disciples because of selfish concern to save their idolatrous business (Acts 19:23-29). Also, the masters of a damsel possessed with the spirit of divination caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers and magistrates saying, **“These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city”** (Acts 16:19) when they suddenly discovered that the hope of their illicit gain was gone if they allowed these ministers to continue their gospel crusade.

Paul himself testified that they had no little trouble in Asia because of oppositions and persecutions **“insomuch that [they] despaired even of life”** (2 Corinthians 1:8). We should beware lest we be discouraged because of oppositions to the gospel and quit our duty post.

THE PROPHECY OF THE HIGH PRIEST (John 11:49-52; Acts 4:23-28; Psalm 2:1-3; John 16:2,3).

It is instructive to learn that the persecution Christ went through was in line with what was written concerning Him. Caiaphas the high priest, prophesied that **“it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”** (verse 50). He said further **“that Jesus should die for that nation and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad”** (verses 50,51). Caiaphas’ declaration did not originate within his human reasoning because he spoke **“not of himself”**.

Question 4: State any three lessons from the prophetic declaration made by Caiaphas concerning Christ?

Several lessons can be derived from this prophetic declaration by the high priest concerning Christ, namely: that God is not stereotyped or limited in His choice of vessels when communicating divine truth or warning to humanity; that it is His will that Christ should die for the sins of the whole world; and that the challenge of evangelizing and reconciling men to Christ remains largely unaccomplished even today.

PRECAUTION DURING CHRIST’S PERSECUTION (John 11:53,54; Matthew 10:16-23; John 5:10-13; 7:1; 2 Corinthians 11:32,33; Acts 9:22-25; 23:12-31; Jeremiah 40:7-16; 41:1-4).

“Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples”.

Question 5: What lesson do we learn from our Lord’s withdrawal from open ministry to the Jews when His life was being sought?

While we are to endure persecutions in the course of spreading the message of salvation, we are at the same time expected to fulfil our days and ministry on earth. This is where believers need to apply wisdom. Jesus knew He yet had a ministry to accomplish. He was yet to enter Jerusalem triumphantly to glorify God and draw the world after Him (John 12:12-19). He was to be at the feast of the Passover where He would minister to the Greeks who had come for worship (John 12:20-28). It was therefore wise for Him to relocate from the place of danger to a safer place and still continue His ministry, this time, specifically, to His disciples. In another instance, He resorted to Galilee when ministry to the Jews became hazardous to His life (John 7:1).

In sending out His disciples to the mission field, Jesus counselled them to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves, adding that they should flee to other cities when ministry becomes hazardous in a particular place (Matthew 10:16-23). Apostle Paul in keeping with the same spirit was let down in a basket through a window in order to save his life from his persecutors (Acts 9:22-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32,33). Again, when he got information that about 40 Jews were planning to kill him before his trial, he quickly communicated it to the civil authorities and was delivered (Acts 23:12-31). Therefore, it is not cowardice or

unbelief to take precaution in times of danger or fatal opposition (Proverbs 22:3).

Question 6: *What is the possible consequence of a believer's failure to take precaution in a life-threatening situation?*

It is foolishness and not faith to defy warnings of danger in the course of ministry or service, when the believer's life is threatened. The consequences can be grave if we fail to take caution. King Gedaliah died prematurely along with several others in the treacherous hands of Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah because he doubted and failed to make use of privileged information regarding his safety (Jeremiah 40:7-41).

God knows the end from the beginning and will caution His faithful servants of dangers ahead so that we can enjoy His good promise of fulfilling our days on earth. Our part in the appropriation of His promises is to wisely heed the warning that He reveals to us.

Lesson 384

CHRIST HONOURED AT A SUPPER

MEMORY VERSE: "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (**John 12:3**).

TEXT: John 12:1-11

he fame of Christ had spread following His miraculous ministry, this time, in Bethany, occasioned by the raising of Lazarus to life in the previous chapter. The event heightened the religious leaders' envy and antagonism against His public ministry in Judea. The fact that several attempts had been made on His life to no avail (John 7:30; 7:44; 8:59; 10:39; 11:47,48; 11:53), the raising of Lazarus to life provided another opportunity to plot His elimination. In this, we learn that no matter the devices of the enemy against God-appointed and faithful messengers, such devices cannot prosper (Proverbs 19:21).

In spite of earlier attempts on His life, Christ returned again to Bethany, which was situated on the east side of mount Olives, about two miles east of Jerusalem. Towards the close of His ministry, He went six days ahead to the town of Bethany in order to prepare for the feast of the Passover. How we need to seek the face of God as part of our preparation for Christian meetings, especially large ones like retreats, congresses and crusades so as to receive the best from the Lord (Proverbs 16:1-3).

Christ knew the occasion would afford Him the opportunity to make the gospel known to multitudes of people who would gather for the feast in Jerusalem. What a lesson we ought to learn from the Master: to employ every occasion and opportunity to reach the lost souls with the gospel of Christ!

CHRIST'S VISIT TO BETHANY AND ANOINTING BY MARY (John 12:1-3; Matthew 21:17 John 11:18; Matthew 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-38).

Question 1: *State the reasons that occasioned Christ's constant visit to Bethany?*

Like His mission from heaven to earth is not without purpose, Christ's moves and actions were intended to achieve specific purposes. Bethany provided opportunity to fulfill His ministry to seek and save the lost (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10). Two, it provided a lodging for Him and His disciples after the day's activities in the city of Jerusalem (Mark 11:1,11,12). Three, Mary and Martha, sisters to Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, had their residence there; the family greatly loved the Lord (Luke 10:38-40). Four, because of its nearness to Jerusalem, Christ could easily resort there as a quiet and serene place for privacy and meditation (John 11:18). Five, it is the house of Simon the leper where He was anointed with a very precious ointment (Matthew 26:6-13). Suffice it to state here that Simon the leper, though despised and rejected by the people and the religious class, must have received

a miracle of healing from his leprosy (Matthew 26:6). The Lord had compassion on him and removed the object of his ridicule and contempt.

Six, we see also that Christ's ascension after His resurrection took place at Bethany. **"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven"** (Luke 24:50,51). Finally, we note that Christ will appear on mount Olives at His second coming, while Bethany, on the east, will reverberate again (Zechariah 14:4).

Question 2: *What makes Mary's act a unique one?*

The ointment of spikenard which Mary used to anoint Christ was a very expensive, fragrant substance. It was said to be worth a year's wage when valued in comparison with what people earn in those days. But she did not count this too much to be given to the Lord.

Spikenards bore the seal of royalty and were used to anoint kings and princes. Mary must have understood this knowing that Jesus is the King of kings and the great Redeemer.

Question 3: *What challenge can believers receive from Mary's selfless act?*

It is illustrative and instructive that the action of Mary in anointing Christ with a very costly substance portrays an utmost service and every believer should be willing to do likewise. She did not count the cost of the sacrifice, but gave her best to her Lord who redeemed her from sin and shown her mercy and love. Her act also served to appreciate Christ's love for her family. Little wonder, that Christ acknowledged and commended her selfless act with a universal memorial promise: **"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her"** (Mark 14:9).

Mary must have considered also that Christ's bestowals were worth more than her choicest treasure; therefore, she offered her best. We notice again that she wiped the Lord's feet with the hair on her head. She employed that which was every woman's ornament and pride to clean the dirtiest part of the body instead of a towel. Believers can surrender and sacrifice their highest pride to the One who loves them before the foundation of the world.

In pouring the ointment to anoint Jesus against the day of His burial, Mary's action also signifies God's anointing upon Christ, whose **"name is as ointment poured forth"** (Songs 1:3). It was an emblem of the sweet savour of Christ, anointed by the Father with the oil of gladness to minister life to a world scorched by sin (Hebrews 1:9).

Mention is made here also of the act of Martha whose character it is to serve. It is as though she is given to acts of hospitality and would go out of her way

to serve. In her previous encounter with the Lord when Lazarus was sick, she was found to be "cumbered" with much serving. We also should not be weary in serving the Lord and His people no matter our position in the society or church. Jesus says, **"whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant"**.

Question 4: *What impact did Mary's sitting at Christ's feet have on those who came to hear Him?*

Mary was at three different times at Christ's feet: for instruction (Luke 10:39), for comfort (John 11:32) and for service (John 12:3). She enjoyed being in Christ's presence because in His presence she found joy, comfort and peace. When we cultivate the habit of coming into the presence of the Lord always, we shall have the blessed assurance of beholding His glory (John 17:24). We shall be secure and protected from the prying eyes of the enemy. In His presence, we shall receive comfort and assurance in our sorrows. In His presence, we feel the joy of His love and the peace our soul longs for. When Christ abides with us, we have no fear and we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death. With Him in us, by us and with us, we can climb every mountain, cross every bridge, fight every battle, conquer every enemy and suffer no hurt. None comes to Him without a touch of His power and transformation.

CRITICISING A NOBLE ACT (John 12:4-6; Matthew 12:34; 1 Corinthians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Acts 8:18-24; 1 Timothy 6:10).

While Jesus commended the unqualified act of Mary, we find it strange that one of His disciples saw it from an opposite perspective and considered it a waste of valuable resources.

Question 5: *What lesson should a believer learn from the life of Judas Iscariot, and what should be our prayer in making choices?*

The critical attitude and comment of Judas Iscariot about the spikenard was a facade, which could not cover the motive of his heart. His purported concern for the poor was a veneer to conceal his covetousness and greed. In actual fact, he craved a bigger purse to enable him satisfy his propensity to steal. Thus, his action became a contradiction to his profession. He spoke thus, not because he cared for the needy, but **"because he was a thief"**. He was judgmental because he had temporal inclination and saw nothing worthwhile in the Christ-honouring act of a woman who counted nothing too expensive for the Lord. Though a professed disciple, his life fell far short of a Christian or someone who had tasted the grace that is in Christ. Judas stands tall in the company of the mixed multitude 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).

Judas' betrayal of Christ was just a question of time and his subsequent moves reveal his true motive and incurable greed. Those who hold positions of responsibility in the church should be careful not to abuse the privilege or make merchandise of God's people. They should make faithfulness the bedrock of their service so as to receive at the end of life, not the Lord's rebuke and frown but His reward and favour.

Judas Iscariot was a hypocrite whose love for money towers above his conscience and commitment to righteousness. His heart was so seared with a hot iron and his conscience so deadened that he was not afraid to make a hypocritical comment before Him who searches all hearts and knows the secret

motions of men (Hebrews 4:13). But Christ knew he was a traitor who would shortly put a paltry 30 pieces of silver on His head (Matthew 26:14-16).

It is fearful that in spite of Christ's knowledge of Judas' motive and dishonesty, He said nothing about it. Similarly, when we choose to willingly live in sin, God may not immediately bring about judgment. It may be that He is allowing us sufficient opportunity to make right our ways and return to Him. Therefore, we should not spurn His longsuffering or take His patience for granted. Those who do will soon discover that their "**judgment now for a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not**" (2 Peter 2:3). How we should ensure we maintain a life of self-accountability and probity.

Simon the sorcerer had a similar disposition towards money and was rebuked by the apostle Peter (Acts 8:18-24). It is the practice of false professors to frown at the holy zeal of others in order to discourage them. Anyone harbouring Iscariot's spirit becomes an offence to the Kingdom of God he or she professes to possess.

There are great lessons to learn from these, first, we should shun all acts of greed, covetousness and love of money. Second, we should hold the things of this world - wealth, riches, honour or position - with loose hands. Third, we must constantly ask the Holy Spirit to search our heart and life for any hidden motive, thoughts or desires which tend to lead astray. Fourth, we should quickly repent when we discover that we have gone away from the will of God. Fifth, we must ask God to build in us the strength of character and integrity so as to stand out in the face of temptations.

CHRIST, OUR DEFENCE AND ADVOCATE (John 12:7,8; Psalms 7:10; 59:16; 89:18; Matthew 12:2-6; 15:2-5; Revelation 12:10; 1 John 2:1).

The Lord's verdict to Judas' criticism was: "**Let her alone....**" Christ came into the world, not to condemn, but to save those who are lost and oppressed by the devil. His mission is to defend the weak in mind, the sick in body and those battered, bruised and abused by the enemy.

Since the devil can never see anything good in God's children, so do his servants. Fault-finding, false accusation and disparagement are their stocks-in-trade (Revelation 12:10). We should be careful how we react to the good works people engage in for the sake of God's Kingdom.

Christ defended the woman's action so that she needed not say a word in self-defence. He stood in the gap to take the assault thrown at her. God had always been the defence of His people whenever the enemy comes to assail. He will never allow the "accuser of the brethren" swallow us up or destroy our faith even when we are weak. "**For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king**" (Psalm 89:18). We have an Advocate in Christ who pleads our case and defends us before the Father whenever the enemy accuses us falsely (1 John 2:1). As children of God, we need not fear what people say nor should we be weary in well-doing as long as we are given to good works for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Our Lord knows the motives within us and our service of sacrifice for righteousness sake.

What Mary did was justified by the Lord, and accepted as kindness and token of her goodwill. This implies that whatsoever good we do in the name of Christ for the expansion of His Kingdom should be promptly done, knowing that no work will go unnoticed and unrewarded.

Aside of the command to “let” the woman alone, Christ hinted also that His death and burial were nigh and that Mary had done this great thing against that day without knowing it. The Lord can lead His children to perform acts whose meaning and effect may be for a time to come. Whatever we have opportunity to do for the Lord now should be done promptly with eternity in view; there is time for everything (verse 8).

Question 6: *What should be the believer’s attitude when persecution comes because of our testimony of salvation, healing and deliverance?*

CONSULTATION TO KILL LAZARUS (John 12:9-11; 11:47; Matthew 5:11,12).

While Christ and Lazarus were being appreciated and honoured at the Supper, the chief priests and the elders plot to kill Lazarus because his life had become a testimony which had drawn much people to believe in Christ. It is clear that these religious fanatics belong to the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection; therefore, they felt obliged to get rid of any evidence that was contrary to their doctrine. They reasoned that if they did nothing about the notable miracle, they would soon lose their followership and the means of their trade would be jeopardized. Enemies of the gospel had always reasoned this way because of their hypocrisy and desire to make merchandise of the people (Acts 4:15-18; 19:25-27). They were prepared to deny the convincing evidence of Christ’s miracle in raising Lazarus to life.

If the chief priests and the council were really concerned about righteousness and the life to come, they would have been persuaded by the raising of Lazarus to life. If they believed not other miracles by Christ, this singular one should have persuaded them; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled which says “**neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead**” (Luke 16:31). They were determined to suppress the truth though they have heard from the eyewitnesses (John 12:17,18), “**for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it**” (Acts 4:16).

Genuine miracles bring about thanksgiving for God’s goodness and elicit faith in those who may not otherwise believe. Miracles are designed by God to draw men to Himself; they have been a strategic tool in confounding skeptics and bringing doubters to their knees. In addition, miracles serve as powerful witnesses for those who are true ministers of Christ. Through miracles, the sureness of God’s word is confirmed (Psalm 93:5). As we go about to preach the gospel, let us seek the demonstration of God’s power to the intent those who are otherwise unwilling to believe might encounter the touch of the Almighty (Acts 4:33).

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

MEMORY VERSE: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (**Zechariah 9:9**).

Our lesson this week deals with the story of Christ riding triumphantly to Jerusalem. This event is so significant that all the four gospels recorded it (Matthew 21:1-11,15-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-16). The triumphal entry conveys the Kingship of Christ and bespeaks His dignity, honour, dominion, power and authority. Christ, the long expected Messiah was joyfully received by the crowd, made up of different groups with different expectations of who the Messiah should be. This great event fulfils the Scripture (Zechariah 9:9). If His triumphal entry is fulfilled to the letter to make men believe Christ is King, it is certain then that His millennial reign is sure. The sinner needs to ask for salvation, the backslider should seek to be restored and the believer should pray for more grace to be able to reign with Christ in the end.

The text also reveals the great influence of Christian testimony, as a mammoth crowd came to Jesus as a result of the witnesses of the miracle of raising Lazarus to life. Even certain Greeks “**who came up to worship at the feast**” did not get lost in the euphoria of the Jewish feast but made personal efforts to seek Jesus. What a great challenge to us not to withhold our testimony of conversion and unmerited blessings, as these are capable of drawing multitudes to Christ. The attitude of these Greeks is equally an indictment to those

who just come into religious gathering but lack the desire to have personal encounter with Christ.

THE ROYAL TRAIN AND RECEPTION OF THE KING OF KINGS (John 12:12-15; Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118:26; Zechariah 9:9).

“On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (verses 12,13).

The whole city was moved at the news of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. This great multitude was made up mainly of the country people and not the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Part of the crowd may be those who greatly admired the ministry and personality of Christ, while others are devout Jews who came earlier to Jerusalem to purify themselves in readiness for the feast of Passover. We learn here that nearness to the temple and people of God does not necessarily mean a right relationship with the Lord of the temple. Also, we discover that God has chosen the weak and foolish things

of this world to manifest His glory, as the multitudes were not made up of great men and rulers, but the common people (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Question 1: *What lessons can we learn from the fact that the crowd which joyfully welcomed Christ was the common people?*

The glorious reception given Christ by the people teaches us some important lessons. One, their expression of love and affection was spontaneous and enthusiastic. They “**took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Lord**” (verse 13). We should be zealous and passionate in the service and worship of God rather than manifest cold, nonchalant attitude in matters relating to the Kingdom of God. The people’s enthusiastic reception exemplifies the wholeheartedness, excitement and readiness with which

believers and even sinners should attend to Christ, respond to His message and accord Him the honour due to Him.

Two, true worship of God demands the giving of our substance, talents and resources as the multitudes did not count their garments too precious to be spread in the way for Christ to walk over. “**And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way**” (Matthew 21:8). Christ commands us to release personal effects to meet the needs of fellow brethren and use our resources for the propagation of the gospel so He can be glorified.

The jubilant crowd “**took branches of palm trees**” (verse 13) to welcome Jesus Christ. The palm tree is an emblem of victory and triumph (Revelation 7:9). To cast flowers or garlands before warriors returning from victory or kings entering into their kingdom was a way of honour and testimony of triumph. Christ conquered principalities and powers through His sacrificial death on the cross (Colossians 2:15). He is our Captain who has gone before us to fight our battles.

The shout of “**Hosanna: blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord**” is an acknowledgement that the promised Messiah and rightful King of Israel has come. The word “hosanna” means, “save now” or “save, I beseech thee”. By this the people prayed that the kingdom of Christ should come in its power and deliver them from foreign domination. It was a plea that the Almighty God might deliver them through His promised Messiah.

Christ’s use of an ass as against a horse, to ride into Jerusalem is a demonstration of His meekness and humility and shows that His kingdom is not of this world. It denotes His peaceful and not war-like nature, though He is the King of kings. Called to be conformed to Christ, the believer needs to learn to be meek, lowly and peaceful.

Question 2: *What necessary preparations must believers make to be partakers of Christ’s coming kingdom?*

The people trooped out with joy and jubilant expectation as soon as they heard that Jesus was coming. Likewise, tidings of His imminent second coming should awaken believers to prepare to meet Him. Like the five wise virgins, we must prepare to meet the Bridegroom at rapture with our lamps trimmed and our lights burning. This we can do by maintaining daily victory over temptations and all the wiles of the devil, winning souls into the kingdom, edifying the body of Christ and, maintaining a life of holiness both in private and public.

RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY (John 12:16; Zechariah 9:9; Isaiah 9:6,7; Matthew 2:1,2,13,14; Luke 2:8-11; John 18:37,36; 6:14,15).

Although the multitudes and the disciples did not initially understand the full import of this great event, they were fulfilling prophecy. They did not know that the grand reception accorded Christ during His entry to Jerusalem was symbolic of His ultimate victory on the Cross and a preview of His coming Kingdom. In retrospect, the Old Testament sheds light on it and the disciples were expected to be conversant with this truth. But it was not until Christ was glorified that the pieces of the puzzle fitted together and they began to understand. There are some truths of scriptures that some people may not immediately understand. This should not bring discouragement in the heart of Bible teachers. They need to depend upon God as well as pray that He opens the understanding of those who listen to the message of the word (Luke 24:45).

Believers should study the whole Scripture in order to avoid being ignorant of what has been written. They should equally form the habit of remembering the truths they have learnt or have been taught. As part of efforts to ensure we are not forgetful of vital truths of the word of God, Christians should cultivate the habit of listening attentively during the teaching of God's word; taking down notes of sermons; praying in the message; reading and reviewing their notes from time to time; meditating on the Word; and relying on the Holy Spirit whose ministry it is to "**bring all things to (our) remembrance**" (John 14:26).

Question 3: Highlight the significance of the triumphal entry of Christ?

Christ's triumphal entry is significant in many respects. First, it is an authentication of His Messiahship. Zechariah captures Him as "having salvation" to offer to the world (Zechariah 9:9). The angel of the Lord also announced and confirmed Him as the "**Saviour, which is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:11). Second, it serves to show the kingship of Christ (John 12:15). His sovereignty is an indisputable fact that runs through the entire scriptures. "**For unto us a child is born... and the government shall be upon his shoulder...**" (Isaiah 9:6,7). He himself acknowledged this fact before Pilate while He was being interrogated (John 18:37) and made it clear that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). To this end, He did not

meddle in the politics of this world. Even when the Jews attempted to coronate Him by force, He declined. In like manner, believers should be alert and sensitive to discern any attempt by the people of this world to lead them away from the will of God.

THE RESULTS OF POWERFUL CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY (John 12:17-22; 1:35-42; 4:29,30,39-42; Mark 10:46,47,51,52; 5:18-20; 6:7,12-16; 2 Kings 5:1-9,14; Joshua 2:9-11).

Question 4: *What do we learn from the way the multitudes came together to meet Christ during His triumphal entry?*

“The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle” (John 12:17,18).

Multitudes of people responded to the powerful testimony of those who had witnessed the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from death. It was through this effective witness that news of His presence reverberated in and around Jerusalem. Those who otherwise would not have listened to Him responded because they heard

from the witnesses who had receive His divine, life-saving touch. This teaches us that our testimonies of God’s great power and saving grace are needed to bring multitudes into the Kingdom. When we publish abroad the marvelous works of Christ, sinners will turn to Him and be saved; some will not believe until they see signs and wonders.

However, the teeming crowd that gathered to see Christ became a great threat to the Pharisees insomuch that they could not withhold their frustration and helplessness. Their fears found expression in the statement **“...Perceive ye how ye prevailed nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after him”** (John 12:19). The people of the world can do little to prevent the spreading of the gospel if believers, energized and empowered by the Holy Spirit perform their responsibility with sustained zeal and aggressiveness.

Of peculiar significance is the far-reaching extent of the effect and influence of the news of Christ’s presence in Jerusalem. Certain curious Greeks among the pilgrims who came for the feast were attracted to Him. They came with a deep hunger and desire to see Jesus. These events uniformly attest to the effects or results of Christian testimony by true believers engaged in propagating the power of Christ. Powerful and convincing preaching of the gospel arouses interest and attention. We can so preach Christ that even skeptics would desire to see Him.

Question 5: *Mention some examples of the positive effects of Christian testimony?*

Examples abound in the scriptures of effective witnesses whose testimonies brought tremendous results. First, is the testimony of John the

Baptist who pointed his disciples to Christ (John 1:35-40). Second, the woman of Samaria at the well brought the whole city to Christ because she testified that she had met the Messiah (John 4:28,29). Third, the demoniac of Decapolis, went and published the news of Christ's power throughout the city. As a result, Christ was gladly received by the same people who had earlier sent him out of their city (Luke 8:39,40).

These examples challenge believers today to be zealously affected and enthusiastically committed to the proclamation of the gospel. We should be upbeat about evangelism and sharing of the glad tidings as this is the only way sinners can be saved and escape eternal damnation. When we sincerely and effectively preach the gospel, publicize important programmes of the church, like retreats or crusades and persuasively invite people to attend, they will come and be saved or healed (Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15,16). Powerful Christian testimonies also awaken the dead conscience of hardened sinners.

Drawn by the beauty and brilliance of Christ's life and miraculous ministry and amplified by fervent testimony, the people's earnestness and sincerity in seeking to see Christ indicts the lukewarm and carnally contented believer. Christians need to be passionate about seeing, knowing and experiencing more of Jesus. Such holy heart-hunger and pursuit require setting aside time daily and concentrating on God and communing with Him in His word and prayer.

Lack of hunger to experience more of God is the bane of present-day Christians and Christianity. A shallow Christian life is such that does not see any need to experience more of God. Obviously, the self-satisfied (rich) will remain spiritually empty of grace and barren of fruits of righteousness. **"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away"** (Luke 1:53).

David, in the Old Testament, illustrated his quest for God with a hart's restless search for water brooks to satisfy its thirst (Psalm 42:1-2). Men who have been useful for God in the Bible and in contemporary times were those who were incessantly passionate for God and His glory.

Christ describes the blessedness of such spiritual aspiration and quest in His sermon on the mount. **"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"** (Matthew 5:6). The loss of those who are carnally content with their spiritual state can only be illustrated by the physical condition of loss of appetite. People who are humanly hungry and thirsty continually do something to satisfy themselves. Likewise, those who have this blessed

spiritual hunger for more of God do sing: *"More about Jesus would I know"* with the songwriter who committed his own spiritual quest to paper. And to know more of God requires conscientious efforts of continual praying and communing with God, studying the Bible, fellowshiping with the people of God, seeking counsel from spiritual leaders and preaching the kingdom of God. Such constantly seeks God for the outpouring of the Spirit for latter-day revival that will usher in multitudes of souls into the Kingdom. **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the**

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”
(Philippians 3:10).

The Greeks who sought to see Jesus can be likened to sinners who come to Christians and Christian assemblies in order to find the way of salvation and freedom from sin. Believers then must be careful not to distract such earnest, sincere seekers from seeing the Saviour in their lifestyle or in their gathering. Preachers too should ensure they point sinners to Christ in their preaching.

Finally, we learn that Andrew and Philip brought the request of the people to Jesus (verse 22). As we go around talking to people about Jesus, we should also talk to Jesus about the people and their needs. It is important to seek, not only to see Jesus here but also to abide in Him till we see Him face to face in heaven.

Lesson 386

CHRIST PREDICTS HIS SUFFERING AND GLORIFICATION

MEMORY VERSE: “**And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified**” (John 12:23).

TEXT: John 12:23-50

Following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His encounter with the Jews and Greeks who had heard of His fame and had come to hear Him, Christ proceeded to talk of His imminent suffering and passion. He told them the hour of His glorification was at hand when He would be lifted up so that the purpose of His advent might be fulfilled. Though the tidings were heavy, He wrapped it in beautiful illustration so that those to whom it is “**given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God**” (Luke 8:10) might hear and understand. This underscores the need for wisdom in preaching and teaching so that the wise can hear and understand.

As He spoke, some believed and some doubted, and in them is fulfilled the words of prophet Isaiah: “**Lord, who hath believed our report?**” (verse 38). In spite of their response however, the Lord went on to talk about His person, the effect of faith in His sacrifice and the portion of those who reject Him. In this, we learn that people’s attitude to the word should not stop us from delivering God’s message to them. We are to be faithful messengers of the heavenly message.

Question 1: *What should be our attitude to those who refuse the Word?*

CHRIST’S SUFFERING PREDICTED(John 12:23-33; 16:32; 21:19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 24:6,7,26,46; Acts 1:3; Psalm 69:20,21; Isaiah 50:5,6; 53:3-5).

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified” (John 12:23).

The Lord perceives the arrival of the hour, the determined time of His glorification when He would bear the sins of the whole world. The time the promised Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent and bring many sons to glory (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:10). This path to glory is however marked by grief and agony beyond human description.

The mention of the word ‘hour’ here suggests that there is an appointed time for our sojourn in this world. Everyone has an appointed time that is known only to the Lord when our life shall be over. This places on us the burden to live responsibly with eternity in view. Besides, we learn that no evil can befall us or anyone terminate our life before God’s appointed time. No one can destroy our life or ministry before our time is over. There were many attempts on Christ’s life but all failed “**because his hour was not yet come**” (John 7:20; 8:20; 16:32).

Question 2: What challenge does Christ's attitude towards His suffering and death pose to believers today?

Christ equally spoke of His glorification to mean the testimony which the Father would give of Him presently, at His death and His resurrection and ascension (Matthew 17:5; John 17:5).

Christ illustrates His death with the picture of grain of corn which abides alone except it is buried. All the beauty and richness of the harvest results from the fact that the grain had died otherwise it profits but little. But when it is allowed to be buried in the earth, it comes up abundantly. This illustrates the benefits of sacrificial service and labour. Our life would count but little except we die to sin and self. We cannot as much be profitable to God and humanity unless we exchange our life with Christ's and allow Him full control. We should not love our lives to the point we withhold it from the one that gave it, else we lose it (verse 25). Except the owner of the grain releases it to be buried it is left alone. We learnt from Christ that our focus in times of suffering should be on the gain and not the pain (Hebrews 12:2). Furthermore,

Christ likened His humiliation, death and resurrection to the process of germination of a corn of wheat. The seed buried in the soil will first die before it comes up again green, fresh and flourishing with great increase.

We learn also that the death of Christ was a necessity for the salvation of the world; that a selfish and self-indulgent life leads to spiritual barrenness just as the corn of wheat that abides alone cannot multiply; and, a selfless, sacrificial life results to fruitfulness. The sacrifice of Christ has brought millions of souls out of darkness into the marvellous light of the glory of God.

Consequently, believers should be challenged to serve God wholeheartedly and faithfully irrespective of what may be happening (Revelation 2:10). They are to have a holy contempt for the pleasure of this present world.

However, in service Christ remains our perfect example. He said: "**If any man serve me, let him follow me...**" (verse 26). In other words, Christ says we should imitate Him, copy His lifestyle, do what He would do and frequently ask ourselves, "**what would Jesus do?**" By so doing we shall assure our hearts of His commendation and a place in His Kingdom. Those who serve faithfully and truthfully shall have their part in Christ's eternal portion. Thus, our lives should take its pattern and practise from Christ. As He lived, acted and pleased the Father by separating from the corruptions of this world, so should we.

Christ declares the reward of all that will serve Him selflessly: they will be with Him in paradise and, the Father will honour them. These will more than repay for their pains and losses.

Question 3: What should be our motivation in serving the Lord?

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour" (verse 27). This was the passionate prayer of Christ. He knew fully before the time, the heavy weight and pain of the Cross but He knew it was the will of the Father. He therefore submitted Himself to His will and prayed for divine strength. He chose to go through the pain as long as God is glorified.

God's glory should be our priority in everything we do irrespective of whether it is convenient or not. God answered Him with an assurance that He would glorify Him. When the glory of God becomes the priority in our prayer, God will answer without delay.

Then the Lord hinted of the judgment of this world, which means that His death on the Cross would spell the final doom for the devil and all who reject His message. It would be a final testimony to the faithfulness and justice of God in redeeming those that have been lost to sin. With it, no one would be acquitted from eternal damnation if they fail to accept the One who has been lifted from the earth (verse 32,33).

PERSONIFICATION OF THE LIGHT (John 12:34-46; Isaiah 62:1; Proverbs 11:30; John 5:32,33,35; Matthew 5:14-16)

“Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...” (verses 35,36).

Christ, the brightness of God's glory, is the Light of the world. The metaphor of light expresses the beauty, purity and perfection of God. Before His advent, there was spiritual darkness all over the world. He is the Light, not just of the Jews but also of the Gentiles. He shines His light into the hearts and lives of men so that darkness would no longer reign.

Every man is in darkness and is lost without Christ. But those who believe in Him are quickened and given eternal life. Transformation by the power of His light comes through faith in His sacrifice at Calvary.

Jesus equally called believers the light of the world. **“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 5:14-16). By this, believers are to lighten their environment and neighbourhood with their lifestyle. Living a secretive life is contrary to the nature of light. Believers are not to separate themselves from the society of humans but shine in order to influence it. By the light of God's glory should be our priority in everything we do irrespective of whether it is convenient or not. God answered Him with an assurance that He would glorify Him. When the glory of God becomes the priority in our prayer, God will answer without delay.

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would not believe the testimony about Christ. This shows us some basic traits of a typical unregenerate man. They are willingly ignorant of the truth even in the face of divine evidence. Their eyes have been blinded and their hearts deceived lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine unto them. Sinners can decide to give their lives to Christ or reject Him and damn the consequence. But everyone should know that they will be responsible for the choices they make.

It is a pity therefore that men love darkness rather than light because their works are evil. Human education may inform man or religion may reform him, but it is only Christ that can transform and change him.

We find that many of the rulers and the people deliberately refused to believe Him, not for want of evidence but for fear of the people. Even some who managed to believe could not confess Him openly. They feared what people would say, and loved their positions too more than the witness of heaven. The fear of man brings a snare and breeds hypocritical lifestyle. Christ will eventually be ashamed of those who are ashamed to identify with or testify of Him now.

Christ lamented their obstinacy and refusal to accept the Light while they could. **"Then Jesus said unto them, yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light"** (verses 35,36). Peril, condemnation and judgment await those who refuse the Light and the substitutionary death of Jesus now. Gross darkness will eventually clothe them. The patience and forbearance of our Lord was exercised towards those who slighted Him when He was on earth and those who died in unbelief shall live throughout eternity to regret their actions. There is nothing more dreadful than abuse of patience, and grace trampled upon, though for a while, yet there will be judgment without mercy (James 2:13). The rebellious should not forget that **"though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished"** (Proverbs 11:21). Therefore, all those who are opportuned today to hear His call to repentance should respond without delay.

PROFITING FROM THE TRUE LIGHT (John 12:44-50; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Great privileges await those who believe in Christ, the Light of the world. By believing in Him we are brought into honourable acquaintance with God.

Question 5: *What are the believers' benefits in Christ the Light?*

“Jesus cried and said, he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:44-46).

Without Christ, the sinner is without true comfort, joy or hope. The reception of the true Light brings illumination, revelation, guidance and freedom from error. Believers, who walk in the light no longer abide in darkness. Besides, they enjoy protection and preservation (John 17:15); they are kept in joyful separation from the world. Finally, on the day of judgment, those who accepted Jesus will be raised to eternal life but those who reject Him will face eternal punishment and damnation (Revelation 21:11-15).

JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES' FEET

MEMORY VERSE: "After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (**John 13:5**)

TEXT: John 13:1-20

Every word, action and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is very significant. For more than 2000 years His words have continued to have a profound and life-changing impact on mankind. Through His words and actions, hordes of men and women have been changed. But of all the personal examples and teachings given and demonstrated by the Lord, perhaps the most striking lesson is that on humility, as we have read from our text. What a challenge that the Creator stooped down to wash the dusty feet of His creatures (verse 5).

God places great premium on humility. The Bible tells us that "**he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble**" (James 4:6). Knowing that men are generally slow to learn the important lessons of life, the Lord decided to teach this all-important subject through the medium of an unforgettable experience. He did that so that the lesson can be ingrained in our hearts and that believers might shun pride, arrogance and self-conceit.

CHRIST'S EVERLASTING LOVE (John 13:1,2; Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 13:8-10; Ephesians 3:19).

Question 1: *What lesson can we learn from Christ's pattern of love for His disciples?*

"Now before the feast of passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father..."

Jesus knew that He would soon depart out of this world. In God's time-table, His physical presence to continue His earthly ministry, like those of all true ministers of the gospel, has a definite end. But as the Omniprescient One, He is God with us; and His ministry was to continue through the agency of His disciples whom He was about to leave in the world.

Though Christ knew that He would be betrayed by one of His disciples, He loved them until the end. He knew that they would soon be exposed to trials, persecutions and temptations as a result of His separation from them.

The constancy of Christ's love is here underscored. His love for His own never grows cold nor diminish. Its steadfastness towards us never ceases but is renewed everyday because of His faithfulness. Only divine, unchanging love could have prompted the Lord to lay down His life. The Bible says: "**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends**" (John 15:13). He willingly gave it as a ransom for us. A songwriter puts it this way: *His love will never fail, His love will never fail; My soul is satisfied to know,*

His love will never fail. Believers, like Christ, should demonstrate genuine love for their fellow brethren. We must also love even those who are at variance with us as Christ did.

JUDAS' BETRAYAL OF JESUS (John 13:2; Luke 22:3-6; Matthew 10:4).

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him” (John 13:2). The treachery of Judas Iscariot was already at an advanced stage. No doubt, the devil influenced him, yet, the responsibility for his wicked act cannot be excused (Romans 6:16; Matthew 26:14-15). He should not have chosen to surrender himself to be used of Satan but should have resisted and retraced his steps when the Lord exposed him. Instead, he allowed the gain of covetousness becloud him and made him a ready tool in the hand of the devil.

Question 2: Explain how Judas Iscariot was responsible for allowing the devil to use him to betray his Lord?

The Bible says, **“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”** (Romans 6: 16).

As believers, we must be careful not to yield to Satan as a ready tool for iniquity. We must always be watchful so that we do not take the grace of God in our lives for granted. **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12).

DEMONSTRATION OF HUMILITY (John 13:4-20; Luke 22: 24-27; Matthew 11:29; John 13:15-17; 1 Corinthians 4:7).

Question 3: Explain how Christ taught humility in our text?

To learn that the Creator condescended to wash His disciples’ feet after knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, is indeed a great challenge. It is easy for a servant to wash his master’s feet, but it is incomprehensible that the Lord of lords and King of kings should bend so low as to wash His disciples’ feet.

How many Christians and leaders today can put aside their official titles and bend so low to serve members of their congregation? At the home, how many believers or partners can put aside their pride to serve one another? How many people can forget their titles and offer apology to their subordinates in a matter in which they are guilty? This is the practical implication of what Christ did. It is also interesting to note that despite the fact that Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, He washed his feet also.

There are many leaders today who are comfortable only when they are recognized, respected, honoured, worshiped or feared. Anything short of this makes them uneasy, offensive and saucy. They prefer to be so treated with heavy titles than being meek and lowly in heart. **“But ye have not so learned Christ”** (Ephesians 4:20).

Peter could not fathom why Jesus stooped down to wash their feet and demanded that he be excluded. But **“Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”** (John 13:8). His protest was because he did not

understand the import of the lesson Christ was demonstrating to them. He has forgotten that the way up is down. Many Christians today are like Peter: their

understanding of humility does not go beyond words. They cannot reconcile how an older person should serve the younger.

The problem with some others is that they want to understand every detail from the Lord before they obey His will. But there are things we may not fully understand now but this should not hinder us from doing the perfect will of God. A song writer said,

*I do not ask to know the way,
My feet will have to tread;
But only that my soul may feed,
Upon the Living Bread,
'Tis better far that I should walk,
By faith close to His side,
I may not know the way I go,
But oh! I know my Guide.*

Question 4: What do you understand by the word humility? Why is it a necessary virtue?

Humility is the act of voluntary self-abasement, and choosing to serve others rather than to be served. Humility is the exact opposite of pride and the only way to overcome pride is to heed Christ's words. "**Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me for I am meek; and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls**" (Matthew 11:29). Humility is an essential ingredient of acceptable service to God.

One of the incidents that formed the background for the act of washing the disciples' feet is their quest for greatness. "**And there was a strife among them which of them should be accounted greatest**" (Luke 22:24). To impress further the lesson on their hearts, the Lord alluded to the normal relationship between the servant and the master. And said unto them, "**And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth**" (Luke 22:25-27). The Lord knew that they needed an unforgettable lesson on humility in view of His imminent departure.

After teaching them this lesson on humility, Christ admonished them to engage in sacrificial love. Christianity transcends mere exhibitionism. It is only those whose lives practically conform to the teaching of Christ that can claim to possess a living relationship with the Lord. We cannot truly say we have the Spirit of Christ if we avoid the self-effacing ministry of love which places the interest and welfare of others above self, positions of honour, dignity and greatness. We must not look down on other workers but should see them as fellow servants and co-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord.

Question 6: *What is the importance of obedience in a believer's life?*

Lest the disciples become so absorbed in the lesson they have just learnt without translating their knowledge into action, the Lord told them that only the doers of the word would be blessed. **“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”** (John 13:15-17). Mere admiration of Christian virtue without corresponding action is worthless and vain. We can only receive heaven's approval if we obey the word of God. When we are truly humble, we will quit petty rivalries and choose to serve rather than be served. We will not make issues out of people fail to recognize our position. Our emphasis will no longer be the praise of men but of God.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

MEMORY VERSE: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

TEXT: Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Peter 1:16-21.

The level of confidence which every individual has in God is a direct reflection of his confidence in the Bible. Full persuasion on the genuineness of the claims of the Bible and the certainty of the rewards that it promises every faithful pilgrim at the end of life's journey makes men surrender to the Lordship of Christ, obtain salvation which is its singular goal and live by its principles and precepts which it demands. Its claims can only be held as genuine if its source is known and believed to be divine. This is why this study is of utmost importance to all.

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Question 1: Explain the *inspiration of the Bible*?

Inspiration of the Bible means the inexplicable power and influence the Spirit of God exerts on writers to unerringly express what God intended them to communicate as a revelation of His mind and will. The writers' peculiar character, style, mental endowments and circumstances did not affect the message God passed through them to His people and all humanity. The Spirit's guidance in the choice of words they used preserved them from all errors of omissions and commission. The Greek word, “*Theopneustic*”, translated inspiration in the English Bible literally means “God-breathed”, which denotes the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the holy writers for exact record of the words and will of God. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these holy men qualified and enabled them to make infallible record of divine truth concerning the will of God to man. Written by divinely inspired men, the Bible therefore is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction authored by God for man's salvation. The Bible is inspired from Genesis to Revelation. It contains the principles by which God will try and judge all human conducts, creeds and opinions at the end of life. The Bible is inspired to secure truth and unity in the records of various men used in writing its different parts. It is also inspired to make men that believe wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), to give eternal life through faith in the eternal Son (John 20:30,31), attain perfection (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Psalm 19:7) and to qualify men whose lives have been transformed by it for eternal inheritance in heaven.

FALLACIES ON BIBLICAL INSPIRATION (Isaiah 8:20; Luke 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1,11; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Question 2: Mention three erroneous views people hold about inspiration of the Bible.

There are various erroneous views about Biblical inspiration. Some people hold the view that the writers of the Bible had the same natural insight into truth which all men possess to some degree and which some (like poets, philosophers, musicians and scientists) have distinguished themselves in its use. Called the *Initiation Theory*, they claim that inspiration is a higher development of man's natural insight into truth placing Bible writers alongside geniuses like Cicero, Caesar, Shakespeare or Newton. This is wrong, for the writings of none of these affect the lives of men to any comparable extent nor give the same hopes as the Bible. Morally depraved mortal men cannot produce an immortally purifying book as the Bible. Other people declare that the Bible is inspired in as much as the writers were believers in the true God and there is an illumination in the mind of every believer seeing that "**as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God**" (Romans 8:14). This is called the *Universal Christian*

Inspiration Theory. This theory puts all regenerated believers on the same plane as Bible writers but it is wrong. Advocates of *Mechanical Inspiration* or *Dictation Theory* teach that God just used the writers of the Bible as stenographers or secretary/transcribers of the words and dictated to them, not allowing them the use of their intellect and faculties. The notable observations about the personality traits of different writers like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, John and others disprove this theory.

Others still erroneously hold the theory of *Partial Inspiration* establishing that only certain parts of the scriptures are inspired while others are not. Some go further to say that only the thoughts (and ideas) of Bible writers were inspired but not their words (or writings). This is called *Thought Inspiration*. These theories are all wrong. The only aspect of the Bible that we cannot prove its inspiration is that which was done after the canon of the scriptures was completed. This is simply the chapter division (by Stephen Langton in 1228 A.D.) and the verse division (by Robert Stephen in 1551 A.D.).

The Bible-approved view of inspiration is that both the thoughts and the words of the writers were divinely inspired. They were not absolutely left to themselves to use the words of their choice but the words were co-ordinated and divinely directed in their selection. This view is known as *Verbal, Plenary or Full Inspiration*. Both the words and thoughts of the writers were influenced by the Holy Ghost. However, they still had the freedom of the exercise of their moral agency in heeding the instruction of the divine Spirit as we see in their various methods of writing. In the Holy Writ, there are different parts of our subject – Revelation and Inspiration. Revelation essentially discovers new truth, inspiration superintends (or guides) the communication and recording of that truth. There are instances of inspiration with or without revelation (Luke 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1,11) as well as inspiration with illumination (1 Peter 1:11; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19). Though every part has equal bearing to the central theme of redemption, yet, there is nothing to suggest that any part is more inspired (or superior) than others. "**All scripture is given by inspiration...**" (2 Timothy 3:16).

EVIDENCE OF FULL INSPIRATION (Luke 24:44; 11:51; Matthew 23:35; 4:1-11; 5:18; Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Samuel 23:1,2; 2 Peter 1:14-21; Psalm 119:9,11; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Question 3: Mention two “internal evidences” and three “external evidences” that prove that the Bible was authored by God.

There are various evidences that attest to the fact that the Bible is inspired of God. Examination of its internal claims (or self-evidence) as well as external claims leads any sincere seeker to the conclusion that, without doubt, the Bible has a divine origin. We shall acquaint ourselves with a number of these evidences.

The testimony of Christ, the claims of the Bible writers and the observable peculiarities of its internal evidence are in agreement on this subject. The Lord Jesus Christ, second in the Godhead and the “**express image of the invisible God**”, affirmed tenaciously that the Bible is the Word of God during His earthly ministry. He held it in high esteem and used it as a weapon to defeat the tempter (Matthew 4:1,11). He quoted from it time and again during His ministry and after His post-resurrection appearances, and declared that no jot or tittle of it would pass away unfulfilled (Matthew 5:18). In the 3,779 verses of the four gospels, out of which 1,934 were spoken by Christ, 180 verses were quotation from or references to the Old Testament. This implies that nearly one out of every ten words spoken by Jesus was taken from the then available canon of Scripture. Undoubtedly, the Saviour approved of the divine authorship of the Bible. He also promised that the Holy Spirit was to come to lead them into all truth and inspire the writing of the New Testament.

Self-testimony, intellectuals believe, is valid evidence. The Bible claims divine inspiration and is replete with such expressions as, “**Thus saith the Lord**”, “**The Lord said** (or spoke) **unto me**”, “**The word of the Lord**” and so on (Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Samuel 23:1,2). For instance, the phrase “**Hear ye the word of the Lord**” occurred in the book of prophet Isaiah more than twenty times. The New Testament contains similar statements (1 Corinthians 11:23-25; 2 Peter 1:14). Every part of the Bible is inspired by God. Results follow as a man reads and obeys the instruction of the scriptures: his life is cleansed and he is kept from evil (Psalm 119:9,11; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The way the Bible teaches against and denounces sin (even in the life of some of the writers) is not known with any other book on earth. Its origin must be from above. It has never been added unto or enlarged since the last book was written, yet it is complete and applicable to every generation. Above all, the New Testament attest to the Old Testament as sacred (Matthew 21:42; 22:29; 26:54,56; Luke 24:25,26,44,46; John 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2,11; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Galatians 3:8,22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 3:16).

Moreover, its sixty six books written in three different languages by about forty writers over a span of more than 1,600 years all exhibit wonderful unity in their presentation and revelation. Its writers include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, musicians, scholars and shepherds. Note also the fact that over three thousand of Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled and proves that the Bible is the word of God.

UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE (Genesis 2:7; Joshua 10:12-14; 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 40:22).

Question 4: How unique is the Bible compared with other books?

The Bible is unique in many aspects. As stated already, its wonderful unity in the face of the diversity of the background and experiences of its writers is bewildering enough to be taken as an aspect of uniqueness. No other book has been circulated or translated into as many languages as the Bible. Presently, the Bible is in print in many languages. "Pile them, if you will, on the left side" a writer highlights the difference, "but place your own Holy Bible on the right side – all alone itself... there is a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought." Besides, unlike many other books which get outdated (if not reviewed in a couple of years) the Bible has refused to get outdated since its over 1,800 years of existence. All these are aspects of its survival and divine preservation. Many kings and emperors, philosophers and scientists have fought against the Bible, some destroying as many copies as they felt were in existence but the Bible is still very much alive today. Voltaire predicted its extinction within a hundred years after his death but he was proved wrong. His very house was (in less than half the time) turned into a Bible publishing house! Emperor Diocletian's government fought much to exterminate the holy Book but divine providence had it that Constantine, his successor, ordered the printing of the same at government's expense for people to read and become God-fearing. No one has ever succeeded (or can ever succeed) in the fight against the Bible.

Further proof of its uniqueness and inspiration is found in how it has stood through great criticisms. Like Christ's Church, the Bible is an *"anvil that has worn out many hammers"* taking sides (in experience) with the bush that Moses saw burning but, not consumed. Intellectuals from various disciplines have advanced many arguments against the facts of the Bible but one by one, they have all (by later discoveries) been proved wrong. Only a book with an origin greater than man can withstand such criticisms. History and Archaeology also prove the historicity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

The fact that most men of renown that have made impact in world history have either been people who had their faith in Christ and the Bible or had great respect for the same also prove that the Bible has a divine origin. A British Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone once remarked: "I have known 95 of the world's great men in my time, and of these, 87 were followers of the Bible." Abraham Lincoln, John Bacon and Isaac Newton and a number of others are believed to have professed belief in the word of God. Men like Napoleon Bonaparte, Lord Tennyson, Francis Bacon, Mahatma Gandhi and George Washington and many others (from their statements), are known to have great respect for the Bible even though they do not profess genuine faith in the Saviour.

Scientific discoveries have always proved that the Bible is full of divine inspiration. Comparative anatomy supports the fact that man is a special class of the vertebrate creation (being) so far in "intelligence quotient" from the nearest species. Chemical analysis of the components of the body reveal that at least fourteen of the elements in man are found in the soil proving man's creation **"out of the dust of the earth"** as the Genesis account reads (Genesis 2:7).

Computerized calculation of the number of days that have transpired since the creation of the earth have also confirmed the fact of a *"missing link"* as recorded in the accounts of Joshua 10:12-14 and 2 Kings 20:8-11. It took a

long time before geographers came to agree that the earth was spherical, a fact that had been penned down by the instruction of the Creator Himself in Isaiah 40:22, years before the research. All these and an almost innumerable others prove the fact that the Bible is “inspired of God” and make us to say with the thoughtful writer who advised: “Never compare this Book with other books. Comparisons are dangerous. Never think or never say that this book just contains the Word of God. It is the Word of God –

*Supernatural in origin, eternal in duration
Inexpressible in value, infinite in scope,
Regenerating in power, infallible in authority,
Universal in interest, personal in application
INSPIRED IN TOTALITY.*

“Read it through. Write it down. Pray it in. Work it out. And then pass it on.”

BENEFITING FROM THE BIBLE (Romans 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8).

Question 5: How can the believer maximally benefit from the word of God?

Many do not want to accept that the Bible is the word of God because of the consequences of such profession of faith in it. They would be bound by its principles and precepts that spell doom for the fleshly and careless. They do not want to obey the laws of God that charts a restricted path for the godly and prescribes unpopular, holy lifestyle for heavenly pilgrims. Others profess faith in the Bible but live without its precepts. This is as damnable as the attitude of those who reject it as the word of God. “A man that is endued with the powers of reason, by which he is capable of knowing, serving, glorifying, and enjoying his Maker, and yet lives without God in the world, is certainly the most despicable and the most miserable animal under the sun”, a writer decried. Unbelief in or rejection of the word of God is as sinful as wilful disobedience of its known precepts. **“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them”** (2 Peter 2:21). God relates with people on the basis of their attitude to His word because He honours His word more than His name. His words reveal His Person, character, desire, dislike, demands, condition of relationship with Him, His expectations of man, promises and blessings for those who enter into relationship with Him and punishment for the obstinate. He does not listen to the prayers of those who do not listen to the preaching or reading of His words. **“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination”** (Proverbs 28:9).

So, God expects everyone to cultivate the attitude of hearing, reading, studying, delighting or meditating on His words and obeying its precepts (Romans 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8). Everyone who allows the word of God to affect his life will be convicted, cleansed and saved from sin (Psalm 19:7-11; John 15:3); enabled to live victorious life over sin, self, the flesh, the world and Satan, equipped for holy, fruitful service, helped to obtain all the inheritance of saints through the promises of God and preserved to make heaven in the end. Since **“All scripture**

is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17), we must approach the word with reverence and openness of mind to derive the stated benefits from it.

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TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” **(1 John 5:7).**

TEXT: Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19; John 10:30; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2.

The Godhead and its Trinity is one of the deep mysteries of the Kingdom of God revealed to us in Scripture. It is one of the greatest tenets of the Christian faith that is better believed than mentally understood because it is anchored on the nature and person of God. The subject has, through the ages, confounded the wise and prudent but conferred on the faithful, trusting believer, the blessings of simplicity of faith.

Through reasoning, man can never attain the Trinitarian conception of the Almighty God, neither can he by research or logical inquiry understand the nature of God. The error many people have fallen into is an obsessive desire to rationalize this teaching.

Some contend that the word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible; and this has hindered their acceptance and belief of it. They have forgotten that the word, ‘Bible’ is not in the Bible, yet they use the term without reservation. They also fail to note that the word, ‘Rapture’ is not in the Scripture. But, shall we disbelieve the scriptural teaching on the Rapture because the word is not directly written in the Bible?

Another reason some find it difficult to comprehend this Scriptural teaching is that they try to compare the human structure with the divine. They reason that it is incomprehensible to talk about one and only God, yet with a Son and Spirit that are co-equal with Him. They have forgotten that it is not possible to know everything about God, else He would cease to be God. Yet, we make bold to say that there is enough evidence in the Scripture to give us all the profitable knowledge we need to have about the nature and attributes of God. He has sufficiently revealed Himself in His Word so that every sincere seeker may come to the knowledge of His will.

Believers must therefore be on their guard not to fall into the same temptations but come with open minds into the sanctuary of God so that He might reveal His will to us. Let us, once and for all, lay up this truth in our hearts and be free from being **“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”** (Ephesians 4:14).

Question 1: *What should be our attitude to the doctrine of Trinity?*

May we, therefore, categorically state that just as we have believed the facts of atomic or nuclear energy, solar energy or the computer, even before we understood their nature, we must, likewise, accept the fact of the Trinity as a teaching revealed in God’s word, and that it is doctrinally sound. Every believer must accept the gospel truth of the Trinity by faith, recognizing that God remains the eternal repository of all mysteries (Deuteronomy 29:29).

CONCEPT OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY (Genesis 1:1; 1:26; 3:22; 11:6,7; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; 14:26).

Question 2: *What is our basis for teaching and believing the doctrine of Trinity?*

The doctrine of Trinity is a revealed teaching, that is to say, it embodies a truth that cannot be discovered by human natural reason but through divine revelation and understanding. With all his search, man has not been able to discover for himself the deep things of God.

In fact, we cannot fully grasp the pearls of God’s Word except through the revelation of His Spirit.

The notion or concept of the Trinity of the Godhead is embedded in the Word of God. The word which is translated ‘God’ in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim*, the plural of *El* (‘The Strong One’). *Elohim* therefore, means, ‘The Strong Ones’. This uni-plural noun appears more than 2,700 times in the Old Testament.

It is interesting to note that God Himself, from the beginning, used plural nouns to explain the work of creation. **“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”** (Genesis 1:26). The use of the pronouns, “us” and “our” implies the involvement of more than one personality in the creation of man. Similar application continues in other references. For example, at the excommunication of man from the Garden of Eden, God said, **“Behold, the man is become as one of us...”** (Genesis 3:22). And, on the threshold of God’s perfect desire to curb the foolish excesses of man, by wisely confounding him with diverse languages (Genesis 11:7), the same pronoun is used.

Question 3: *Explain the word ‘Trinity’?*

Trinity therefore emphasizes the unity of three Persons in one God. The word, “Trinity” is a coinage from Three-in-Unity or Tri-unity to underscore the perfect, pure relationship between the Personalities in the Godhead.

Doctrinally, it expresses that there is only one God, one divine nature who is tri-personal and also involves the distinctions of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are joint partakers of the same divine and majesty of God. There is one only and true God but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons; and they are the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.

CLEAR TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE ON THE TRINITY (John 15:26; 1 Peter 1:2; Psalm 89:26; 45:6,7; Acts 5:3,4; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,3).

The Scripture clearly teaches that the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct, and recognizable Personalities and qualities, perfectly united in one. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person. The Father is called God (1 Corinthians 8:6; Psalm 89:26; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Isaiah 63:16; Matthew 6:9); the Son, Jesus Christ, is called God (Psalm 45:6,7; Isaiah 9:6,7; John 20:28); and the Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3,4; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20; Hebrews 3:7-9; 10:15,16).

From the foregoing references, it is clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons, co-eternal and co-existent in power and divine attributes.

Question 4: *Why do we believe that God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are co-equal and co-eternal in nature? Support your answer with at least one Scripture reference?*

The Trinity is foreshadowed in Daniel 2:47 as three personalities united in one God. The Personalities are God, the Lord and the Revealer of secrets or the Holy Spirit (also Roman 8:26,27; 1 Corinthians 2:10). These three Personalities are the uncreated Beings. They have always been and will continue to be. And they are united in every sense. There is no possibility of disagreement between them because they are one in mind, character and purpose. In every action, the Three are equally active. The Father is the Creator (Genesis 1:1,2; Psalm 100:3; John 1:3) yet the works of creation are ascribed to the Son and the Spirit (Job 26:13; 33:4; Colossians 1:12-16; Hebrew 1:2,3). The work of regeneration and redemption is ascribed to the three Personalities: the Father in Matthew 3:17; The Son in John 5:19-21 and the Spirit in John 15:26. The Spirit sanctifies yet, the Father and the Son are present and active in the work of sanctification. The Father judges but by the Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31; John 5:22). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit receive honour (John 5:23; Matthew 12:32).

The testimony of Scripture on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the perfect unity of the Godhead. **“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”** (Acts 10:38). Second, Jesus taught that He is God and also emphasized the truth of God’s oneness (John 5:17,18). The testimony of Jesus can neither be rejected nor refused.

Christ’s assertion of unity in the Trinity is of sufficient strength to prove to every man that there are three distinct Personalities in the Godhead and the three are united as one. A 4th century Christian creed puts it this way. “We

worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity... for the Person of the Father is one, of the Son another and the Holy Ghost another. But of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost there is one divinity, equal glory and co-eternal majesty... the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternal but one eternal... Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God... Therefore, there is one Father not three Fathers; one Son not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity, there is nothing first or last, nothing greater or less. But all the three co-eternal Persons are co-equal among themselves so that through all, as is above said, both unity in Trinity in unity is to be worshipped.”

Further prove of the truth about the Godhead became clear at the baptism of Jesus Christ, when the Father sent the Holy Ghost in bodily form as a dove upon Christ, and God Almighty Himself made a public proclamation of Jesus as His beloved Son (Matthew 3:16,17). Even at the outset of His ministry, Jesus affirmed the companionship of God the Father and the Holy Spirit with Him. It was only by their combined workings that He was to fulfil His multi-pronged ministry of preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and delivering the captives (Luke 4:18).

In addition, the work of redemption which Jesus Christ completed on the Cross was a joint venture with the Father and the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 9:14).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY (John 14:9; 1:14; 1 Corinthians 2:12; John 16:12-15).

The doctrine of the Trinity, as have been established, is pre-eminently given to the Church by revelation. And while it brings before us one of the greatest mysteries or revelation and transcends finite comprehension, it is essential to the understanding of the Scripture. And as we shall see, it has its great value and uses.

The doctrine of the Trinity and unity of the Godhead has been called “a bulwark of Christian-theism.” It gives us a glimpse into the wonderful but complex being of God, while at the same time it constantly proclaims the impossibility of comprehending God. While it is a stumbling-block to rationalism, it is for those who accept it a safeguard against all tendencies towards rationalism or intellectual pride.

Question 5: *What are the benefits of believing the doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead?*

In the teaching of the Trinity, we behold, first, not only a God who is exalted far above us, but also Christ who is with us and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Second, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to God’s revelation of truth. **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, and the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). Christ is the revelation of the Father and the express image of His person. **“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”** (John 14:9).

Now if there is no Trinity, then Christ is not God and cannot perfectly know or reveal God.

Christianity is the only true religion because Christ is the only true revelation of God; but if Christ be not God then we cannot be sure of His revelation of God, and Christianity will be just another religion like all other religions having its portions of truth and portions of error. But if Christ be God, and indeed He is, as the

Bible declares that He is, then Christianity is the absolute revelation of God's will for mankind.

The same is true of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples: **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you"** (John 16:12-15). The Holy Spirit is the One who guides us into all truth. How can He do that unless Christ and the Holy Spirit are as God the Father?

Third, the legitimacy, validity and veracity of the gospel depend upon this truth; for Christ is most clearly seen to be God's unspeakable gift, the bringer of eternal salvation, when we recognize His essential oneness with the Father. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is thus seen to be, in His relation to a sinful world, and the Church as well as to individual believers, the infinite Source of hope and a new, holy life.

Lesson 390

PATTERN OF SCRIPTURAL GODLINESS

MEMORY VERSE: “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” **(1 Timothy 1:16)**.

TEXT: Titus 2:7-10

postle Paul instructed Titus to teach different categories of people in the church, the lifestyles expected of them. His message was painstaking, pungent and panoramic.

Sequel to this, the great apostle, in our text, charges Titus, the pastor of the church in Crete, to set the pace and lay the example for others to follow. He, as a minister of the gospel, must match his morals with his message. Else, he would pull down with one hand, what he spent years to build, with the other.

Paul seems to say: “Titus, you may be a dynamic, eloquent, and persuasive preacher but, if you labour hard to teach sound doctrine without backing it up with your own life, your preaching will be ineffective”. Paul himself had striven to follow this pattern all through his ministry. Reflecting on his life, he told the Philippian Christian: **“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example”** (Philippians 3:17).

Question 1: *In your own opinion, why was Paul bold enough to instruct Titus on exemplary living?*

EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD (Titus 2:7,8; Matthew 11:29; Acts 20:35).

Paul the apostle held the issue of Christian character and integrity in high esteem. He had little or no room for those whose lives are diametrically opposed to their profession and teaching. He lived the Christian life and saw himself as a pattern worthy of emulation. To Timothy, he confidently testified: **“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life...”** (2 Timothy 3:10). His manner was consistent with his message. Expectedly, he knew Titus would not make the desired impact if he did not conduct himself well before the saints. **“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”** (Titus 2:7,8).

On account of Titus’ position in the church, he must be ahead in practising these things, if he expects the virtues of sobriety, temperance, charity, patience and godliness in his members. To instruct others in the specifics of their responsibilities is good and commendable, but the example of the teacher is more important. Good life must tally with good doctrine. In all things, Titus and by extension, all believers must show themselves models of good works. Men are wont to say: “we are not perfect; therefore we cannot live holy”. This is not scriptural. Every New Testament saint is expected to be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Every Christian must be a pattern of good works. Goodness, as we know it, is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Christians must be good to one another and to those outside the Church. In all we do, we must have good purpose and esteem the good of others. Believers are to be beautiful specimens of the grace of goodness.

Moreover, Titus is admonished to teach the whole counsel of God while maintaining purity. Corruption of the Word, frivolity and shallowness in doctrine and teaching will not make the desired impact. Rather, sincerity, singleness of purpose and commitment to truth, must underline his ministry.

The calling of the servant of God is not secular; it is not meant to be used as a cloak to make merchandise of people but to highlight the glory and honour of God. Our speech must be sound, devoid of the fallible human knowledge. Scriptural truths must be explained in scriptural terms and, as much as possible, in Scripture language.

The idea of being examples to the world and the Church runs through the length and breath of Paul's writings. In his valedictory sermon to the Ephesians he said: **"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35). And to the Thessalonians he wrote: **"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you"** (2 Thessalonians 3:7). Jesus Christ, the greatest Teacher and Example, also told His disciples to follow Him. **"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"** (John 13:15).

Question 2: Why must Christian leaders be at the forefront of uprightness?

EFFECTS OF EXEMPLARY LIVING (Titus 2:5,8; Philippians 3:17; Luke 20:20,26; Roman 2:24; 2 Samuel 12:14; 2 Peter 2:2).

"To be discreet, chaste... that the word of God be not blasphemed. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:5,8).

It is pretty good to preach the gospel, read the Bible and give out tracts and literature to others but our priority should be to be specimens of the Bible in life and conduct. The fastest way to destroy our sermons and doctrines is to contradict them by our lives. What we spend an hour or two to preach, we live the rest of our lives. Our adversaries constantly seek occasion to find fault with us that they might hold us in derision and contempt. This was why, the apostle, on two occasions, gave Titus reasons why the believer must live righteously (verse 5,8).

David was favoured as a man after God's own heart, but because he erred in a matter of morals, he gave the enemies of God opportunity to speak blasphemously: blasphemously: **"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die"** (2 Samuel 12:14).

The critics of Jesus' day also kept vigil on Him to seek occasion to accuse Him: **"And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign**

themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor” (Luke 20:20). But they failed woefully (verse 26). Our lives preach more powerfully than our precepts and sermons. Majority of the unbelievers do not have a copy of the Bible but can well read the epistles in us. If we live true to our vocation, skeptics will not have occasion to blaspheme the worthy name by which we are called. **“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”** (1 Peter 2:15). Finally, they will lack grounds for their evil allegations.

Question 3: *What impact does a godly life make on the world?*

EXHORTATIONS TO THE GODLY (Titus 2:9,10; Matthew 16:24; Ephesians 6:5-8; Hebrews 3:1; 1 Peter 2:21).

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:9,10).

The apostle, here, charges servants in all categories to be obedient to their masters according to the will of God. They are to render service to their masters as unto the Lord. **“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free”** (Ephesians 6:6-8). They are not to steal but to elevate honesty and faithfulness which bring glory to God. This same admonition applies to every servant of Christ.

Question 4: *As servants of Christ, what should be our attitude in service?*

Christ calls Himself our Master: **“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ”** (Matthew 23:8,10). He has chosen, called and commissioned us to love one another (John 13:35). Moreover, we are mandated to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). As servants of Christ, our will, time and substance must be placed at the Master’s disposal and use. Servants of Christ should be obedient to Him.

In upholding and demonstrating scriptural godliness, Christ remains our perfect Example. He is the spotless Son of God, worthy of our whole-hearted imitation. **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”** (Matthew 16:24). In spite of difficulties, we must exalt godly living above all things. Our light must shine enough for God’s name to be glorified. **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”** (1 Peter 2:21).

Question 5: *Who is our perfect example in godly living and how can we be like Him?*

