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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## Foolish Questions

Paul wrote Titus, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain." (Titus 3 : 8, 9). He likewise admonished Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts : but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes." (2 Timothy 2:22,23).

From these statements we want to especially give our attention to foolish questions and what is meant by them. In both instances Paul says that such questions should be avoided because they are unprofitable, vain, and they gender strife. This also helps us to understand the kind of questions that are under consideration and the kind of people who ask them. Any question that would produce the results of strife could be listed as foolish.

Not only were the people of Paul's time plagued by such

questions, but the same problem is with us to this day. What are some of these questions ?

Not only were the people of Paul's time plagued by such questions, but the same problem is with us to this day. What are some of these questions ?

1. "What about the thief on the cross ?"

Every time the plan of salvation is discussed, and especially when the subject of baptism comes up, then the question that is raised more than any other one, is : "Wasn't the thief saved without having to be baptized ?" This means that this individual is not willing to do what the Lord asked him to do but he is looking for some way to escape. This question is never asked by those who want to obey Christ. They are not concerned at the moment about the thief, but their own salvation. Then when they learn what is expected of them they are ready to comply with it.

If one will study the scriptures he will know that the thief lived before Christ died on the cross. In other words, the thief lived and died under the law of Moses. During the life time of Christ He could forgive anyone he desired to forgive, under any condition that he prescribed, but since the death of Christ, he has clearly said : "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16 : 15, 16). This means that if you, or anyone else, wants to be saved that you must believe and be baptized. The thief has absolutely nothing to do with your salvation. You can't be saved as the thief and there is no need to ask about him. This is a foolish question and one that denotes rebellion against the Lord and his will.

2. "What if one wanted to be saved but was out in the desert somewhere and there was no water available in which to be baptized ?

This is another question that is similar to the one about the thief. It also is an attempt to escape the command of baptism.

Why would anyone in his right mind ever conclude that even though the Lord has commanded something of him, he can excuse himself with fabricated "what ifs" ? The Lord has nowhere said that under certain circumstances he will make exception to his rules. Actually, it doesn't matter where an individual is, or under what conditions he happens to be there, if he is to be saved then he must comply with the Lord's command. But to perhaps answer this one quibble, turn to Acts 8 : 26-39 and you can read about a man who was out in a desert, but when he was taught the truth, he had a desire to obey it, and when they came to a certain water, he was baptized. Nothing was ever said, however, about no water being there to be baptized in. The point is, when it was needed, water was there. Likewise, when a person is ready today to obey the Lord, he'll find it possible to do so if he really wants to. Those who are always bringing up some hypothetical case in which it is impossible to obey the Lord's command are not ready yet to obey him.

3. "What will happen to those who have never had the opportunity to obey the gospel ?"

The implication is that they should be saved, and if one can be saved in his ignorance, and that without ever having been baptized, then why can't one who has heard the gospel be saved without having to be baptized ? But what do the scriptures say ? Christ says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16 : 16). Peter told the believers on Pentecost that they should repent and be baptized to have the remission of their sins. (Acts 2 : 38). Then Paul says the Lord will eventually come to take vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1 : 7-9). Please notice that he says that Christ will come to punish those who know not God (ignorant) and those who have not obeyed the gospel (disobedient). Therefore one cannot be excused because of ignorance, according to this scripture, and we cannot contradict his statement by saying that the ignorant can be saved. Of course, in the day of judgment if the Lord

wants to set aside his conditions for the benefit of the ignorant, and save them then he has the right to do so. But we cannot assume that he will do that because no where does his word say that he will. This means then that all must hear his will and obey him in order to be saved. (Hebrews 5 : 8, 9).

4. "Do you mean that my father and mother will be lost because they were not members of the church of Christ?"

As with the others, this question is not asked for information but to find fault with the one who is expected to give an answer and to prejudice others against the church. Actually, I cannot pass final judgment on anyone. I cannot say that they will be saved or that they will be lost. Even if I did, that wouldn't make it so. Only the Lord can judge a person. But there is no need talking about the dead when they are already in the hands of the Lord. We should be concerned about the living, about ourselves, and about what the Lord expects of us. The Bible teaches that Christ established the church (Matthew 16:18), that he died for it (Ephesians 5 : 25), that he is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5 : 23); and that he adds the saved to it. (Acts 2 : 47). Now, can I be saved without being a member of that church? Can you?

5. "Is the Law of Moses still binding?"

Any one who has studied the Bible should know that the law of Moses was fulfilled with Christ's death on the cross. He didn't come to destroy it but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5 : 17, 18). The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1 : 17). Paul declares that we have been delivered from the law and he identifies which law by referring to one of the ten commandments. (Romans 7 : 1-7). He likewise shows the superiority of the law of Christ over the law of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3. In Hebrews 10 : 9 the writer says that the first law was removed so that the second one might be established. The first one is identified as the Old Testament and the second one as the New Testament. (Hebrews 8 : 13). The question of which law is binding should therefore never be raised.

There are many other questions that are similar to the ones already considered. They are foolish because they are intended to arouse suspicion, prejudice, confusion, and rejection of God's will. Those who ask them are not really interested in the truth and are therefore trying to justify themselves and others without having to comply with God's will. But God will not allow them to succeed, and neither should we.

### *ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL*

## A Letter To You

Dear Reader :

Do you believe the Bible to be the word of God ? Are you saved from your sins, as the Bible teaches ? Do you know that we believe in Christ so that we might not perish (John 3:16), and we repent of our sins because God has commanded that all should turn away from sins (Acts 17:30), and we confess Christ with our mouth, as the Son of God, unto or to obtain salvation (Romans 10:9,10), and that we are baptised (immersed in water) for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38)?

Now, I ask you, is faith necessary to salvation ? Yes, you say. What about repentance and confession ? Yes, most of you say, they are too essential for ones salvation. Then, I ask again, what about baptism, is it necessary for salvation ? Most of you will say, NO. But, I ask, Why ? You reply, its an outward sign, and no matter whether one is scripturally baptised or not he is still saved. But, oh, dear reader, do you know, right here you are committing a blunder ! Now, you might want to laugh at it. But I beg you to seriously consider the following :

If baptism is not necessary for salvation then why did :

Christ say, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" ? (Mark 16:16).

Peter, upon the day of Pentecost, to a great multitude, say,

“Repent and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.....Then they that gladly received his word WERE BAPTIZED : and THE SAME DAY there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” ? (Acts 2:38, 41).

Eunuch, after believing and upon seeing water, urged Philip, saying, “See here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ?” (Acts 8:36).

Jailer, with his household, after hearing the word of God from Paul and Silas, believed, and, “took them THE SAME HOUR OF THE NIGHT AND WAS BAPTIZED, he and all his, straight way.” ? (Acts 16:33).

Saul was told, “And now why tarriest thou ? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” ? (Acts 22:16).

Peter, the Apostle, in 1 Peter 3:21, say, “BAPTISM DOTTH also now SAVE US.” ?

My friend, you are asked to sincerely consider these matters in light of God’s word. Have you obeyed God in these matters ? If you have not, we ask you to do so. Only then can you be saved.

## Bible Questions And Bible Answers

These questions come from South India.

QUESTION :

Isaiah 14:12. In our Telugu Bible it is written like this : “Thejo Nakshatrama (Bright Star) Vekuvachukka (Morning Star)”, and in the English Bible we read Lucifer—Son of the morning. Why did they not write clearly, Lucifer—Satan, in the Telugu ?

ANSWER :

The scriptures in the original languages do not specifically



identify Lucifer as Satan, so that is why it is not translated as "Satan" in Telegu. In Isaiah 14:12, the phrase "son of the morning" refers to Lucifer's exalted position before he fell ; it is not an identification of his present position.

**QUESTION :**

What is your opinion about the Divine Healing now-a-days? (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:17 ; Mark 16:18 ; James 5:14-16 ; Luke 13:16 ; Acts 10:38).

**ANSWER :**

My opinion on this would be worthless, but I'll try to explain it in the light of God's word. You speak of divine healing—and all healing is divine healing—but you probably have reference to miraculous healing. First, let us realize that God's hand is in all healing, and therefore it is all divine. The human body is so put together that it resists many diseases and ailments, throws off others, and with time, proper care, and medicines, is able to heal itself of more severe diseases, wounds, operations, etc. Then God works through the various medicines (that he himself placed here), with doctors, nurses, and so on, to heal the body. Jesus thus taught that they that are sick need a physician. Also, Paul asked Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. But divine healing is not miraculous healing. Miraculous healing was done in the days of Christ and the Apostles, and ended with that age. It was done for a specific purpose, *to make believers* until the New Testament could be written, and now that it has been written there is no longer a need for such miracles. (John 20:30,31 ; 1 Corinthians 13 ; James 1:25).

Now let us notice the scriptures given:

Isaiah 53:4,5—By "his stripes we are healed" has reference to the healings and blessings that Jesus was to bring to mankind.

Matthew 8:17—This was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Mark 16:18—Here Jesus is speaking to the Apostles concerning the miracles that they will be able to do. These

include taking up serpents, drinking any deadly thing, healing the sick, and so on. Since this promise was made to the Apostles, and not to us, then we cannot do these things. Who today drinks poison and does not die from it ?

James 5:14-16—James says that if there is any sick in the church then he should call for the elders of the church, let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick. One thought: Does this passage promise miraculous healing, or simply divine healing ? Today, God responds to prayers for the sick, through his healing hand, but he does not promise the use of miraculous power in this verse. But do those who believe that this verse teaches modern miraculous healing actually call for the elders and pray over the sick with oil ? If not, why not ?

Luke 13:16—Christ is involved here in healing a woman on the Sabbath.

Acts 10:38—Peter, in telling of Christ's work, speaks of his healing all that were oppressed. As explained earlier, Jesus performed miracles in his day. There is no question about this.

None of these verses have reference to miraculous healing today. There are many who claim that miracles are being done, but there are no proofs. Where are the dead that have been raised ? Where are the blind that can see again ? Where are the deaf that can hear again ? Where are the lame that can walk again ?

Just because miracles are not being performed today, this does not mean that God is not at work, but he has chosen to do his work in other ways than through some miraculous process. For instance, he created man and woman originally through a miracle but he is not creating man today in this manner. Nevertheless, who would say that he is still not man's creator ?

**QUESTION :**

Washing the disciples' feet. (John 13:14,15). Are Christians doing this custom now-a-days ?

**ANSWER :**

Jesus washed the disciples feet to teach the lesson of humility. He did not do so to teach that this should be done as an act of worship in the church. Yes, Christians are still to do this and other acts requiring humility, according to the need. The Christian should always be willing to humble himself to do whatever is necessary to help his brother, or anyone else.

Thank you for these questions and I trust the information given will be helpful to you. If any of you readers have sincere Bible questions, and you would like for them to be answered through this magazine, then send them to us at once and we'll get to them as soon as possible.

## The Thief on the Cross

**Paul S. Gray**

Many questions have been asked concerning the thief on the cross. One of the two malefactors between whom Jesus was crucified, said unto Him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." To whom the Lord answered, "Verily I say unto thee. Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23 : 42-43. Some want to know whether or not the thief was saved. Some want to know where Jesus said the thief would go that day. Others of course want to change that which is said in order to try to prove some theory. Today we answer the question, "Did the malefactor go that day with Jesus to paradise?"

Since some want to use this as a model case of conversion and have the idea that both Jesus and the thief went into heaven that very day and thus insist that they too want to be saved just as was the thief we think it should be profitable to look at

another incident in the life of Christ somewhat related to this. In Luke 18 : 18-22 we read of a man who came to Jesus saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus told him to keep the commandments and began enumerating them. The man replied, "All these have I kept from my youth up." Jesus answered, "Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me." Notice that this man had kept these commandments from the time of his youth, still he lacked one thing. Still some today have the idea that keeping the Ten Commandments is all there is to Christianity. If one were able to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly he still would not have a scriptural hope of eternity with God. On the other hand surely no one would say that this man would not have inherited eternal life if he had done exactly what the Lord commanded him. Yet I have never known of a person saying he wanted to be saved just like this man would have been if he had obeyed. I know of no one who teaches that one must sell all he has and give to the poor in order to be saved. Can we understand that what Jesus told this man is not a model case of conversion for us to imitate? Or was it because He asked too much for any one today to consider seriously, and because the thief did nothing more than say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," making it look so easy and demanding obedience to nothing that so many say they want to be saved just like the thief? Or is it purely to keep from obeying the Lord by being baptized for the remission of sins? Acts 2 : 38-39.

Where did Jesus go the very day He said? "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." If we can learn from the Bible exactly where Jesus went, we will know also where the malefactor went. First let us go to Matthew 16:18. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In explaining the last expression many say that Jesus was simply saying that all the power and influence of Satan would never be able to blot the

church out of existence; that once it was established it would stand forever. It is true that once the kingdom (church) was established it would never pass away, never to be destroyed. Dan. 2:44. Even the angel speaking to Mary before Jesus was born said, "And of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:33. But Matthew 16:18 does not teach this. Jesus is here giving proof that even though He must die before that church is built, He will build it nevertheless. The gates of hell, the powers of death, shall not prevent his building his church. Hell in this passage is translated hades in other translations and means the unseen world, the abode of spirits, the intermediate place of the dead both righteous and unrighteous.

In Luke 16:19-31 we have more information about hades, paradise or Abraham's bosom. Both Lazarus and the rich man died. Lazarus is described as being comforted in Abraham's bosom while the rich man is in hell being in torments. The rich man can see Lazarus and suggests that he come to him. However, he learns that Lazarus cannot come to him neither shall he return to testify to his five brothers lest they also come to this place of torment. In Psalm 16:10 David wrote, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Peter tells us plainly that David was not speaking of himself but rather of Christ in Acts 2:25-31. Thus we know exactly where Jesus was while his body was in the tomb. He was in hades, paradise as he spoke of it to the malefactor. His body was not in the tomb long enough to see corruption neither did his Father permit his spirit to remain in hades. Truly He is the One who lives, was dead, and is alive for evermore. Rev. 1:18. Again in Eph. 4:8-10 we have proof as to where Jesus was while his body was in the tomb. Christ is the One who ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fulfill all things; but before He ascended He first descended into the lower parts of the earth. Further proof is given in Jesus' statement to Mary in John 20:17, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Now since

we know positively where Jesus went the very day He died on the cross we know also where the malefactor went because they both were to go to the same place that very day.

Thus we do not have the malefactor in heaven with the Father as some imagine but rather in hades awaiting the resurrection and the judgment. Jesus of course overcame death and hades, is the firstfruits of them that slept, arose to die no more and brought life and immortality to light giving a positive answer to Job's age-long question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Job 14:14.

Now may we consider some other questions. Was the thief saved? Can one today be saved just like the thief? Must one be baptized in order to be saved? First let me say that I see no reason to doubt the salvation of the thief. In Mark 2:5 Jesus said to a man sick of palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Do you doubt that his sins were forgiven? In Luke 7:48 to a sinful woman Jesus said, "Thy sins are forgiven." Do you doubt this? In Luke 19:9 concerning Zacchaeus Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." There is no reason to doubt this either. Then why have or reveal doubts concerning the thief? To be in paradise indicates forgiveness of sins before death and both Jesus and the thief went to paradise the very day they died on the crosses.

We are all acquainted with wills and their importance and effectiveness both before and after the death of the testator; but many times we forget these things when we come to the last will and testament of Jesus. Still Paul says in Heb. 9:16-17, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." A man can make a will at any time. He may name the heirs to his estate. He may stipulate conditions that must be met. But so long as he lives the property is still his. He may change his will. He may write a new one. He may before his death sell, trade or even give his property away.

But after his death no changes can be made, the conditions must be met if those named therein are to receive their inheritance. These same things were true with Jesus and his will. While Jesus lived on the earth his will was not effective. Jesus lived and died under the Ten Commandment Law. Gal. 4:4-5. While He lived He chose men from among his disciples whom He called apostles. These men He instructed for some three and one-half years. Later they were all filled with the Holy Spirit which enabled them to have in remembrance all that Jesus had taught them as well as all that they needed to know in order to write the last will and testament of Jesus, the New Testament scriptures. John 14:26, 16:13 and Acts 2:1-4. Jesus died, sealed his will with his blood, arose the third day, ascended into heaven and has now become both Lord and Christ. Acts 2:36. His will became effective some 1900 years ago on Pentecost following his resurrection at Jerusalem.

Now He no longer grants forgiveness upon different conditions or upon no conditions at all, but He has pointed out in his will, the New Testament, the conditions which must be met by everyone who is to be forgiven, added by Him to his church and thus having the right to be called Christians. What are those conditions? First we must hear and learn of God. John 6:44-45. We must believe God is and that Jesus Christ is his Son. Heb. 11:6, John 3:16. Having come to this belief we must determine to serve and worship Him, to make our lives harmonize with His word; in other words we must repent. Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30. Having determined to reform our lives we freely confess our faith in Christ before men, Matt. 10:32, and are then fit subjects to be baptized for the remission of sins. Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21. Only those who obey him can expect eternal salvation. Heb. 5:8-9. There is salvation in the name of Christ and in His name only. Acts 4:12.

Instead of saying, "I want to be saved, just like the thief," why not be saved in accepting the Lord's invitation to come unto Him. Matt. 11:28. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him. He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

# Can You Not See?

Vipul Rai

On being asked what they must do to be saved, Peter said to them, "**REPENT**" and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

What does this mean? Just what it says.

"Repent, **AND** be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;"

"Repent, and **BE BAPTIZED** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;"

"Repent, and be baptized **EVERY ONE OF YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST** for the forgiveness of your sins;"

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS;**"

Can You not see that these sinners were commanded to Repent and be Baptized? Can You not see the reason why they were to do this? Could they have been forgiven of their sins without complying with these conditions? They had believed, had they not? But were they saved? If so, Peter would not have said "**for the forgiveness of your sins**", would he? Would they have been saved by only obeying one of the commands? Could they just repent or just be baptized, or did they have to do both before they could claim the promise based on these conditions—**forgiveness of sins**? Answer these questions honestly for yourself. Then you will see.

Jesus's final command to his disciples was, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:15-16).

What did Jesus say one must do to be saved?

"He who **BELIEVES** and is baptized will be saved;"



“He who believes **AND** is baptized will be saved;”

“He who believes and **IS BAPTIZED** will be saved;”

“He who believes and is baptized **WILL BE SAVED;**”

Now I ask you : who will be saved? One who believes? One who is baptized? Or one who believes and is baptized?  
**Can you not See?**

In no way am I undermining the atoning death of Christ. I too teach that there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of Jesus' blood (Heb. 9:22). Under no circumstances am I teaching salvation without faith. I accept every verse on faith that you can show me in the New Testament. But I oppose the doctrine of salvation by faith **only**, because the Bible opposes it “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jas. 2:24).

Being the Word of God, the Bible must harmonise and no scriptures contradict each other. If one verse says faith saves (Jno. 3:16) and one verse says one must repent (Lk. 13:3) and one verse says confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:10) and another verse says baptism saves (I Pet. 3:21), then one must believe in Christ, repent of his sins, confess Christ and be immersed in water and only then is one saved, not before.

### **CAN YOU NOT SEE?**

“For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears.”

### **DON'T SHUT YOUR EYES TO THE TRUTH.**

For more on this vital subject, ask for the article “Before or After” from :

C-22 South Extension 2  
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# “Win A Prize” Bible Quiz, No. 5

Vipul Rai, Quizmaster

ALL THOSE WHO SEND IN ALL CORRECT ANSWERS WITH CORRECT SCRIPTURE REFERENCE/S WILL RECEIVE A FREE BOOK. SEND IN YOUR ANSWERS TO THE QUIZMASTER, SOUTH EXTENSION 2, NEW DELHI—110049. THEY MUST REACH US WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

1. Who succeeded Jehoash as the king of Israel?
2. Which Proverb talks about training up a child in the way he should go?
3. Why did the Bereans examine the Scriptures daily? Hint : Acts.
4. What is the sword of the Spirit? Hint : Hebrews.
5. What did Philip preach unto the Eunuch? One word.
6. What should be our attitude towards those who cause division? Hint : Romans.
7. How are the angels affected when a sinner repents? Hint : Luke.
8. What must all Christians do to be forgiven of their sins?
9. What is vain worship? Hint : Matthew.
10. Scriptural baptism requires immersion in water. True or False?

## ANSWERS TO QUIZ NO. 4

1. True, Matthew 13:55. 2. True, 2 Corinthians 11:14.
3. False, Luke 9:22. 4. False, Acts 16:33. 5. Through baptism, Galatians 3:27. 6. 3,000, 1 Kings 4:32. 7. The Fool, Psalms 14:1. 8. About 30, Luke 3:23. 9. True, Titus 1:6.
10. One, 1 Timothy 2:5.

**Note** : We regret that many quiz answers have been rejected as the above instructions were not followed carefully. Your reference must **prove** your answers.

# परमेश्वर की मूर्खता

लेखक : सनी भाई

यद्यपि आज संसार में पाप और तरह-तरह की बुराईयां अधिकांश लोगों को अपनी ओर आकृषित कर रही हैं। परन्तु, दूसरी ओर बहुतेरे लोग आज परमेश्वर की उपस्थिति का अनुभवभी कर रहे हैं। बहुतेरे ऐसे लोग भी जो कुछ समय पहले परमेश्वर की निन्दा करते थे, अब उसके अस्तित्व को मान रहे हैं। मनुष्य आज अपने लिये परमेश्वर की आवश्यकता का अनुभव करने लगा है तथा अपने पापों से मुक्ति प्राप्त करने के लिये तरह-तरह के मार्गों द्वारा परमेश्वर के पास पहुंचने का प्रयत्न कर रहा है। लोगों ने अपने लिये आज सैकड़ों गुरु, बाबा, देवी तथा देवता इत्यादि ढूँढ लिये हैं, और उनकी शिक्षाओं पर चलकर, उनके द्वारा परमेश्वर को पाने का प्रयत्न कर रहे हैं।

परन्तु यदि एक परमेश्वर है, और यह सत्य है, तो उस का एक ही मार्ग होना चाहिए। यद्यपि मनुष्य को अन्य-अन्य मार्ग ठीक लगते हैं, परन्तु ये मनुष्य के ज्ञान के अनुसार हैं। पवित्र बाइबल का लेखक कहता है, "ऐसा मार्ग है, जो मनुष्य को ठीक देख पड़ता है, परन्तु उसके अन्त में मृत्यु ही मिलती है।" (नीतिवचन १४:१२)।

आज मनुष्य अपने ज्ञान पर इतना भरोसा करने लगा है कि परमेश्वर का सरल मार्ग व उसकी सरल आज्ञाएं उसे मूर्खता प्रतीत होती हैं, और इसी कारण मनुष्य, परमेश्वर की सरल आज्ञाओं को न मानकर, अपने लिये, अपने ज्ञान के अनुसार, तरह-तरह के मार्गों की खोज कर रहा है। वास्तव में, मनुष्य का स्वभाव सदा से ही ऐसा रहा है। परन्तु, प्रेरित पोलुस ने बाइबल में, १ कुरिन्थियों १:२५ में, लिखते हुए कहा, "परमेश्वर की मूर्खता मनुष्यों के ज्ञान से ज्ञानवान है, और परमेश्वर की निर्बलता मनुष्यों के बल से बहुत बलवान है।" बाइबल में, 'परमेश्वर की मूर्खता' के ज्ञान के उदाहरण कई स्थानों पर मिलते हैं, किन्तु इस समय हम उन में से चार को देखेंगे। अब ध्यान से पढ़िए, और यदि आप के पास बाइबल हो तो उसमें से भी देखिए।

१. जब परमेश्वर इस्त्राएलियों को मूसा के द्वारा मित्रियों के हाथ से छुड़ा लाया और वे मूसा की अगुवाई में प्रतिज्ञा किए हुए देश की ओर बढ़ते चले जाते थे व, "फिर उन्होंने होर पहाड़ से कूच करके लाल समुद्र का मार्ग लिया, कि एदोम देश से बाहर-बाहर घूमकर जाएं ; और लोगों का मन मार्ग के कारण बहुत व्याकुल हो गया। सो वे परमेश्वर के विरुद्ध बात करने लगे, और मूसा से कहा, तुम लोग हम को मिस्र से जंगल में मरने के लिये क्यों ले आए हो ? यहां न तो रोटी है, और न पानी, और हमारे प्राण इस निकम्मी रोटी

से दुखित हैं । सो यहोवा (परमेश्वर) ने उन लोगों में तेज विष वाले सांप भेजे जो उनको डसने लगे, और बहुत से इस्राएली मर गए । तब लोग मूसा के पास जाकर कहने लगे, हम ने पाप किया है, कि हम ने यहोवा के और तेरे विरुद्ध बातें की हैं ; यहोवा से प्रार्थना कर, कि वह सांपों को हम से दूर करे । तब मूसा ने उन के लिये प्रार्थना की । यहोवा ने मूसा से कहा, एक तेज विष वाले सांप की प्रतिमा बनवाकर खम्भे पर लटका तब जो सांप से डसा हुआ उसको देख ले वह जीवित बचेगा । सो मूसा ने पीतल का एक सांप बनवाकर खम्भे पर लटकाया ; तब सांप के डसे हुए लोगों में से जिस जिस ने उस पीतल के सांप की ओर देखा वह जीवित बच गया ।” (गिनती २१:४-६) ।

२. उस समय इस्राएली जहां कहीं भी जाते थे उनकी जीत होती थी क्योंकि परमेश्वर उनके साथ था, अब वे यहोशु की अगुवाई में आगे बढ़ रहे थे । “और यरीहो के सब फाटक इस्राएलियों के डर के मारे लगातार बन्द रहे, और कोई बाहर भीतर आने जाने नहीं पाता था । फिर यहोवा ने यहोशु से कहा, सुन, मैं यरीहो को उसके राजा और शूरवीरों समेत तेरे वश में कर देता हूँ सो तुम में जितने योद्धा हैं नगर को घेर लें, और उस नगर के चारों ओर एक बार घूम आएं । और छः दिन तक ऐसा ही किया करना । और सात याजक संदूक के आगे जुबली के सात नरसिंगे लिये हुए चलें ; फिर सातवें दिन तुम नगर के चारों ओर सात बार घूमना, और याजक भी नरसिंगे फूंकते चलें । और जब वे जुबली के नरसिंगे देर तक फूंकते रहें, तब सब लोग नरसिंगे का शब्द सुनते ही बड़ी ध्वनि से जय जयकार करें ; तब नगर की शहरपनाह नव से गिर जाएगी, और सब लोग अपने अपने साम्हने चढ़ जाएं ।.....बिहान को यहोशु सवेरे उठा, और याजकों ने यहोवा का संदूक उठा लिया । और उन सात याजकों ने जुबली के सात नरसिंगे लिये और यहोवा के संदूक के आगे-आगे फूंकते हुए चले ; और उनके आगे हथियार बन्द पुरुष चले, और पीछेवाले यहोवा के संदूक के पीछे पीछे चले, और याजक नरसिंगे फूंकते चले गए । इस प्रकार वे दूसरे दिन भी एक बार नगर के चारों ओर घूमकर छावनी में लौट आए । और इसी प्रकार उन्होंने छः दिन तक किया । फिर सातवें दिन वे भोर को बड़े तड़के उठकर उसी रीति से नगर के चारों ओर सात बार घूम आए ; केवल उसी दिन वे सात बार घूमे । तब सातवीं बार जब याजक नरसिंगे फूंकते थे, तब यहोशु ने लोगों से कहा, जय जयकार करो ; क्योंकि यहोवा ने यह नगर तुम्हें दे दिया है ।.....तब लोगों ने जय जयकार किया और याजक नरसिंगे फूंकते रहे । और जब लोगों ने नरसिंगे का शब्द सुना तो फिर बड़ी ही ध्वनि से उन्होंने जय जयकार किया, तब शहर-पनाह नव से गिर पड़ी, और लोग अपने-अपने साम्हने से उस नगर में चढ़ गए, और नगर को ले लिया ।” (यहोशु ६: १-५, १२-१६, २०) ।

३. उस समय अराम के राजा का एक सेनापति था जिसका नाम नामान था, परन्तु वह कोढ़ी था। उसे पता चला कि इस्राएल में एलीशा नाम का एक परमेश्वर का भक्त, भविष्यद्वक्ता, रहता है तथा वह उसे चंगा कर सकता है, क्योंकि परमेश्वर उसके साथ था, "तब नामान घोड़ों और रथों समेत एलीशा के द्वार पर आकर खड़ा हुआ। तब एलीशा ने एक दूत से उसके पास यह कहला भेजा, कि तू जाकर यरदन में सात बार डुबकी मार, तब तेरा शरीर ज्यों का त्यों हो जाएगा, और तू शुद्ध होगा। परन्तु नामान क्रोधित हो यह कहता हुआ चला गया, कि मैंने तो सोचा था, कि अवश्य वह मेरे पास बाहर आएगा, और खड़ा होकर अपने यहोवा परमेश्वर से प्रार्थना करके कोढ़ के स्थान पर अपना हाथ फेरकर कोढ़ को दूर करेगा ! क्या दमिश्क की अबाना और पर्वर नदियां इस्राएल के सब जलाशयों से उत्तम नहीं हैं ? क्या मैं उनमें स्नान करके शुद्ध नहीं हो सकता हूँ ? इसलिये वह जलजलाहट से भरा हुआ लौटकर चला गया। तब उसके सेवक पास आकर कहने लगे, हे हमारे पिता यदि भविष्यद्वक्ता तुम्हें कोई भारी काम करने की आज्ञा देता, तो क्या तू उसे न करता ? फिर जब वह कहता है कि स्नान करके शुद्ध हो जा, तो कितना अधिक इसे मानना चाहिए। तब उस ने परमेश्वर के भक्त के वचन के अनुसार यरदन को जाकर उस में सात बार डुबकी मारी, और उस का शरीर छोटे लड़के का सा हो गया ; और वह शुद्ध हो गया।" (२ राजा ५: ६-१४)।

४. यीशु जिस थोड़े से समय के लिये इस संसार में था उसमें रहकर उस ने प्रचार किया तथा इधर उधर घूम-घूमकर उसने बहुतेरे लोगों को चंगा किया "फिर जाते हुए उस ने एक मनुष्य को देखा जो जन्म का अन्धा था। और उसके नेत्रों ने उस से पूछा, हे रब्बी, किस ने पाप किया था कि यह अन्धा जन्मा, इस मनुष्य ने, या उसके माता-पिता ने ? यीशु ने उत्तर दिया, कि न तो इस ने पाप किया था ; न इसके माता-पिता ने : परन्तु यह इसलिये हुआ, कि परमेश्वर के काम उस में प्रगट हों.....यह कहकर उसने भूमि पर थूका और उस थूक से मिट्टी सानी और वह मिट्टी उस अन्धे की आंखों पर लगाकर। उस से कहा ; जा शीलोह के कुण्ड में धो ले, सो उसने जाकर धोया, और देखता हुआ लौट आया।" (यूहन्ना ९:१-७)।

ऊपर लिखे चारों उद्धारणों में परमेश्वर ने लोगों को कुछ न कुछ करने को कहा, और जब उन्होंने ठीक वैसा ही किया तभी वे बचे या चंगे हुए।

अब, परमेश्वर जानता है कि सब मनुष्य पापी हैं और उन्हें मुक्ति या उद्धार की आवश्यकता है। परमेश्वर ने मनुष्य का उद्धार करने के लिये

अपने पुत्र यीशु मसीह को इस संसार में भेज दिया ताकि क्रूस पर उसकी मृत्यु के द्वारा मनुष्य का उद्धार हो सके। लगभग दो हजार वर्ष हुए जब कि यीशु क्रूस पर चढ़ा कर मार डाला गया। मृत्यु के तीन दिन के बाद यीशु जी उठा और बहुतेरे लोगों को दिखाई दिया। फिर अपने चेलों से मिलकर, उसने उन्हें आज्ञा दी कि तुम जाकर दुनिया के सब लोगों को यह सुसमाचार प्रचार करो कि अब वे यीशु मसीह की क्रूस पर मृत्यु तथा जी उठने के द्वारा उद्धार प्राप्त कर सकते हैं, और उस ने एक आज्ञा दी कि इस आज्ञा को मानने के बाद ही लोगों को उद्धार प्राप्त होगा, तथा इसे कोई भी मान सकता है, उस ने कहा, "जो विश्वास करे और बपतिस्मा ले उसी का उद्धार होगा, परन्तु जो विश्वास न करेगा वह दोषी ठहराया जाएगा (मरकुस १६:१६)।" यह कहकर यीशु मसीह अपने पिता के पास स्वर्ग में वापस चला गया। (बपतिस्मे का अर्थ है, पानी के अन्दर गाड़े जाना तथा उससे बाहर आना—यह यीशु मसीह की मृत्यु, गाड़े जाना, तथा जी उठने का प्रतीक है—तथा यह अवश्य ही विश्वास लाने के बाद ही लिया जाना चाहिए)। उस समय से अब तक अनेकों लोगों ने प्रभु यीशु की आज्ञा को माना है और ऐसा करके उससे उद्धार प्राप्त किया है। परन्तु बहुतेरे लोगों के लिये यह मूर्खता की बात है। वे, नामान की तरह, तर्क करते हैं कि, क्रूस पर मसीह की मृत्यु, विश्वास तथा बपतिस्मा लेने से उद्धार कैसे मिल सकता है ?

पौलुस, पवित्रशास्त्र में कहता है, "क्रूस की कथा नाश होनेवालों के निकट मूर्खता है, परन्तु हम उद्धार पानेवालों के निकट परमेश्वर की सामर्थ्य है। क्योंकि लिखा है, कि मैं ज्ञानवानो के ज्ञान को नाश करूंगा और समझदारों की समझ को तुच्छ कर दूंगा। कहां रहा ज्ञानवान ? कहां रहा शास्त्री ? कहां इस संसार का विवादी ? क्या परमेश्वर ने संसार के ज्ञान को मूर्खता नहीं ठहराया ? क्योंकि जब परमेश्वर के ज्ञान के अनुसार संसार ने ज्ञान से परमेश्वर को न जाना तो परमेश्वर को यह अच्छा लगा ; कि इस प्रचार की मूर्खता के द्वारा विश्वास करनेवालों को उद्धार दे। यहूदी तो चिन्ह चाहते हैं, और यूनानी ज्ञान की खोज में हैं। परन्तु हम तो उस क्रूस पर चढ़ाए हुए मसीह का प्रचार करते हैं जो यहूदियों के निकट ठोकर का कारण, और अन्य जातियों के निकट मूर्खता है। परन्तु जो बुलाए हुए हैं क्या यहूदी, क्या यूनानी, उन के निकट मसीह परमेश्वर की सामर्थ्य, और परमेश्वर का ज्ञान है। क्योंकि परमेश्वर की मूर्खता मनुष्यों के ज्ञान से ज्ञानवान है ; और परमेश्वर की निर्बलता मनुष्यों के बल से बहुत बलवान है।" (१ कुरिन्थियों १:१८-२५)

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