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THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Published by Church of Christ, C-22 South Extension-2,
New Delhi-49

Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 4

No. 7



The Eating of Meats

Here in India there are many vegetarians. These are people who do not eat meat in any form but stay with vegetables for their diet. This is usually a religious practice based on the idea that animals represent former human beings and naturally one would not want to eat them. In recent times more and more people in the West have also begun to abstain from the eating of meats, usually because such people reason that it is wrong to kill any living thing. They mean by this that they are opposed to taking the life of any animal for the purpose of food or for any other reason.

Some people, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, approach the eating of meats as a health problem and so they teach their members and people in general that it is not healthy to eat meat. Of course they get their supposed authority for this in the Law of Moses. Until recently the Catholic Church forbade the eating of meat on Friday. Muslims, Jews, and perhaps others, forbid the eating of pork and other such meat, based on the teaching of the Old Testament of the Bible.

While we are aware of all of this, and the fact that those who abstain from the eating of meats usually do so on religious

grounds, Christians cannot agree with such practices. Rather, we believe that it is altogether right and proper to eat meats of various kinds and we are going to show you this from the Bible.

At the time of creation, and before man sinned, we read, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." (Genesis 1 : 29-31). Then after man had sinned God gave Adam and Eve "coats of skins and clothed them." (Genesis 3 : 21). In the story of Cain and Abel, the record says that Cain offered the fruit of the land to God as a sacrifice while Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, and because Abel offered by faith, as he had been instructed, then God accepted his offering and rejected Cain's. As a result, Cain became jealous and slew his brother Abel. (Genesis 4 : 1-15; Hebrews 11 : 4).

After the flood, in which all the wicked were destroyed, we read : "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things." (Genesis 9 : 1-3).

Within the Law of Moses was given a list of clean and unclean meats. Man could eat the clean but could not the unclean animals, fowls, etc. Let us read : "And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall

eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless, these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh ye shall not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch: they are unclean to you," (Leviticus 11 : 1-8). He goes on to instruct them on clean and unclean fish and of the fowls of the air. All of these things were clean or unclean depending on whether they were scavengers or not, whether they were susceptible to diseases or not, etc. In other words, the Lord laid down these rules and regulations on these living creatures as a means of safeguarding his people from diseases, in order to discipline them, and to keep them pure for himself.

Coming on over to the days of Jesus Christ, we have the scriptures saying that he fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes. (Matthew 14:17). After the Lord's death, burial and resurrection, Jesus appeared before the Apostles on one occasion and "He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." (Luke 24 : 41-43).

Because of idol worship among the heathen in the early days of Christianity, many Christians thought it would be wrong to eat the meat of a sacrificed animal. Of course there was nothing wrong with the meat itself, but if one's conscience would not allow him to eat such meat then naturally he was not to eat. But those whose conscience did not forbid them eating such meat could do so, provided they did not offend a brother who thought it was wrong to eat such meat. In this case, they

were told not to eat. Paul says himself : "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Corinthians 8 : 13).

With the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the New Testament, which is the law of Christ, no longer is there a distinction to be made between Jew and Gentile, as there was under the law of Moses, and neither is a distinction to be made any longer between clean and unclean animals. In other words, now all people are to have the right to hear and obey the gospel, just as all animals are clean and can be used for meat for human consumption. This is brought out in the story of Cornelius and his conversion. Let us read some of it : "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, what is it, Lord ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter : He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually ; And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour : And he became very hungry, and would have eaten : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth : Wherein were all manner of

fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter ; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice : and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing : for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius ; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek : what is the cause wherefore ye are come ? And they said, Cornelius the centurian, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up : I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation ; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10 : 1-28). The story goes on to tell that Peter preached the gospel to them and they were obedient to it, and thus became the first Gentile Christians. The

whole point is that God used the animals of the vision to teach Peter that even as all animals are now clean even so both Jew and Gentile are to hear the gospel. At the same time we learn from this that no longer is any animal, fowl or other flesh unclean for men.

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning some things that would eventually come to pass, and he said : "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils ; Speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their conscience seared with a hot iron : Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanks giving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving : For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (1 Timothy 4 : 1-5) Please note that the writer is saying that one of the signs of brethren departing from the faith would be that they would begin to abstain from the eating of meats. He didn't say that it was wrong to eat meats but he stressed the fact that when man would begin to abstain from the eating of meats, thus making a law where God had not made one, then they would be sinning. He went on to show that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving." This means today, then, that we may eat meat of all animals, fowls, and fish. It does not mean that we *must* do this, but we can if we so desire.

If one chooses to be a vegetarian, he can. However, he cannot insist that all others must be vegetarian. Neither is there any wrong done when animals, fowls, and fish, are killed for food. It is true that they represent life, and that in death they suffer momentarily, but they were given for man's use. They do not have souls and neither do they have the ability to think and reason. Therefore, they are not equal to man.

It is not true that man dies, and, because of the way he lived, returns in the form of some animal or some other living

creature. The Bible says, rather, that when man dies his body returns to the dust of the earth and his spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12 : 7). It also says that after death cometh the judgment. (Hebrews 9 : 27).

Those who are vegetarian on the basis that they do not believe in killing animals do not hesitate to take the life of plants for their use. Don't they have life, feeling, etc. ? Theirs is a different type of life, but it is still life. When they are cut down or taken for food they wilt and die. If they are not used they will decay. It would appear that to use the one is the same as using the other.

Think about this : Suppose all people everywhere became vegetarian, believing that it is wrong to use animals for meat. This would mean that all animals, as well as fowl and fish, would multiply at such a rate that it wouldn't be long until they would be consuming all of the plants and grain to the point that the world's population would soon be on starvation. Therefore, the eating of meat is a necessity. Look at the animals themselves. Do they not kill one another for meat ? What does the tiger eat ? The lion ? And countless other animals ? With the law of nature being such that they live off of each other, and with man's use of them for food, then a balance is kept that is to the advantage of both the animals and man.

In the final analysis, we are often the products of our environment. If we have grown up among those who are vegetarian, then we are the same. If we have been reared among those who eat meat then we do likewise. If certain animals, birds, etc., are rejected as food, then we reject them. But regardless of what we think, believe, or practice, the Bible says, and Christianity teaches, that every living creature is for man's use, for the purpose of food as well as for other purposes. We are violating no law when we so use them. Thus, instead of animals controlling us, we control them for the good of all.

How the Church is Organized

The church is the divine institution. In no way is it a mere meeting house or a certain structure etc., as it is commonly understood or supposed by many. The church, in fact, is the greatest, divinely authorised, body that has ever existed in the world. Christ, who came from heaven, founded it. (Matthew 16 : 18). Thus it has a divine founder. It was also founded on the divine foundation, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3 : 11). Its members wear a divinely authorised name—"Christians": (Isaiah 56 : 5 and 62 : 2 ; Acts 4 : 12 ; Acts 11 : 26). It also has a divinely approved creed or constitution, the Bible, by which alone it is governed. (2 Peter 1 : 3, 20,21; 2 Timothy 3 : 16, 17).

Since the church is a divine institution, therefore it is necessary that its organization must also be divinely approved. And it is so, God's Word teaches us that :

1. Christ is the head of the church. After referring to the fact that God has exalted Christ above every thing, Paul in Ephesians 1 : 22,23, says, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. "Emphasizing the fact, he again, in Colossians 1 : 18, said, "And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning; the firstborn from the dead ; that in all things he might have preeminence."

2. All those who have believed in Christ and have obeyed Christ, that is, have repented of their sins, confessed or owned Christ, and have been baptized, buried under water, for the remission of sins, constitute the church. (Mark 16 : 16 ; Acts 2 : 38 and 8 : 36-39). It must be noticed that Christ saves a person on the basis of one's faith and obedience to his command and then he adds him to the Church. (Acts 2 : 47). Neither does he own more than one church, nor would he add the saved to several different churches, but to **the church**. The local congregations of **the church** are known as the churches of the Lord or churches of Christ. (Romans 16 : 16). All con-

gregations of **the church** have the same head, foundation, name, creed, and mission.

3. The Holy Spirit has taught that from among the members of the church men of certain qualifications should be chosen and ordained to serve as elders or bishops in every church. (Titus 1 : 5 ; Acts 20 : 28). For qualifications of elders or pastors or bishops, and also for their duties, see in your Bible (1 Timothy 3 : 1-7 ; Titus 1 : 6-9). The work of the elders or bishops, also seen from the aforesaid scriptures, is to be the shepherd to the church and to exercise the oversight. However, it is very noteworthy that in each church there should be a plurality of elders or pastors, and not one bishop or pastor over one or several churches. Why this is so ? Bro. H. Leo Boles, in one of his articles, explains it in this way, "The wisdom of God is seen in such an arrangement for his churches. If one became corrupted in doctrine or effected by evil practices, other churches would not be so effected. If dissension arose in one, it would not spread to the others ; if one perished, the others would not be dragged down. If a window is made of one large pane, a break injures the entire pane ; but if it be made of several panes, it is not so bad to break one."

4. As elders, so deacons must be chosen and appointed in every congregation. Deacons are to serve under the elders as helpers. They must also possess some certain qualifications to be qualified to serve as deacons. For qualifications of deacons see 1 Timothy 3 : 8-13.

5. In the church, then, there should be evangelists or preachers. Their work is to preach the good news of Christ. (Acts 8 : 5, 12). They are to preach, teach, and exhort. (2 Timothy 4 : 1-5). However, evangelists or preachers should not be confused with bishops, elders or pastors.

While elders, deacons, and evangelists have specific works to do in the church, all Christians, being members of the church, are also expected to work for the growth of the church, according to their several abilities. For instance, some can

preach and teach to others. (Acts 8 : 1-4). Others may be able to support the church financially. (Acts 11 : 27-29; 2 Corinthians 8 : 1-4 ; 1 Corinthians 9 : 6-14).

This is the divine arrangement for the church. The Lord's church has no earthly head or headquarter. Christ is the only head of the church, and now he is in heaven, so the headquarters of the church is also there where its head is. Christ exercises all authority over his church by the instructions left, by his guidance, in the New Testament, his law.

“Win A Prize” Bible Quiz, No. 7

Send in all correct answers and win a book that will be very valuable to you. Accompany every answer with one or more scripture references and send it to the Quizmaster within two weeks or you will be disqualified.

1. Who was Moses' grandfather ?
2. Ruth is mentioned in Luke's genealogy of Jesus. True or False.
3. Lebbeus Thaddeus was also called by another name. Which ? Use King James Version. Give only the verse where you find his other name. Hint : Compare gospel lists of the Apostles.
4. We must have on the breastplate of.....
Fill in the blank. Hint : A six-chapter book.
5. Peter said that the devil went about like a wild bear. True or False.

IN REPLY TO LETTERS : These quizzes are quite difficult as the prizes offered are meant for the diligent students of the Bible. If you're a beginner do not be discouraged. Try it anyway.

Many have written asking for the prizes even though they send in wrong answers. This cannot be done. Others have

written asking for extra prizes for friends. If you want your friend to have the prize then ask him to attempt the quiz. Don't show your answers to him though ! Sorry we are unable to send you your corrected papers.

Note : If we see that only a few have won a certain prize, we shall offer the same prize in a future quiz. This will give you the opportunity to win all our prizes. Please do not ruin the magazine by tearing out the quizzes. Simply send us the answers. Also, **do not send us back the magazine.** It is meant for your permanent keeping. If you don't want it, give it to some one else.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ NO. 6

1. Amos, Amos 8:1.
2. John 17.
3. False, Acts 8 : 13-22.
4. For man, 1 Corinthians 11 : 9.
5. Hear the word, Romans 10 : 14-17.
6. Peter, Acts 10 ; 11 : 14.
7. 1 Corinthians 1 : 10-17.
8. Acts, chapters 2,8,16, etc.
9. True, Colossians 1 : 18 ; Ephesians 1 : 22, 23.
10. True, Mark 16 : 16 ; 1 Peter 3 : 21.

Seeking the Same God

Jess Willis

“Do we not seek to serve the same God and study from the same Bible ? If so, what is keeping us from uniting in Christ as we should be ?” This thinking over a century and a half ago led men of various groups to begin a spirit of free and frank discussion of God's word that they may be united. Some of the first men involved in promoting these free discussions were Barton W. Stone a Presbyterian, Abner Jones a Baptist, and James O'Kelly a Methodist. They did not want to start a new religion. They wanted to restore the New Testament Christianity to a world that has been torn by sectarian strife and confusion. They began a plea for discarding human names, organizations, and practices and return to the Bible as the only authoritative instructions from God.

We can never have real Christian unity by agreeing to give up part of the doctrines that I follow on the basis that you give up two doctrines that you follow. I submit that the only way that we can enjoy the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" is for us to have free and frank discussions in studying the Bible together and accepting the Bible as the only authority in religion. By this I mean not only the accepting of the Bible in theory as our only guide, but actually discarding all human creeds, whether written or unwritten, and to live by the Bible teachings. Just let the Bible be our creed and only creed.

Do not all the religious people who read this desire to worship God, respect Jesus as Christ the Saviour, and consider the Bible to be the inspired word of God? Every honest, sincere, God-fearing person should have a burning desire to be united with all people that are of like minds. Come let us reason together and grow closer to one another and to the Lord.

Do you want to be Rich ?

Vipul Rai

Of course you do. Everyone does, so do I. Many people have learned the secret of growing rich and getting richer day by day. I discovered this secret just two years ago, and believe it or not, I want to share this secret of riches and happiness with you too. You may be surprised but I am interested in increasing **your** bank account !

Reading what's written so far you probably think I've gone crazy in the head. Who has ever heard of someone interested in increasing another's bank account ! I'm sure that's what you're thinking. But kindly read on and let me explain.

You may have your money stored in the Reserve Bank, State Bank of India, or the Punjab National Bank. Let me assure you, I'm not going to touch any of it, even if I could ! I have quite a different Bank in mind. Perhaps you've never

even heard its name before, because its name doesn't remind one of any bank at all. Have you ever heard of a Bank where your treasure is **absolutely** safe and where thieves do not even try to break into? Have you heard of the Bank that cares for you even after you are dead? Did you know that a Bank exists whose vaults challenge the deadliest bombs and which claims to last forever, even after this world ends? This Bank's Authority can be got in touch with **anywhere**; even in your own home! Now I'm sure you think I'm mad. Still, why not read on. You won't regret it.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Now you know which Bank this is. This is heaven! This quotation is from the sixth chapter of Matthew, a portion of the Bible, the Word of God. This is all quite wonderful, you may say, but how do I open my account there? Let me give you the Bible answer. It is self-explanatory. There are no forms to be filled in, no pass books or any other formalities. But there are certain conditions to be fulfilled and some things you've got to realise before you can start placing your treasures in the Bank.

Firstly, you've got to believe that such a Bank exists. After all, you're not going to place your money in a bank whose existence you're not sure of. You'll need faith to believe in a Bank you cannot see as yet. The next thing you need to do is to go to its Authority, Christ and **do** what he says. Unless you do so, your money may not be safe at all. It may be misplaced into a temporary bank. Surely you want your treasures to be safe for ever. So you've got to fulfill **all** Christ's commands. Once you've done this you are added into this eternal bond. Your account is now opened and the reward of your daily labour is automatically stored there. The interest rate is fantastic. It's beyond our imagination. After obeying Christ you

long to serve him out of gratitude because you realise what he has done for you. You get richer and richer day by day by working for him. You can only serve him for a life time but Jesus in his infinite love for you, gives you the **gift of everlasting life** ! You are given the crown of life. You then live forever with Christ in his kingdom. You won't ever die again. Just think about that ! I have experienced alot of Christ's great love, and believe that he will do what he says. He has never failed me. You cannot find a better Master ! Why not join me and thousands of other Christians and let's work together for him. He takes care of all my needs. He will take care of yours. I have never lacked, not once. This is how YOU can be rich—yes, rich indeed !

Learn of the Bible and the way to heaven where you can have **eternal riches**. Write for Free Correspondence courses.

Keep Hoping !

Tommy Exum

Man has always been disappointed with life. Life seems to promise so much and often seems to deliver little. This is no pessimistic complaint against life, for we are satisfied with whatever God sends us. However, everyone who lives very long knows that many of his dreams and ambitions never materialize. Often he must settle for much less than he had expected. No matter how successful a life may be, it also has its disappointments and failures.

One of the most meaningful sentences that the apostle Paul ever wrote is that found in 2 Corinthians 4 : 17, 18, where he said, "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

In the lives of everyone there is often a deep longing for something better. The innocence of childhood is shattered by the stark reality of the adult world. Many of the psychological problems that are so common in today's society come from man's inability to face the real, disappointing world. He sometimes retreats from life itself due to the many frustrations and disappointments he encounters.

Christ holds out the only real hope for the disappointments and discouragements of our world. Instead of trying to hide his face from the reality of the problems in our world, as many

do, the Christian faces reality strengthened by an inner power that comes from his faith in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews summed it up best when he wrote, "We have an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast." Hebrews 6 : 19. It is this hope in Christ that gives us strength to face the unpleasant realities that sometimes come in life.

Life has many mountain-peak experiences, which are pleasant and enjoyable. It also has valleys which are difficult indeed. Our hope is our anchor that sustains us in these difficult periods of life. It is our "hope in Christ" that enables us to continue on to ultimate victory.

Winners of Bible Quizzes

No : 1 : D. Elisha, C. A. Thomas, Vincent Juan, G. Kamkhawthawng, G. Vum Zathang, N. Victor, C.A. Titus, Desmond E. Samuels, Jampu Guite, P. Paul Joseph.

Late but correct entries, no award : P. Prakasm, K. Guite, Tonsing T. Khanpao, P. B. Nathaniel.

No. 2 : P. Paul Joseph, D. Elisha, I.D. Singh, L.K. James Guite. G. Vumzathang, Joseph J. Karoor, John Anand Masih, G. Liangkawzam, P. Tualzalian Guite, Miss Jebarani Wilson.

Late, correct, no award : N. Williams, D. E. Samuels, E. K. Durairaj, G. Vum Kamkhawthawng, Vincent Juan, Mrs. Nalini Nehemiah Gootam, Miss N. Clara, N. Victor, P. B. Nathaniel.

No. 3 ; P. B. Nathaniel, Lawrence Raj, D. Elisha, Lk James Guite, G. Kamkhawthawng.

Late, correct, no award ; Miss Jaya Prabha.

Do not be discouraged if you have not won any quiz so far. Just keep trying and you will succeed. We regret our inability to correspond with those of you who have requested your corrected entries back. If you keep a copy of your answers, you can compare them when the answers appear in the magazine. We deeply appreciate your manifested interest. Keep it up !

Your Quizmaster

NOTE :

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परमेश्वर का महान प्रेम

लेखक : एफ० डेविड

“विश्वास, आशा, प्रेम ये तीनों स्थायी हैं पर इनमें सब से बड़ा प्रेम है” (१ कुरिन्थियों १३ : १३) । जी हाँ, संसार में सबसे बड़ा प्रेम है । यह कतई सत्य है । सन् १६२७ से १६५७ तक एक सम्राट हुआ जिसे इतिहास में शाहजहाँ के नाम से पुकारा जाता है । शाहजहाँ की बेगम मुमताज बहुत रूपवती स्त्री थी । शाहजहाँ उससे अपार प्रेम करता था । अपनी मृत्यु से पूर्व बेगम मुमताज ने शाहजहाँ से कहा हमारा प्रेम इतिहास में अमर रहेगा । मुमताज ने शाहजहाँ से कहा कि आप एक ऐसा स्मारक बनाना जो सदा हमारे इस प्रेम की निशानी बना रहे । शाहजहाँ ने बेगम की इच्छा पूर्ण करने का वचन दिया । और उसने उसकी स्मृति में एक ऐसा स्मारक बनवाया जो कि अपनी सुन्दरता के लिए संसार भर में प्रसिद्ध है तथा ताजमहल के नाम से जाना जाता है । ये तो था शाहजहाँ का अमर प्रेम ! परन्तु क्या आप परमेश्वर के महान प्रेम के विषय में जानते हैं ? शायद आप इसके विषय में अज्ञात हों । तो आइये परमेश्वर के इस महान् प्रेम के विषय में देखें ।

लगभग १९०० वर्ष पहले की बात है, कि जब संसार में पाप मनुष्य के बीच बहुत बढ़ता जा रहा था तो परमेश्वर ने एक योजना बनाई, और यह योजना थी कि परमेश्वर ने अपने एकलौते पुत्र ‘यीशु मसीह’ को इस संसार में भेजा ताकि वह पापियों को उनके पापों से छुटकारा दे । ऐसा परमेश्वर ने क्यों किया ? क्योंकि उसको इस जगत से प्रेम था (पढ़िए यूहन्ना ३:१६, १७) ।

परमेश्वर के वचन बाइबल में हम पढ़ते हैं, कि सबने पाप किया है (रोमियों ३:२३), फिर हम यह भी साफ पढ़ते हैं कि पाप की मज़दूरी मृत्यु है (रोमियों ६:२३) । इसी पाप की मृत्यु से हमें बचाने के लिए, परमेश्वर ने हम से इतना बड़ा प्रेम किया । पौलूस लिखता है, “परन्तु परमेश्वर हम

पर अपने प्रेम की भलाई इस रीति से प्रकट करता है, कि जब हम पापी ही थे तभी मसीह हमारे लिये मरा (रोमियों ५:८)

जब हम परमेश्वर के प्रेम के विषय में देखते हैं तो अवश्य हमें यीशु मसीह के प्रेम को भी देखना चाहिए, कि किस प्रकार यीशु मसीह ने परमेश्वर की आज्ञा को माना, तथा सारे जगत के पापियों के लिए क्रूस पर अपने प्राण दे दिए। क्या संसार में कोई ऐसा व्यक्ति हुआ है जो स्वयं तो निष्पापी था परन्तु दूसरों के पापों के लिए मर गया? मेरा जहाँ तक विचार है संसार में कोई ऐसा व्यक्ति नहीं हुआ। यह बात बिलकुल सत्य है। बहुत से लोग ऐसे भी हैं जो इस बात को सत्य नहीं मानते। वह शायद सोचते हैं कि यह मनगढ़न्त बात है, परन्तु परमेश्वर का वचन ऐसे लोगों के लिए कहता है, "क्योंकि क्रूस की कथा नाश होने वालों के निकट मूर्खता है, परन्तु हम उद्धार पानेवालों के निकट परमेश्वर की सामर्थ्य है (१ कुरिन्थियों १:१८)

प्रिय मित्र क्या आप यह स्वीकार करते हैं कि मैं पापी हूँ तथा पाप की मजदूरी मृत्यु है। यदि आप यह स्वीकार करते हैं तो आप इससे छुटकारा भी पा सकते हैं। अभी आपने परमेश्वर के कितने महान प्रेम को देखा, कि किस प्रकार से परमेश्वर ने अपने एकलौते पुत्र को जो उसका प्रिय पुत्र था इस जगत में भेजा कि वह पापियों को उद्धार दे तथा उनको पाप की मजदूरी से बचाए। अब परमेश्वर ने तो अपना प्रेम प्रकट कर दिया, किन्तु क्या आप, अपना प्रेम परमेश्वर के प्रति नहीं दिखा सकते? आप किस प्रकार से परमेश्वर के सम्मुख अपना प्रेम प्रकट कर सकते हैं? उसकी आज्ञाओं को मानकर। परमेश्वर चाहता है कि हम पाप न करें तथा अपने को इससे बचाएं। यदि वास्तव में हम अपना प्रेम परमेश्वर के प्रति दिखाना चाहते हैं तो अवश्य ही हमें उसकी आज्ञा भी माननी होगी। परमेश्वर चाहता है कि हम अच्छे मसीही बनें जो वास्तव में उसके वचन अनुसार हों। यदि आप परमेश्वर की आज्ञा को मानना चाहते हैं तो आज ही हमें डाक द्वारा सूचित करें। यदि आपके सामने कोई ऐसी अड़चन आती है जो आपको परमेश्वर की आज्ञा मानने में रुकावट उत्पन्न करे तो याद रखिए परमेश्वर का महान प्रेम!

कौन परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य नहीं है !

लेखक : एफ़० डेविड

इस संसार में बहुत से राजा हुए, जिनके अपने-अपने राज्य थे तथा इन सब राजाओं ने अपने-अपने राज्यों पर राज्य किया। परन्तु इन राजाओं का राज्य सदाकाल तक स्थिर नहीं रहा। अर्थात्, या तो उनका राज्य समाप्त हो गया या फिर उनसे छिन गया। इस प्रकार से यह तो हमने देखा संसारिक राज्यों के विषय में।

अब आइये, मैं आप को एक ऐसे राज्य के विषय में बताऊँ जो कि संसार में तो है परन्तु संसार का नहीं है ! इस राज्य के विषय में हम पवित्र शास्त्र बाइबल में पढ़ते हैं। यह राज्य है परमेश्वर का राज्य (१ कुरिन्थियों ६:९)। इस राज्य को स्थापित करने के लिए, पहले से ही परमेश्वर द्वारा योजना बनाई गई तथा इसके विषय में भविष्यद्वाणियाँ की गई (दानियेल २:४४)। फिर पित्तोकुस्त के दिन इसकी स्थापना हुई (प्रेरितों २ अध्याय)

यह क्योंकि परमेश्वर का राज्य है अतः यह प्रभु यीशु मसीह का भी राज्य हुआ। जो परमेश्वर का है वह मसीह का भी है। यह परमेश्वर के प्रिय पुत्र यीशु मसीह का राज्य है (कुलुस्सियों १:१३) बाइबल हमें बताती है कि यह राज्य कभी समाप्त न होगा, तथा यह सदाकाल तक स्थिर रहेगा (दानियेल २:४४)।

अब आप यह जानने के इच्छुक होंगे कि यह राज्य क्या है। इसके विषय में भी जानने के लिए हमें बाइबल में से देखना होगा। बाइबल बताती है कि यह राज्य परमेश्वर की कलीसिया है (१ कुरिन्थियों १:२; प्रेरितों २०:२८)। यीशु मसीह इसका संस्थापक है (मत्ती १६:१८)। तथा यीशु मसीह ही इस राज्य का मुखिया अथवा सिर है (इफिसियों ५:२३)।

अब हम परमेश्वर के वचन में से यह देखेंगे कि कौन है, जो परमेश्वर अथवा मसीह के इस राज्य के योग्य नहीं है। बाइबल हमें बताती है कि कैसे-कैसे लोग परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य नहीं हैं। तो आइए बाइबल में से इसके विषय में देखें।

१. पौलूस, कुरिन्थुस में कलीसिया को लिखता है “क्या तुम नहीं जानते, कि अन्यायी लोग परमेश्वर के राज्य के वारिस न होंगे ? धोखा न खाओ, न वेश्यागामी, न मूर्तिपूजक, न परस्त्रीगामी, न लुच्चे, न पुरुषगामी, न चोर, न लोभी, न पियक्कड़, न गाली देनेवाले, न अन्धे करनेवाले परमेश्वर के राज्य के वारिस होंगे” (१ कुरिन्थियों ६:९-१०) । अतः इस प्रकार हमने देखा कि ऊपरलिखित कार्य करनेवाले परमेश्वर के राज्य के वारिस न होंगे ।

२. यीशु मसीह ने अपने वचन में बताया कि धनवान का परमेश्वर के राज्य में प्रवेश करना बहुत कठिन है । “.....परमेश्वर के राज्य में धनवान के प्रवेश करने से ऊँट का सूई के नाके में से निकल जाना सहज है” (मत्ती १९:२४) ।

इसका अर्थ यह हुआ कि जो अपने धन को ही सब कुछ समझता है, रात-दिन धन की ही चिन्ता में रहता है, वह परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य नहीं है । बाइबल बताती है “क्योंकि जहाँ तेरा धन है वहाँ तेरा मन भी लगा रहेगा । (मत्ती ६:२१) अतः धन के लोभी का परमेश्वर के राज्य में प्रवेश करना बहुत कठिन है तथा न ही वे परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य है ।

३. यीशु मसीह ने कहा, “जो माता या पिता को मुझ से अधिक प्रिय जानता है वह मेरे योग्य नहीं है और जो बेटा या बेटा को मुझ से अधिक प्रिय जानता है वह मेरे योग्य नहीं” (मत्ती १०:३७) ।” बहुत से लोग ऐसे होते हैं जो अपने माता-पिता तथा अपने बेटा-बेटा को परमेश्वर से अधिक महत्व देते हैं, अथवा उनको परमेश्वर से अधिक प्रिय जानते हैं । ऐसे लोगों के लिए यीशु मसीह कहता है कि वे मेरे योग्य नहीं हैं, अर्थात् ऐसे लोग उसके राज्य के योग्य नहीं है । हमें अपने जीवन में सबसे पहिला दर्जा परमेश्वर को देना है । तब ही हम परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य हो सकते हैं ।

४. “जो मुझ से हे प्रभु, हे प्रभु कहता है, उनमें से हर एक स्वर्ग के राज्य में प्रवेश न करेगा; परन्तु वही जो मेरे स्वर्गीय पिता की इच्छा पर चलता है” (मत्ती ७:२१) । इस संसार में अधिकतर लोग हैं जो प्रभु का नाम लेते हैं, परन्तु उसकी इच्छा पर बहुत कम लोग चलते हैं । प्रभु यीशु ने अपने वचन में स्पष्ट कहा है कि, हे प्रभु, हे प्रभु कहनेवालों में से हर एक स्वर्ग के

राज्य (परमेश्वर के राज्य) में प्रवेश न करेगा, परन्तु वही जो परमेश्वर की इच्छा पर चलता है। उसकी इच्छा क्या है? उसकी इच्छा हमें बाइबल के दूसरे भाग अर्थात् नए-नियम में मिलती हैं। नए-नियम में प्रभु ने बहुत सी ऐसी आज्ञाएं बताई हैं जिन्हें मानने से कोई भी परमेश्वर के राज्य में प्रवेश कर सकता है। ये आज्ञाएं हैं—सबसे पहले यीशु मसीह पर विश्वास करना (यूहन्ना ८:२४), अपने पापों से पश्चात्ताप करना (प्रेरितों २:३८), मसीह के नाम का अंगीकार करना (मत्ती १०:३२), और प्रभु यीशु मसीह के नाम में बपतिस्मा लेना (मरकुस १६:१६) जो इन सब आज्ञाओं का पालन करता है, वह प्रभु यीशु द्वारा परमेश्वर के राज्य अर्थात् उसकी कलीसिया में मिला लिया जाता है (प्रेरितों २:४७)।

५. “जो कोई अपना हाथ हल पर रखकर पीछे देखता है, वह परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य नहीं (लूका ९:६२)।” इसका अमिप्राय यह हुआ कि जब कोई यीशु मसीह के पीछे हो लेने का बिलकुल तैयार हो जाता है, या उसकी आज्ञा मानने को पूरी तरह से तैयार हो जाता है, तो उसे उसी समय उसकी आज्ञा को स्वीकार करके उसके पीछे हो लेना चाहिए। बहुत से लोग ऐसे होते हैं, जो परमेश्वर के वचन में से सत्य को सुनकर उसकी आज्ञा को भी मानने को तैयार हो जाते हैं, परन्तु जब उनसे आगे कुछ और करने के लिए कहा जाता है, जैसे बपतिस्मे को ही ले लें, जो कि परमेश्वर के राज्य में प्रवेश करने की एक विशेष आज्ञा है, तो वह कहते हैं, पहले हम अपने माता-पिता, संबन्धियों या मित्रों से पूछ लें। हल पर हाथ रखकर पीछे देखने का यही अर्थ है। यीशु मसीह ने ऐसे लोगों के लिए कहा कि वह परमेश्वर के राज्य के योग्य नहीं है।

प्रिय मित्रो आप में से प्रत्येक व्यक्तिगत रूप से अपने आप को देखें, कि क्या मैं परमेश्वर के उस अनन्तकाल तक बने रहनेवाले राज्य के योग्य हूँ। यदि नहीं तो, आप उसके राज्य के योग्य हो सकते हैं। यदि आप उसके राज्य के विषय में अभी भी अनजान हैं, तो मेरा आप से यह आग्रह है कि उसके राज्य की खोज करें। यीशु मसीह ने कहा, “इसलिए पहिले तुम उसके राज्य और धर्म की खोज करो तो यह सब वस्तुएं तुम्हें मिल जाएंगी (मत्ती ६:३३)।” इसलिए सबसे पहिले परमेश्वर के राज्य की खोज करें तथा अपने को परमेश्वर के राज्य के अधिकारी होने के योग्य बनाएं।

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