

CONNECT GROUPS
word time
SPRING EDITION



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MEN'S REBELLION IV

THE BUILDERS OF THE TOWER OF BABEL

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 11:1-9

2. Key Verse: Proverbs 16:2

All a person's ways seem right in his own opinion, but the LORD evaluates the motives. (Net Bible)

3. Reference scripture: Matthew 12:25

4. Objectives

a. Let us do our best to make both our private life and church life truly Christ-centred.

b. Let us be humble before God at all times that we may not fall into the sin of pride.

c. Let us remember that we will be destroyed if we despise the Word of God. We should always honour the Word of God

Leading questions

1. How many languages did mankind have originally? (Genesis 11:1)

2. Where did the people build the Tower of Babel? (Genesis 11:2)

3. What was their purpose in building the tower? (Genesis 11:3-4)

Today's Message

People have always, and still are, endeavouring to magnify themselves and lift up their hearts to succeed in life without God. Adam and Eve fell in the attempt to be like God and now the descendants of Noah also defied God, planning to reach heaven through building the Tower of Babel. They built a city and a tower so they would never be scattered again. It was also to be their safe place in case a flood would come again in the future, but above all, their desire was to display their own power and glory through it, but they failed to complete it.

This lesson will cover how man failed to build the tower, because his motives and attitudes towards God were wrong.

A Babel Tower of confusion

The number one factor in their failure to complete the tower was the confusion which came upon them. "Babel" means confusion. When they were busily constructing the tower, God confounded their language.

Immediately they thought differently, talked differently and acted differently. All of a sudden the builders realized they were incapable of cooperating together to build the tower and they were divided into groups that spoke the same language.

Of course, our Heavenly Father is pleased when we are united with one accord for the sake of His glory and good will. The builders of the Babel Tower were also united; however, they were going against God so He had to stop their building by confounding their language.

Even today, to achieve a certain thing successfully there must be unity. To lead a successful life we should always work in unity and watch that no confusion approaches our living. Jesus Christ said: *“Every kingdom that is fighting against itself will be destroyed. And every city that is divided will fall. And every family that is divided cannot succeed.” (Matthew 12:25)*

When we are divided, we fall. The devil always causes confusion to divide people so that God’s work will be thwarted and people will fall away. Therefore, we must be on guard that the enemy of our soul will not bring division. We must remove any kind of confusion and disharmony in our hearts, homes, society, churches and connect groups. We should do our utmost to allow the Holy Spirit to keep us in the unity of the Spirit so that we become one in Jesus.

A Babel Tower of pride

Another reason for the descendants of Noah failing to complete the tower was that they were filled with pride before God and attempted to place themselves higher than God. Pride is against God’s will and our sin always originates in pride. Proverbs 16:18 teaches: Pride will destroy a person. A proud attitude leads to ruin. From the very beginning their motive in proposing the tower contradicted God’s will.

If they wanted to build the tower in that location for the purpose of having a close-knit unity among themselves, that was a direct challenge to the command of God because after the flood God commanded them to have many young ones and grow in number upon the earth (Genesis 8:17).

If they wanted to build the tower in preparation for a future flood, that was a sin of disbelief of the promise of God: “Floodwaters will never again destroy all life on the earth.” (Genesis 9:15)

If they wanted to display their power and honour to the coming generation through the tower, that is clearly an act of pride placing themselves ahead of God and His glory. They deserved ill for their deed and for this reason all of their purposes were not achieved, but failed.

Therefore, we should always guard against pride. When we become conceited and boast of every small success, the sure thing that follows is destruction. Pride always brings along a “Tower of Babel” and the “Babel” always causes confusion. We must always be humble believers before God and other people

A Babel Tower of Rebellion

Most of all, the builders of the Babel Tower suffered confusion, chaos and failure because they esteemed God’s Word too lightly.

God had commanded the children of Noah to multiply and spread over all the earth, but they told each other in Genesis 11:4:

“Let’s build for ourselves a city and a tower. And let’s make the top of the tower reach high into the sky. We will become famous. If we do this, we will not be scattered over all the earth.”

This was a direct challenge and rebellion against the command of God.

When they rebelled against God, God caused chaos by confounding their language, a wise move on God’s part. When the people were not able to communicate with each other, they could not understand each other, and where there is no understanding, there is jealousy, resentment, strife and faction.



Today, if the sin of despising God's Word enters any individual, home, society or nation, confusion begins, smoulders, and eventually it destroys the foundation and existence of the person or society. The "tower" that is called the "life" of an individual, the "tower" that is called the "home" of a family and the "tower" called "society" or a "nation", collapse through the sin of opposing the command of the Lord God. Human history sufficiently proves this. We all know only too well those countries and churches which feared God's Word, became powerful and prospered, while those countries that despised God and the gospel are impoverished today and are still failing.

For us to lead a successful life, we must eliminate all the elements of confusion and division that may be called the "Towers of Babel" in our lives. Let us eradicate all the Babelic poisons in our everyday living and march forward in the complete harmony of the Holy Spirit. When we do so, all our purposes and our work will succeed in bearing fruit and we shall enjoy God's abundant blessing.

Closing questions:

1. What is it that makes God happy about unity in one context and unhappy in another context? Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! Colossians 3:14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

2. Can you identify times in your life when you unknowingly conducted your affairs in a prideful or rebellious manner? How can we unwittingly build our own little mini Tower of Babel.

Proverbs 16:2 All a person's ways seem right in his own opinion, but the LORD evaluates the motives. (Net Bible)

Application in our daily lives

1. Let us discuss what the "Babel Towers" could be in our everyday living.

2. Let us search our hearts to find out whether we are building a Tower of Babel. If we are proud before God and we are faced with confusion and disharmony in our lives, how can we solve this?

MEN'S REBELLION V

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 19:12-28

2. Key Verse: Genesis 19:24-25

The Lord sent a rain of burning sulphur down from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. So the Lord destroyed those cities. He also destroyed the whole Jordan Valley, everyone living in the cities and even all the plants.

3. Reference scripture: Genesis 18:16-33, Isaiah 1:9-10

4. Objectives

a. Through the scene of destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, let us learn that God is righteous and He hates sin.

b. By knowing the fact that all the wicked will be destroyed, let us strive to lead a pure life that is far from sin.

c. Let us have a pure faith by always repenting immediately if we do sin.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. With what did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? (Genesis 19:24)

2. What did Lot's wife become when she looked back? (Genesis 19:26)

What is the spiritual lesson for us?

3. To what can we attribute Lot's salvation from the judgment of Sodom? (Genesis 19:29)

Today's Message

The scripture of Sodom and Gomorrah and its destruction is one of the most degrading views of man when he departs from God. In this lesson, through the tragedy of Sodom and Gomorrah, we will examine the plain fact that the ultimate fate of the wicked is ruin and judgment. We will also learn how we should deal with sin.

The ruin of unbelieving people

Abraham was the father of faith. He always looked up to God, and grew in His grace and love. As he matured in faith, he was able to live a victorious life. However, there were also men who perished because they lived without faith.

They were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who were exceedingly wicked sinners before the Lord (Genesis 13:13). They had become so debased that they even demanded to sodomize two angels sent by God. At last, with the one exception of Lot's family, they were judged by God's wrath and everyone perished. Today, all men are sinners before God. Moreover, the sin of despising and jesting about God's word of warning is a most serious sin.

Lot's sons-in-law took the warning of their father-in-law, Lot, as a joke when they were told to hurry and get out of the city because the Lord would destroy the city (Genesis 19:14). As a result they too perished, together with all the people of Sodom. Their wrong attitude of taking God's Word as a joke was because they did not have faith. There are some people who make their opportunity for salvation an occasion of destruction.

Now, look at Lot's wife, a woman of less faith. The angels saved her life, even seizing her by the hand. Yet, ignoring the word of warning not to look back, she committed the sin of disobedience, looked back at Sodom and became a pillar of salt. She did the same thing her sons-in-law did- she did not listen to the Word of God. She looked back because her love for the things she was leaving behind in Sodom was greater than her desire to be saved. So she perished.

Finally, we now look at the shameful behavior of Lot's two daughters. The two daughters were saved because two angels took them by the hand and led them out of the city yet, absurd as it was, after their salvation they drank in a cave, slept with their father and produced children of sin: the father of the Moabites and the father of the Ammonites. So Lot's family, who loved God but also loved the world lived in misery as a result.

The wicked shall perish

Psalm 37:9 says:

Evil people will be sent away. But people who trust the Lord will inherit the land.

Wickedness cannot last long because it will be judged not by man but by God, who is righteous and eternal.

Even today, there are many cities like Sodom and Gomorrah all around us, filled with the same kind of people living in utter wickedness. There is one type of “Sodom and Gomorrah” that despises the warning of the gospel without acknowledging sin. There is another “Sodom and Gomorrah” that is called communism, rebelling against God and trampling down human dignity and freedom.

In this end time, the world is getting more and more wicked, so we should pray to our Heavenly Father more fervently that those sinners may come quickly into the grace of God.

The days of the wicked are not long. Throughout history, we have seen numerous Sodoms and Gomorrah that have not lasted long but were soon judged and punished. Whether it is an individual, a society or a nation, those who do not repent of their sins are doomed to be judged and will perish.

On the contrary, the Word of God promised:
People who are not proud will inherit the land. They will enjoy complete peace. (Psalm 37:11)



God always takes the side of the meek. He speaks for them and helps lead them to His kingdom. Therefore, as we trust in God we can achieve great things, inheriting the land, destroying the wickedness, but bringing along love, righteousness and freedom in our lives.

The correct attitude towards sin

The incident of Sodom and Gomorrah shows symbolically that all people in the world are sinners and the end of those sinners is the judgment of death.

We too, like people of Sodom and Gomorrah, were sinners in this world, but God sent Jesus to proclaim the gospel and to deliver us by His hand from the judgment of destruction. We obeyed God so we were delivered from the terrible consequences that would have led us to a terrible Sodom. Therefore, we believers in Jesus Christ are no longer under the judgment of damnation

As long as we are living on this earth, however, we are not totally immune from the temptation of sin. Often, like Lot, even after we believe, we will generally react in one of the following ways.

First, there is the humiliating attitude of making many excuses after one has sinned. If we are long-winded, we will attempt to enumerate our many many excuses to both God and our conscience, and God will loathe our self-righteous attitude instead of showering us with His sympathy, mercy and forgiveness.

Another attitude when confronted directly with sin is an attitude of struggling to fight, with our own human resolution and power. If we fight along against the sins and we make resolutions never to sin again, we will always be beaten, much less win over the sin.

Finally, there is a correct attitude towards sin. When we have tried hard to resist but have succumbed to temptation and have sinned, the best thing to do is to confess honestly to God that we are helpless to win over sin by our own might. Then we should pray and ask for God's forgiveness and help through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we sin, we should always confess immediately and seek His forgiveness. Only then will cleansing come with forgiveness and peace.

Today, let us confess to the Lord Jesus that we are powerless over sin and pray that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which sets us free from the law of sin and earth, will truly keep us free! When we pray like this, the Holy Spirit will help us so that we continue to enjoy victorious Christian living.

Closing questions

1. How had living in Sodom affect Lot's family? Was it possible to live there and not be affected by the sin of the city?
2. How do we obey Romans 12:2 "do not be conformed to this world.." and 1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." While at the same time obeying 1 Corinthians 5:10, I didn't tell you that you could not have any contact with unbelievers who commit sexual sins, are greedy, are dishonest, or worship false gods. If that were the case, you would have to leave this world.
3. What must we do after we have sinned? (1 John 1:9)

Application in our daily lives

1. These days, the flood of sin is rising higher in the world than in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us always pray and be watchful that the influence of this evil trend does not invade our hearts and develop into action.

MEN'S REBELLION VI

THE POISONOUS SNAKES AND THE BRONZE SNAKE

1. Today's scripture: Numbers 21: 4-9

2. Key Verse: John 3:14-15

Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. It is the same with the Son of Man. The Son of Man must be lifted up too. Then everyone who believes in him can have eternal life.

3. Reference scripture: John 3:1-15

4. Objectives

a. Through the judgement of the poisonous snakes upon Israel, let us understand that grumbling against God is a serious sin.

b. Let us understand that the only way of deliverance from God's judgement for our sin is Jesus Christ.

c. As the people of Israel looked up to the bronze snake and lived, let us look up to Jesus Christ every day and live!

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. When Israel grumbled against God and Moses, what was it about?

(Numbers 21:5)

2. What did these Israelites do after God sent poisonous snakes?

(Number 21:7)

3. What happened to those who looked upon the bronze snake?

(Number 21:9)

Today's Message

The condition of man after his departure from God is always misery. On their journey towards the land of Canaan after their deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites committed many sins, stumbling into the temptations of Satan and falling many times. As a result, they were judged by God. As we study God's judgment of sending poisonous snakes upon them when they sinned, we will learn the result of their sin of grumbling and the way of God's salvation for them.

Judgment by the poisonous snakes

The people of Israel had to travel through the wilderness to reach the promised land of Canaan that God gave. While crossing the wilderness, they lost heart and became extremely discouraged. The road was rough. There was not sufficient food, nor water, and their legs were very tired.

They were dissatisfied with everything and they began to grumble and complain against God and Moses.

When the grumbling voice of the Israelites rose high, from somewhere unknown poisonous snakes came and bit those people. Many died in agony and pain. Realizing they had sinned, they repented of their grumbling against God and asked Moses to pray for their salvation from the snakes.

The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we grumbled at you and the Lord. Pray that the Lord will take away these snakes.” Seeing the people of Israel repent, Moses prayed to God and God commanded:

“Make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. If anyone is bitten, he should look at it. Then he will live.”

Moses obeyed and made a bronze snake. He sent the snake on a pole and asked the people who were bitten to look upon the bronze snake. Amazingly, as they looked they recovered and lived.

Jesus Christ, our Bronze Snake

The story of the people of Israel who rebelled and grumbled against God is a picture of all of us sinners in the world. And the poisonous snakes symbolize sin or Satan. The Israelites died in pain after having been bitten by the snakes, and this shows that we will be judged by death for our sins if we don't repent.

Our healing and deliverance from the poison of sin comes only by looking to Jesus Christ on the cross in faith, just as Israel lived by looking up to the bronze snake in faith in the wilderness.

Why did God send the poisonous snakes to the Israelites?

First, to awaken them to realize they had sinned against God by grumbling against Him and Moses. Grumbling and resentment are sins that grieve the heart of God and cause His anger. The tougher our situation becomes, the more we should thank God instead of grumbling and complaining before Him. We don't know how God is leading but we should always know He has our best interest in mind and soon all things will work together to bring us to His promised land or to the answer to

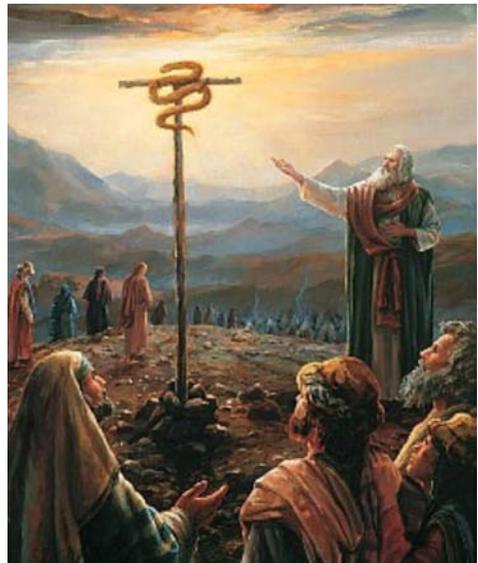
our prayer. Thanksgiving is the song of God. Grumbling and resentment are the songs of the devil.

Second, God sent poisonous snakes to the people of Israel so that they would confess, repent and be forgiven by Him. After they received the judgment of poisonous snakes they became aware of their sins, they also became aware of the fact that their lives could not be saved by their own might. That caused them to seek God's forgiveness and salvation and God sent the bronze snake to redeem them. Even today, our times of trouble and problems in life can become a turning point for us to look up to Jesus, just as the Israelites obeyed and looked up at the bronze snake on the pole. God's purpose in all of our sufferings is to bring us to a place where we bring our stubbornness before Him and repent. Then, we too will see Jesus.

Third, the purpose of sending poisonous snakes was to bring death to the ones who did not repent of their sins and did not even bother to look up to the bronze snake. Those who grumbled in a moment of anger, but immediately repented after having been bitten by poisonous snakes, all recovered by looking up at the bronze snake on the pole. But those who did not, died without exception. It is the same today. For those who resist till the end and refuse to repent and receive the gospel of Jesus, will experience eternal damnation and be lost.

Behold the Bronze Snake!

The bronze snake on the high pole foreshadowed the coming Jesus who would hang on the cross for our sins (John 3:14-15). As the bronze snake was hung on a wooden pole and all those who looked up in faith were healed, so today as we look up to Jesus Christ, we will find salvation and deliverance for every sin and problem we will ever have.



First, to be born again we need to see Jesus Christ nailed on the cross, taking our place. We were all bitten by the snake of sin, so in our bloodstream the same poison which flowed by Adam is flowing in us. To live without this sin, we must look to Jesus Christ who hung high on the cross.

Second, to be cleansed daily from our sins we must still look up to Jesus Christ who hung on the cross. During our lifetime, we are bitten many times by the snake of sin, but the precious blood of Jesus always cleanses and heals us when we ask for forgiveness.

Third, to experience God's daily, we should always continue to look at Jesus Christ. Who understands us and still loves us with an unending love like Jesus? When we are utterly lonely and weary in life, we sometimes try to receive consolation from friends or family, but instead of receiving consolation we often receive more hurt or they put salt on our open wounds and our emptiness remains with no comfort. But Jesus loves us with an unchanging love and when we look to Him, we will receive His great love and comfort that always heals.

Last, Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is our title deed of salvation. He signed the "deed" for our salvation with His precious blood. When fear, uncertainty, doubts or scepticism of life creeps into our hearts, we must again look up to Jesus on the cross. When we behold Him, the healing power of the Holy Spirit will work within us confirming our salvation and also pouring in new hope and joy of life.

Closing questions

1. Why were some of the people of Israel destroyed? (1 Corinthians 10:9)
2. What must we do when we have sinned? (Psalm 78:34, 1John 1:9)
3. What is the difference of being sorry for the consequences we have to suffer as a result of our sins (sins) and Godly Sorrow?

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

2 Cor 7:10

Application in our daily lives

1. Share with each other some of the specific cases in your daily living when we must behold Jesus Christ on the cross.
2. All people are sinners, bitten by the snake of sin, and all believers of Jesus Christ continually look at the bronze snake on the pole. These are all those who have repented before God and obeyed God's Word. Let us pray that our family members and friends will also look at the snake on the pole (The Cross) and be "healed" from their sin.

EN'S REBELLION VII

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF KING SAUL

1. Today's scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1-35

2. Key Verse: 1 Samuel 15:22

But Samuel answered, "What pleases the Lord more: burnt offering and sacrifices or obedience? It is better to obey God than to offer a sacrifice. It is better to listen to God than to offer the fat of male sheep."

3. Reference scripture: Deuteronomy 30:9-10

4. Objectives

- a. Let us always be careful to obey God's Word seeing the tragic end of disobedient Saul.
- b. Let us know what God really wants for us. He wants our humble obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- c. Let us all become faithful workers and the precious vessels that God can use.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. What did Saul do about the command of God that was given to him through Samuel? (1 Samuel 15:8-9)
2. What did God say after He saw Saul's action? (1 Samuel 15:10-11)
3. What was the primary reason for God rejecting Saul as king? (1 Samuel 15:26)

Today's Message

God sternly judges even His chosen vessels when they challenge His authority. That is because God is a God of righteousness and justice as much as he is a God of love. Though Saul was chosen to be the first king of the united Israel, he ended in misery and was removed from this throne because he disobeyed God. Through the failure of King Saul, we will learn what our God indeed wants of us and also the characteristics of the kind of man he uses.

The reprobate King who was rejected by God

Through the prophet Samuel, Saul received God's commandment to attack wicked Amalek. The Amalekites were idol worshippers and adversaries of God. Because of God's plan to preserve Israel and also to receive glory through them, God commanded Saul:

Now go, attack the Amalekites. Destroy everything that belongs to them as an offering to the Lord. Don't let anything live. Put to death men and women, children and small babies. Kill the cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."

King Saul organized the forces and by the power of God he defeated the Amalekites. However, in an attempt to receive some glory through the victory of this war, Saul did not obey all of God's commandments. Instead, he spared the king of the Amalekites alive, the best of the sheep, cattle, calves, lambs and all that was good and took them home. He did not obey God's command to destroy all the people and animals of the Amalekites.

In anger, the Lord God rebuked Saul through Samuel for his disobedience and declared there is no sacrifice and worship that can be substituted for simply obeying God. Even so, Saul was concerned first with his being disgraced before the people of Israel, instead of returning at once to repent sincerely before God.

Eventually, King Saul was rejected by God, lost his throne, lost the presence of God and as a result died a miserable death during a war with the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:4).

What does our heavenly Father want of us?

If we compare the lives of Saul and David we can see very well that God wants obedience and repentance from us. Both of them were kings chosen by God and they both committed many sins. But, strangely enough, God rejected Saul but forgave and restored David, though he committed serious sins.

What was the reason? There was a clear reason. David was completely broken and contrite when he sinned. Though he was king of the country, when he transgressed, he humbly acknowledged what he did and repented immediately when his sin was pointed out by the prophet. He did not excuse himself when he was reprimanded for his transgressions. David was quick to repent and cry out for mercy and forgiveness but Saul became bitter and went away from God. When God sees a repentant heart, he is always full of mercy to forgive and restore. As God saw the humble heart of David, he not only forgave him but also restored him.

But Saul was different. He wilfully disobeyed God's instructions. In addition, when his sin was pointed out and he was reprimanded by God, instead of repenting, he tried to justify and rationalize what he had done. Furthermore, when he was told by Samuel that the Lord had rejected him from being king over Israel, Saul still begged and pleaded to remain as king instead of acknowledging his sin and repenting. God saw that Saul's heart was not in returning to him.

There is not one single person living in this world who has not sinned. During our lives, all of us without exception, commit sins, stumble and fall. But one thing we should never do before God is to try to justify our actions and rationalize what we have done.

When God knocks at the door of our heart by His Word, the only thing we should do is to become contrite before the presence of our holy and righteous God and repent of our sins. When we do so, God will not only forgive us but will also restore us in His mercy and love so that we are able to stand before Him forgiven.

Therefore, when you sin, do not delay in earnestly repenting and seeking forgiveness from God. Our good God who forgave King David will also forgive you and restore to you His abundant blessings.

The vessels that God uses

A lot of us in the world are living in pursuit of our own profit. But those who have been chosen and called through Jesus Christ are called to lives that manifest the glory of God. In that context, all believers of Jesus Christ are chosen vessels of God.

What must we do to become a good vessel that God can use? First, to become a God-chosen vessel, we must be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, present our lives to God, and dedicate ourselves completely. It means to kneel at His feet and empty ourselves to become a fully committed vessel to serve our Lord. This should be our confession: "O Father, take me. Perform Your will through me and glorify Your name through me wherever I am."

Second, to become a vessel used by God, we must have a vision and dream that aligns with His Word. Though we have no vision proof to our eyes, no audible sound to our ears, and we have no tangible proof in our hands to confirm He is fulfilling His plan through us, and though we may sometimes despair, we must steadfastly hold on to that belief that God can do all things. When we have this kind of confidence in the Lord we shall become precious vessels that God can use.

Third, to become a vessel used by God, we must give thanksgiving to Him under any circumstance. No matter how severely your situation oppresses you, take God's Word as your answer with thanksgiving, and with impregnable faith just obey Him. Through your faith, the Spirit of God will conquer and control your situation and the name of our Heavenly Father will be glorified. When the will of God is done through us like this, we will become precious vessels that God uses.



Closing questions

1. What blessing follows those who obey God and keep His laws? (Deuteronomy 30:9-10)
2. What will happen if we do not turn away from our sins? (Psalm 7:12)
3. Saul started wonderfully as king but ended in failure. How did this happen? Can the same thing happen to a Christian?

Application in our daily lives

1. Saul started wonderfully as a king but ended in failure. Let us look back on our faith life and share with each other how the beginning of our Christian life and our present life are different. Our successful spiritual growth comes when we are obedient to God but our failure comes when we disobey God.
2. What God wants of us is obedience and repentance. Let us share specific examples of how we can really obey God's Word in our daily living.

MEN'S REBELLION VIII

SINS THAT GRIEVE GOD

1. Today's scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

2. Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

So anyone who thinks he is standing strong should be careful not to fall. The only temptations that you have are the temptations that all people have. But you can trust God. He will not let you be tempted more than you can stand. But when you are tempted, God will also give you a way to escape that temptation. Then you will be able to stand it.

3. Reference scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

4. Objectives

- a. Let us understand clearly the sins that grieve God and let us live as far away from them as possible.
- b. To overcome the temptation of sin and to bring ourselves near to God, let us always be diligent in prayer and the study of His Word.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. Why were most of the Israelites destroyed in the wilderness? (1 Corinthians 10: 5-6)
2. Why does the Bible record their sin and ruin? (1 Corinthians 10:11)
3. Who will not possess God's kingdom? (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)
4. Which sin is a sin against your own body? (1 Corinthians 6:18)
5. Who will take part in the second death, which is the lake of burning sulphur? (Revelation 21:8)

Today's Message

Through some of the characters of the Old Testament and their experiences, we have so far reviewed several tragic consequences of man's original sin and subsequent sins after his departure from God. God hates sin. He grieves especially when His children commit sin. In this lesson, by going through some of the representative sins, we will study where man stands now since his fall, in terms of his relationship to God.

The Sin of idolatry

The number one sin that grieves God the most is the sin of idolatry. In Genesis 32, the people of Israel made a golden calf as their idol and they ate, drank, revelled and committed immoral acts before the idol. People

who have made and worshipped idols will receive God's judgment of eternal punishment.

It is possible for even the children of God, believers, to have idols. For believers, the sin of covetousness is idolatry. In some cases one may covet someone else's husband, wife, or even children. In other cases it may be fame or honor. But God's wrath is stirred when He sees idolatry. He has already revealed to us clearly through the first and second commandments that we should not worship idols.

Those who worship idols are those who have allowed their altar of worship to crumble. Do you have anything that you love more than you love God? You should not delay any longer but return to God and begin to repair your altar so that you worship only Him. This is only possible for you through the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The sin of adultery and sexual immorality

More than 24,000 people of Israel were killed one day when they sinned sexually with Moabite women while Israel was camped at Acacia. (Numbers 25:9)

The Bible teaches that God's children who commit adultery will receive God's punishment (1 Corinthians 10:8).

The believer's body is purchased by the blood of Jesus so that he becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God dwells in us so we become children of God and members of the body of Jesus Christ. The Word of God teaches us all other sins are outside our body but sexual sin is a sin against our own body. Therefore committing this sin means despising the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in us, defying His Holiness and defiling His Holy Temple.

Sexual sin not only brings separation to the spiritual relationship with God but also it destroys the life of a person. The person's self-esteem and conscience are marred and his own body may become diseased. Not only that, sexual sin does great harm to the family and society he/she belongs to. The cause of the majority of today's marriage breakups is attributed to the immoral acts of husbands and wives outside the marriage relationship.

The Word of God foretold that sexual sin, as a foreboding of the end time, will be sweeping the earth, and today's corrupt sex practices prove the fact openly. The trend of today is to become defiled with those sins so we should be cautious at all times and keep far away from sexual immorality and adultery.

The sin of putting the Lord to the test

Another sin we should avoid is putting the Lord God to the test. The people of Israel put the Lord to test about their food. They contended with God. They complained that He delivered them from Egypt only to have them all starve to death in the desert. God sent down manna and quails for them to eat, but still punished those who tested Him. Nevertheless, the Israelites continually tested God and were judged, bitten by poisonous snakes or attacked by plagues in the wilderness and died.



“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)

King James Bible Online .org

The same applies today. If we come to God without believing in Him totally, but simply to get healed or to receive peace and make a mental assent that He is the Saviour, or to get God's material blessings, that is putting God to test. People with that kind of attitude do not worship God as they should. They are only trying to use Him as a means of gratifying their own interests and needs.

God told us He will not be pleased if we turn back. True faith is to trust God in the times of temptation and still praise Him in the darkness of our situation without yielding to sin. Therefore, in times of trouble we should praise our Heavenly Father even more, give Him all the thanks for the work He is doing in our lives and never put Him to the test.

The sin of resentment and grumbling

Resentment and grumbling saddens God. We cannot grow spiritually by harboring resentment. If a husband resents his wife and the wife resents her husband, love between them will soon fade away. If children resent their parents, the relationship will become strained and the care and love from the parents will get cold. Resentment breaks unity between spouses, a sense of distance between parents and children and causes a split in friendships.

Because the children of Israel grumbled against God, God made them wander about in the wilderness. All men over twenty years old, except Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness and they could not reach the promised land of milk and honey. Moses' sister, Miriam, was also judged by leprosy for speaking against Moses (Numbers 12:10)

The sin of grumbling takes away the blessings of milk and honey which we received from the Lord, and then it drives us into a desert or wilderness experience where we lose the sense of God's presence. When the troubles of life and horrible situations swoop down upon us, we should still give thanks to the Lord for His goodness instead of resenting or complaining about the situation. Of course this is not easy at all. But when we praise our Heavenly Father and give thanks to Him even in the dark experiences of life, we will see His mighty demonstration of miracles, more than we ever expected.

God's Word is not a set of laws or a heavy yoke. God's Word is our daily food and our resources for victorious living. Therefore, if we are committing the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality or grumbling against God, we should allow God's Word to become a mirror to reflect our true state and repent now.

Let us build a new, pure and holy altar of worship that our Heavenly Father will be pleased with.

Closing questions

1. Can anything become an idol?
2. Is it possible to be an idolater and not realize it?
3. Is everything we like or enjoy an idol?
4. What is the cure for idolatry?

Application in our daily lives

1. Have you ever put God to the test simply to satisfy your needs? Then repent now and seek His forgiveness.
2. For discussion: Are we really living for the glory of the Lord? Let us always acknowledge the Holy Spirit and lean on Him so that He will direct our paths.

MEN'S REBELLION IX

THE CONSEQUENCES OF MAN'S FALL

1. Today's scripture: Psalm 51: 5, Romans 5:12

2. Key Verse: Psalm 51:5

I was brought into this world in sin. In sin my mother gave birth to me.

3. Reference scripture: 2 Kings 21:1-20, Matthew 5:27-30, James 4:1-10

4. Objectives

a. To understand how disastrous and far-reaching the consequences of man's fall are.

b. To look at the various aspects of the fall and see where we stand by looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. What does God's Word say about the state of all fallen mankind?

(Romans 3:10)

2/. How does God treat the humble and the proud respectively?

(James 4:6)

Today's Message

The account of man's fall in Genesis contains many deep lessons to ponder. From the beginning, man was made with a free will to obey God or not to obey God. But man misused his free will. Because man wanted to be like God, he was seized by arrogance, then he rebelled against God and fell. Because of his sin, his relationship with God was severed. What were the consequences that followed man's fall and what does he look like today?

Covetousness – The first aspect of fallen man

"Covetousness" means "being unsatisfied with what one owns, a wrongful desire to acquire possession of something that does not rightfully belong to the covetous person." The wrongful longing for something that is rightfully another's is the sin most generally committed by fallen mankind.

The sin of covetousness started from the garden of Eden as in Genesis 3:6: *The woman saw that the tree was beautiful. She saw that its fruit was good to eat and that it would make her wise. So she took some*

X of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of the fruit to her husband, and he ate it.

Here, through the fall of Adam and Eve, at least three aspects of covetousness are shown to us:

1. Covet to please man's appetite – "good for food"
2. Covet to please man's sight – "pleasant to the eyes"
3. Covet to please man's intelligence – "to be desired to make one wise"

But most of all, their hearts were filled with a desire to become like God in a wrong sense and that was the greatest act of covetousness.

Once this covetousness entered the garden of Eden, such a beautiful garden turned immediately into cursed ground with thistles and thorns. The Bible explains so vividly what the sin of covetousness brought upon the history of the human race. At the end of the parable of the foolish wealthy man, God said: "Foolish man! Tonight you will die. So who will get those things you have prepared for yourself?"

Jesus teaches us that no matter how great a greedy man's treasures may be; he is one breath away from those treasures becoming useless to him.

Covetousness is a sin that makes a person desire more things than he rightfully needs. If he is seized by covetousness to acquire his desires, he deceives, slanders, steals and even commits murder. The Apostle Paul warned: The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the true faith because they want to get more and more money. But they have caused themselves much sorrow. (1 Timothy 6:10)

So put all evil things out of your life: sexual sinning, doing evil, letting evil thoughts control you, wanting things that are evil, and always selfishly wanting more and more. This really means living to serve a false God. (Colossians 3:5)

The sin of covetousness is not committed by individuals only. It is also committed by nations. Century after century, wars have broken out continually among nations because of their covetousness. Because of covetousness, many employers have also ripped-off their employees. Covetousness has brought wars, poverty, curses and miserable deaths to mankind.

Pride – The second aspect of fallen man

Though there are countless kinds of sins, the most common sin is the sin of pride. This sin is manifested in many ways. Let's start with examining the three major dimensions of pride.

First, there is "spiritual pride", which is the beginning of all sin and also the origin of man's fall. Spiritual pride holds first place among all kinds of pride. Because it is a love for one's own self instead of a love for God, and also it is putting more trust in one's self than in God, this spiritual pride is tantamount to the sin of idolatry. That is why God hates man's spiritual pride so much! Jesus Christ hates the spiritual pride of man also. Our Lord Jesus did not rebuke the awful sinners, the adulterous woman, the tax collectors or prostitutes, but He furiously rebuked the Pharisees who thought they were the most pious believers of God and always boasted in their religion.

Second, there is the pride of knowledge which means the arrogant attitude of the learned toward the less learned and the oppressed. God gave all of us emotional and mental abilities. Yet when we do not think of these powers as gifts from God, a pride of knowledge begins to sprout. The Apostle Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians 8:1-2:

Knowledge puffs you up with pride, but love build up. Whoever thinks he knows something does not yet know anything as he should.

We should always endeavour to maintain a humble spirit, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:16). Also, we should not forget at any time that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all our knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

Third, there is a pride of wealth and authority. The Bible tells us clearly that the power to get wealth and authority comes from the Lord God (Deuteronomy 8:18, 1 Chronicles 29:12, Romans 13:1)

It is ridiculous if we play high-handedly with these God-given gifts as if the wealth and authority belong to us.

Sexual sin – The third aspect of fallen man

In Matthew 12:39 Jesus rebuked the world as “evil and sinful”. Today’s world is filled with sexual sin and promiscuity just as it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sexual sin is the number one consequence of the fall of man. Whether it is a nation, a race or an individual, its decay begins with a spiritual fall, then a mental fall, and then a physical fall. This physical fall means a fall into sexual immorality. By the degree of moral corruption and decay of an individual, society, or nation one can measure the present status of those individuals, societies or nations.

Sexual sin is the easiest of all sins to commit and it is also the sin that brings the most disastrous results. King David could not keep his eyes off temptation, so he finally took Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, and committed adultery. Because of his sin, not only King David himself but all of the people of Israel received God’s wrath and punishment (1 Samuel chapter 11 and 12)

The sin of adultery and sexual immorality still bring disastrous results with many marriages breaking up as a result. As Satan’s sharpest weapons, these sins ruthlessly impair a person’s mental health and integrity, and too many times they dampen the futures of young people who had bright hopes and dreams. King Solomon professed:

A man who takes part in adultery doesn’t have any sense. He will destroy himself. He will be beaten up and disgraced. And his shame will never go away. (Proverb 6:32-33)



Closing questions

1. Is Jeremiah 17:9 applicable to Christians?

“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?”

2. After a person has been “born again” and has become a new person, do they still sin? Why or why not?

3. How does the love of money affect our lives? (1 Timothy 6:10)

Application in our daily lives

1. Reflect now and share – what is the actual impact of the fall of man on my own present life?

2. We have gone through three major consequences of the fall. If one of these shortcomings relates to you, share it with the Lord and repent of it now.

THE LATTER MINISTRY OF JESUS I

THE MIRACLE OF THE FIVE LOAVES & TWO FISH

1. Today's scripture : John 6:1-15

2. Key Verse: John 6:11

Then Jesus took the loaves of bread. He thanked God for the bread and gave it to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish. He gave them as much as they wanted.

3. Reference scripture: Luke 9:10-17

4. Objectives

- a. To become believers who always expect God's miracles and actually experience them like Andrew did.
- b. As the boy gave his small lunch of five loaves and two fish to Jesus, let us show our faith to Jesus by planting our seed faith.
- c. As Jesus taught the disciples to gather up the leftovers of the miracle food, let us also live without wasting anything

Questions to Answer before Connect Group

1. Who offered the five loaves and two fish to Andrew? (John 6:9)
2. Who brought them to Jesus? (John 6:8-9)
3. When the people saw the miracle, who did they say Jesus was? (John 6:14)

Today's Message

The incident of five thousand men miraculously fed by only five loaves and two fish teaches us many things. Through this miracle, Jesus is teaching us that when we follow Him not only is our spirit saved but also our bodily needs will be met. We will study now the need for seed faith before we can experience Jesus' blessings for our daily needs even as our soul prospers.

The disciples' big problem

As Jesus preached the good news about the kingdom of God, casting out devils and healing the sick, a great crowd always followed Him. The majority of the crowd who followed were poverty stricken or sick in body and needed comfort and healing desperately. When Jesus taught them they received peace and joy. They also witnessed with their own eyes how devils were cast out and how those who were oppressed

and crippled were raised up. Often time passed more quickly than they realized when they were following Jesus and listening to His teachings.

Dinner time was approaching one day as Jesus concluded teaching, and His disciples faced a big problem because there were more than 5,000 hungry adult men, without even counting the women and children there. In the book of Mark, the disciples told Jesus: *It was now late in the day. Jesus' followers came to him and said, "No one lives in this place. And it is already very late, send the people away. They need to go to the farms and towns around here to buy some food to eat."*

But Jesus answered: *"You give them food to eat."* (Mark 6:35-37)

Jesus could say this because he had the solution.

It is the same today. Jesus wants to help us when we are in trouble.

Jesus does not say to us, "You take care of your own problems." He wants us to bring our problems to Him so that we receive the answer from Him and His abundant blessings. We must also have the firm faith that when we bring our problems to Jesus, He will solve them without fail. We must also have our seed faith planted, to show outwardly that we indeed trust Him.

Now, we will see how differently Andrew and Philip acted toward the same problem which needed a solution.



Philip's faith and Andrew's faith

Through this miracle of the five loaves and two fish, we can compare the different levels of faith of Philip and Andrew. They were both disciples of Jesus. They both encountered the same problem in the wilderness. They both needed a solution. But Philip's faith could not bring about a miracle, whereas Andrew's faith did.

To test Philip, Jesus asked a question: "Where can we buy bread for all these people to eat?" Though Philip had experienced Jesus' power and miracles so many times, his faith still remained calculating and scientific. So Philip lifted his eyes and saw a great crowd, calculated and then presented his estimate to Jesus: "We could all have to work a month to buy enough bread for each person here to have only a little piece."

Philip only knew the fact that neither he nor the hungry crowd had that much money, so he reported to Jesus: "I cannot feed them; it is impossible." His calculation was accurate and scientific but no help at all towards producing miracle faith for Jesus. Philip's faith could not bring any solution for the hungry crowd.

But in that same wilderness, under the same crisis, another disciple of Jesus, Andrew, had believed that Jesus could do a miracle there. Andrew wanted to show his faith and did his best to search for the seed of faith to plant until he finally found a little boy's lunch box with five loaves and two fish.

Andrew brought these to Jesus, saying in effect: "Lord, these will never be enough but I believe that you will perform a great miracle." It was just a little seed, but Jesus accepted what he brought, thanked God and broke the bread. Because of Andrew's "seed faith" the broken bread increased each time it was broken until the great crowd was sufficiently fed. Jesus showed another miracle when He asked the disciples to go back and gather up the leftovers. It is possible no one thought that there would be leftovers but even the leftovers of the miracle amounted to twelve basketfuls.

The key to our life lies in our attitude. We, too, have many problems to solve. So let us have an Andrew's attitude toward our problems. Let's always remember, "If I bring my problem to Jesus, He always has the solution."

The little boy's sacrifice

Behind this great miracle there was a little boy's seemingly insignificant act. This is one of the strategies of the evil spiritual forces in their attempt to slow the progress of the Kingdom of God. They want to deceive us into thinking that the "little" things we might do for Jesus are of no consequence. So often, we fall for the lie and don't bother. Our little prayers, even short prayers for others, churches, geopolitical situations are powerful for changing history for those involved but we don't bother because we feel "our little fish and loaves" would make no difference. A little act of kindness shown to our oikos or an invitation to something you and some other Connect Group people are doing could mean the difference between heaven or hell for somebody's poor soul.

Another truth to be studied and learned here is that Jesus taught them to gather carefully what was left over. God's blessings for us are never meant to be wasted. We must take good care of His blessings given to us and use them to share with others in need. Anything that God has made for us should not be wasted.

Closing questions

1. The boy gave his small lunch of five loaves and two fish to Jesus. This was a little sacrifice for the kingdom. He probably thought he wasn't doing much but his little "seed" was turned into a major blessing for many. Tie this in with Zechariah 4:10 "For who dares make light of small beginnings?" (NET Bible) Apply this to our daily walk with the Lord. There are thousands of possible examples, try to come up with at least 10.
2. What lessons/principles can we learn from what Jesus did after the miracle? (John 6:15)

Application in our daily lives

1. Even in the midst of impossible-looking problems, let us always keep our positive attitude, like Andrew, that we have Jesus who can always perform miracles in our life. Let us live positively under any circumstances, and act in faith.
2. Like the lad who gave up his meal, let us gladly give what we have to Jesus. We will live a life of abundant harvest as we sow.

THE LATTER MINISTRY OF JESUS II

PETER'S TWO CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

1. Today's scripture: Matthew 16:13-20
2. Key Verses: Luke 5:8 "I'm a sinful man!" Matthew 16:16?
"Thou art the Christ!"

3. Objectives

- a. Like the Apostle Peter, let us have a personal experience of truly meeting Jesus as our personal Saviour.
- b. Let us be filled with the Holy Spirit and become a powerful witness for Jesus like the Apostle Peter.

Questions to be answered before Connect Group

1. Why was Peter convicted of sin ? (Luke 5:8)
2. What did Jesus respond to Peter's confession of faith?
(Matthew 16:17)
3. Who had given Peter such a revelation that he could confess such a great faith? (Matthew 16:17)

Today's Message

Peter was a fisherman living near Lake Galilee. Peter met Jesus through his brother Andrew before but only knew Him as a great teacher. One night Peter laboured all night on the sea but caught no fish at all. Visiting agonizing Peter, Jesus commanded him to cast his net into a different and deeper place. Peter obeyed Jesus' word, though he himself was one of the best fishermen in town with much experience and knowledge. Jesus' command sounded useless, yet Peter obeyed Jesus' command and experienced a great miracle which filled his empty boat full of fish.

Peter's 1st confession

When Peter saw this miracle, immediately he knelt down before Jesus and confessed: "Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8) He realized now that the man he had simply regarded as a good teacher was actually the miracle-working awesome Lord God. Peter immediately felt that he was a sinner and he could not dare to stand in Jesus' presence. So he begged Jesus to leave. But Jesus chose Peter because he made an honest confession about himself. Since then Peter became Jesus' best pupil, and lived a blessed life walking with Jesus.

Peter's 2nd confession

Taking along His disciples, Jesus worked many miracles for the people and also cast out devils. The disciples certainly thought of Jesus as a great Messiah and a Saviour for the poor and the sick, people possessed by evil spirits, or sinners like tax collectors, but they did not realize Jesus as their own personal Saviour for themselves. But Jesus wanted to meet each one of them individually and become their personal Saviour.

Before entering Jerusalem, He asked the disciples when they were in Caesarea Philippi: "Who do the people say I am?" They answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist. Others say you are Elijah, and others say that you are Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then Jesus asked them; "And who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16)

"Christ" means "the anointed One". In Old Testament days, only the kings, priests and prophets were anointed, so Peter's confession meant, "You are my king of power, my priest to atone for my sin, and my truth to hold on to." For this confession, Jesus commended Peter's faith highly: "You are blessed."

Peter's mistake

Though Peter made a great confession, he soon made several mistakes because he immediately became conceited because of Jesus' praise.

When Jesus told the disciples about His forthcoming suffering in Jerusalem, Peter rebuked Him: "Those things will never happen to you!"

(Matthew 16:22)

Out of his own human desire, Peter tried to stop Jesus from suffering on the cross.



By God's revelation, Peter understood the truth that Jesus is the Son of the living God and also His Saviour, but Peter did not know how Jesus could save people from their sins. Because Peter was ignorant of this truth, Peter tried to stop Jesus' redemption work on the cross.

Not only that, when Jesus was arrested, Peter was overtaken by fear and followed Him from afar, even denying Him three times in the priest's courtyard. This same Peter who had sworn earlier that he would follow Jesus at the expense of his own life, now denied Jesus and even cursed Him (Matthew 26:69-75)

As Jesus' disciple, Peter was directly taught by Jesus, made a great confession of faith and experienced great miracles from Jesus, yet when he attempted to solve problems according to his own human desire and reasoning, he made grave mistakes and fell into despondency.

The restoration of Peter

Seized with a consciousness of complete failure, Peter returned to his old job fishing in Galilee. The feeling of "I failed" must have pressed him more and more. But Jesus did not leave Peter alone in this pit of despair and frustration. He knew what Peter was going through so He visited Peter and performed the miracle of catching 153 fish for him, after a night when he had caught nothing (John 21:3-11). The blessings and miracles from Jesus always surpasses our expectation. When we ruin things and are left alone, discouraged and despondent with no one capable of solving our problems, Jesus visits us, comforts us and bestows upon us His miracles.

After they were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Mark's upper room, Peter and all the disciples were completely changed and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter especially completely threw off the sense of failure and despair and became a servant of God, boldly witnessing to Jesus' death and resurrection. Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter became such a powerful witness for Jesus that 3,000 people were converted through a single sermon (Act 2:41). Also, he became a miracle-working man, even raising a cripple to wholeness through the power of Christ in his life (Acts 3:1-10)

Any Christian who has met Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour may fall into temptation and despair if he takes off the helmet of faith and looks to his own resources. But Jesus comes today to visit us all, the fallen and the weak. Through the Holy Spirit, He wants to meet us today just as He met Peter. Just as Peter became a miracle-producing servant of God after receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we, too, can become a miracle-producing servant after we have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

Closing questions

1. Why did Peter, all of a sudden, start confessing his sinfulness to Jesus in light of the fact that Jesus was a stranger to him at that time? Is this normal?
2. What are “The things of men” that Jesus referred to? (Matthew 16:23) If possible tie this into Isaiah 55:9-10 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Application in our daily lives

1. Let Peter’s confession be our confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
2. After receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Peter was completely delivered from his old passiveness. He became a new man, a miracle-working servant of God for His glory. Let us pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and live a life of miracles in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE LATTER MINISTRY OF JESUS III

JESUS ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

1. Today's scripture : Matthew 17:1-13

2. Key Verse: Matthew 17:5

While Peter was talking, a bright cloud covered them. A voice came from the cloud. The voice said "This is my son and I love him. I am very pleased with him. Obey him!"

3. Reference scripture: Isaiah 42, Luke 9:28-36

4. Objectives

a. To remind us that our body will be transformed like Jesus' glorious body at the second coming.

b. To remember that Jesus is the One who fulfilled the law and prophecies, and He is never to be compared with Moses who represents the law, nor Elijah who represents the prophets.

3. Let us all become like sheep that recognize Jesus' voice calling us.

Questions to answer before Connect Group:

1. What was Jesus' appearance like when He was transfigured before His three disciples? (Matthew 17:2)

2. Whom was the transfigured Jesus talking with? (Matthew 17:3)

3. After they gained their composure and lifted up their faces, who did the three disciples see on the mountain? (Matthew 17:8)

Today's Message

Jesus took His beloved disciples, Peter, James and John to a high mountain and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him.

Jesus alone

The disciples of Jesus could not help but be astounded at the awesome scene. Peter, who was acting like the spokesman for the three, bravely opened his mouth: "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you want, I will put three tents here – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Actually, in his bewilderment, Peter put his foot in his mouth. Immediately a cloud overshadowed them and a voice spoke: "This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with Him. Listen to (obey him!)"

The disciples fell on their faces and trembled but Jesus touched them, saying: “Stand up. Don’t be afraid.”

When they turned around they found only Jesus was there.

The tabernacle of Jesus Christ

The above scene teaches us several things.

First, when Jesus was transfigured and clothed in a glorious light on the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. Moses and Elijah are two representatives of God in the Old Testament and both were witnesses of the glory of Christ.

Moses, as the representative of the law, witnessed about Christ through laws and sacrificial rituals. Elijah, as the representative of the prophets who followed the period of the law, witnessed about salvation and Christ who was to come.

The magnificent glory of the transfigured Jesus is the glory that the law and the prophets of the Old Testament foretold. As written in the law and the prophets, when Christ came in the flesh for the work of redemption, Moses and Elijah as witnesses of the Old Testament appeared before the disciples.

Second, Peter spoke incorrectly. Peter unwittingly suggested to Jesus that they should build three tents or tabernacles (AV), one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. This was a grave mistake. Because Moses and Elijah were only witnesses of Jesus’ glory and they were merely on an errand, they should never have been placed equal with Jesus. The laws and prophecies were to be fulfilled and accomplished in Christ and they were never meant to stand side by side with Jesus.

Third, God corrected Peter’s error. When Peter began to place the law and the prophets equally with Jesus, God spoke from the glory of the cloud and corrected Peter by saying: “This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with Him. Obey him!” The disciples then looked round and found that Moses and Elijah had been taken up to heaven by God.

The law and the prophets were meant only to witness that Jesus is the one and only Saviour of man and their witnessing had already been completed in Jesus. This teaches us that our only Saviour, who deserves our worship and trust, is Jesus Christ.

According to God's command, we should not build a tabernacle to anyone but Jesus. Likewise, the laws, prophecies, denominations, theologies, all these are merely for witnessing to the glory of Jesus, thus they should never stand on the same level with Jesus.

The meaning of Jesus' transfiguration

Then what does this transfiguration incident mean to us?

First, this is foretelling that our mortal body will also be transformed in the not-too-distant future, just as Jesus' glorious body was (Philippians 3:21). So we must earnestly look for and expect Jesus' return to earth as the King of kings. As those disciples climbed hard to follow Jesus to the mountain, we should also remember that after our brief moment of hardship on earth we will be given the privilege of enjoying God's glory.



Second, Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah. It is described in detail in Luke 9:30-31. They were talking about Jesus' crucifixion, which is evidence that our blessing of transfiguration, like Jesus' glorious body, is possible because Jesus was crucified on the cross.

Third, there was a voice from God: "Obey him!" This voice of our Father in heaven still commands us today to listen to Jesus. Jesus came to us as our Shepherd Who gives us life and abundant blessings. When we hear His voice, we can receive abundant "food" from Him. We also have an obligation to please our heavenly Father, by growing in faith. Faith comes when we hear God's Word.

Closing questions

1. One of the most important doctrines of the Bible is the fact that one day all Christians will get an immortal physical body just like Adam and Eve had. This is so important that the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit living inside all believers is to be considered a down payment showing that He will make good on this promise. Why is such a big deal made of this in the Bible?
2. How could Peter have applied James 1:19..."Everyone should be slow to speak quick to listen" and Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools...Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God."
3. How might we apply those same Scriptures?

Application in our daily lives

1. When Jesus returns, we will be transformed to have a glorious body like His. Therefore, let us keep ourselves holy in thought and deed, looking forward with great expectation to His Second Coming!
2. Jesus is God, so He could never be compared with Moses or Elijah. We must always give Jesus the first place in our lives.

THE LATTER MINISTRY OF JESUS IV

JESUS' ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

1. Today's scripture : Matthew 21:1-11

2. Key Verse: Matthew 21:9

*The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,
"Hosanna to the Son of David!"*

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

3. Reference scripture: Zechariah 9:9. Luke 19:29-44

4. Objectives

a. Even as Jesus portrayed a humble and peaceable attitude when He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, let us become believers who are examples of humility and peace to others.

b. Let us become believers who return praise and glory to Jesus.

3. Let us become believers who will meet Jesus returning as the King of kings, and as our bridegroom.

Questions to Answer before Connect Group

On what did Jesus ride as He entered Jerusalem? (Matthew 21:1-7)

What does this indicate about Jesus' character? (Matthew 21:5)

What was the response of the people as Jesus came into Jerusalem? (Matthew 21:10)

Today's Message

A few days before Jesus suffered on the cross, He entered the city of Jerusalem receiving praise and glory. His entering into Jerusalem was not just a simple passing event. In this lesson we will study three points of significance in His entrance into Jerusalem.

The donkey-riding Jesus

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus arrived at Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives and He sent two disciples to the village to bring a donkey and its colt. Jesus told them that if anyone asked anything, just to answer, "The Master needs them".

So Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on the donkey His disciples brought to Him. A great crowd who followed Jesus spread their garments on the road for Him and also cut down branches from the

trees, spreading them on the road, crying out with praises to Jesus: “Praise to the Son of David! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise to God in heaven!”

We can find a few astonishing facts in this scene:

The first fact is that Jesus’ riding on a donkey was foretold in the scriptures. About five hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Zechariah spoke: “Your King is coming to you. He is gentle and riding on a donkey. He is on the colt of a donkey.” (Matthew 21:5)

Jesus, as the Son of God, entered Jerusalem on a donkey, thus fulfilling the Word of God through the prophet.

Jesus’ riding on a donkey showed His humility. He could have entered the city with a host of angels mobilized and with the great sound of a trumpet, but He came “ gentle and riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5). Before this entrance to Jerusalem, to disciple and people, He spoke about Himself: “I am gentle and humble in spirit.” (Matthew 11:29)



On top of that, Jesus was obedient even to death on a cross to save us, according to His Father's will. (Matthew 26:39, 42)

As shown above, Jesus' words and deeds were completely different from those of the religious leaders of that day. Today, as Jesus' believers and followers, we should be lowly before God and others as Jesus has taught us.

The praise-receiving Jesus

When Jesus was entering Jerusalem, a great crowd cried, shouting: "Praise to God in Heaven!" In the King James Version their cry reads "Hosanna in the highest!". By that time in history hosanna in the Hebrew language had become an exclamation of praise though the people would have still understood its original meaning, which was "save or help us now". At that time, Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire. The people of Israel were oppressed and exploited like slaves by the Roman government. Because Jesus appeared and performed miracles under such circumstances, the Israelites thought Jesus would be their deliverer who would save them from the Roman Empire. In other words, the Jewish people misunderstood the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth. He came to give life and freedom to all mankind, who were under the curse of death in the captivity of satan's bondage, resulting from Adam and Eve's fall. Jesus came to revive our dead souls by His precious blood shed on the cross.

The Israelites became greatly disappointed when Jesus would not be their deliverer from the Roman Empire. However Jesus stayed resolute. He was destined to bear the cross according to the plan of God so that the price of man's sin would be paid. Soon enough, the praise of Hosanna from the lips of the Jews disappeared and they began to shout: "Crucify Him on the cross."

As He approached the city the children continued praising Jesus, "Praise to the son of David" but the high priests, Pharisees and scribes became indignant towards them. Jesus rebuked the wicked leaders: "I tell you, if my followers don't say these things, then the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40)

He quoted a scripture from Old Testament prophecy:
“You have taught children and babies to sing praises” (Matthew 21:16)
The love of God and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ are so great that even stones could not keep silent but would praise him. Today, we too should live a life of praising Jesus with pure hearts as children.

Jesus, the King of kings

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people spread their garments on His pathway and shouted, “God bless the King of Israel” (John 12:13)

What kind of a king was He? He did not use a horse, but a donkey. A horse is a symbol of war, while a donkey is a peace symbol. Jesus came to earth as the King of peace, to give us peace. When He was born, angelic hosts also witnessed that He is the King of peace:
“Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God.” (Luke 2:14)

One clear piece of evidence that Jesus came as a king is shown in the fact that the people spread their garments on the road for Him. We can see in 2 Kings 9:13 that people put their garments before Jehu when he was made king. The spreading of people’s garments before Jesus’ pathway tells us that Jesus entered the city indeed as our king.

However, Jesus’ kingdom does not belong to this world; it is the kingdom of heaven. It is the kingdom of God that the returning Jesus will rule. Through Jesus Christ we became citizens of the kingdom of God and Jesus became our king and ruler. When Jesus cleansed the temple with a king’s authority, no one there defied Jesus. In the very near future Jesus will return to earth as the King of kings. Everyday we should praise Jesus, our King of peace, and live in hope and joy expecting His return.

Closing questions

1. Is it possible to get disappointed in God and our praise be turned into bitterness? How can we safeguard against this?
2. Jesus was the opposite of being ostentatious (showy & flamboyant). Instead, though He is the creator of the universe, he was meek (modest mild and humble). Apply this to how we should treat people when we are giving direction or orders or how we used our authority in the family, work place or church context.
3. What is the difference between carrying ourselves with dignity and walking in a prideful manner? What can we learn from the distinction?

Application in our daily lives

1. Following Jesus' example for true humility, let us live a truly humble life through our words and deeds.
2. Let us live with the dignity that we are God-reckoned kingly priests.

