

LESSON 18

The Intrusion of the False Teachings into the Christian Society -I

Objective : To lead a Christian life according to the bible by realising the false teachings and bad customs intruded into the church from the apostolic times.

Bible Portion : Jude

Memory Verse : Jude 20-21

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Introduction

Can you name some of the Christian churches? Some people give importance to traditions than the Bible. Some interpret Bible according to their leaders, to the reason and to the intelligence. Some deviate the importance of the Bible by interpreting it according to the views of their leaders. What do we do for such attitudes? We have to study the Bible sincerely and with prayer. We should believe that it is given to us by god and also no one could destroy it through the ages. Then Holy Spirit will open our hearts and lead us into the truth. We must understand in brief the false teachings and bad customs that intruded into the church.

The false teachings of Roman Catholic, Orthodox (Jacobite) churches

Constantine, the Roman emperor proclaimed the religious tolerance and became a Christian. After his coming to Christianity, a lot of gentile practices intruded into the church. Many converted to Christianity due to the kingly favor, and love of money. They got the leadership of the church. Because of the influence of Constantine, in the form of repentance, justification by faith, baptism, holy life, anointing of the holy spirit and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Some gentile practices were intruded into the church like priesthood, religious rites, festivals, prayer to saints, idolatry and rites after death. Since these bad customs have no place in the bible, the word of God was prohibited from the common men. But God raised John Wycliffe, John Huss, Martin Luther, Singley and Calvin and they translated bible into their own languages. Thus many got rid of the bad customs prevailed in the dark ages. Reformed churches were established. Though the Roman Catholic, Orthodox (Jacobite) churches made some revisions or changes, still they follow the false teachings and bad customs. Let us think about them in this lesson.

1. Priesthood

Roman Catholic, Orthodox (Jacobite) and other Episcopal churches gives priesthood the most important place. Their survival is based on the range of ministers from the top (Pope, Patriarchs, Catholic Metropolitan) to the bottom (ordinary priest). They claim that their priesthood is given from the apostles.

The New Testament very clearly states that priesthood was not prevailed in the early church. Jesus criticized severely the superiority of priesthood, their fabric clothes and their positions. Mt.23:5-10, Mk.12:38-40, Lk.11:43-44. Read the words that Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not call anyone on earth 'father' for you have one father, and he is in heaven'. It was a usual custom that the apostles addressed everyone brothers in Christ Acts.6:3, 9:30, 10:23, 11:12, 12:17, 15:3, 15:22, James.1:19, 2:1, 2:14, 3:1, 4:11, 5:7, 5:12, 5:19, II Pet.3:16, I Jn. 3:13, III Jn. 3,5,10. Apostles were addressed as the leaders among brothers. (Rev.1:9, Act.15:23). Constantine, the Roman emperor was converted to Christianity and the church progressed materially. Thus the political way of administration and gentile priestly customs intruded into the church. There was no evidence on ordaining the next bishops or leaders by any apostles. Instead they taught the universal priesthood of every believer. (I Pet.2:9, Rev.1:6). The epistle clearly admits the fact that Jesus in the high priest who can intercede for the believers and the deliverance of sin is possible through him.(Heb. 5;14-15, 7; 24-28, 1Tim. 2; 5-6)

2. Inheritance from Apostle Peter

Roman Catholic and majority of the Eastern Church argue for this inheritance. You are Peter, on this rock I will build my church (Mt.16: 18). They find the source for their argument is the words spoken to peter by Jesus Caesarea Philippi.

First of all 'the rock' mentions hear is referred to 'Jesus'. The Greek root for 'Peter' is Petros and for 'rock' is Petra. The church is being built on Jesus, the rock. Peter and others are pieces of rocks which are being built along with Jesus (1 Peter 2:4-7, 1Cori 3:11, 1 Cori 10:4, Eph 2:20-22). These verses tell as the cornerstone in the form of Jesus Christ. The apostles and prophets are considered as chief stones who were built along with Jesus first. It is unbiblical that the church was founded on a particular apostle.

Roman Catholic argue that Peter had ruled over Rom. for 25 years and the popes are his successors. It is commonly accepted that Peter and Paul were martyred in A.D. 68 at Rome. If so, Peter had reached Rome in A.D. 43. Peter was present in Jerusalem council conducted in

A.D. 51 (Act 15:6). When, Paul wrote the epistle to Romans in A.D. 61, he had to address Peter if his presence was there at Rome. Pauline letters written at Roman prison during the years between AD 62 and 64 has no evidence of Peter's presence at Rome. It is true that Peter wrote his first epistles from Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). He was a gentile city! (Gal. 2:7-9). So the argument of the inheritance of Roman papacy is not right.

3. The authority to forgive sins

The important teaching of Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches is that the Peter had been given the key of heaven and that his successors are being given the authority of forgiving sins. They use the verses for their side are Mt. 16:19, 18:19 and Jn. 20:23. These verses needed further study on the basis of the written context. The following reasons tell us the hollowness of their teaching.

1. Peter never told other apostles of his power to forgive sins and entering the sinners into heaven. Their using of such power is not mentioned in Bible. Instead, they preached and taught the repentance, Redemption through the death of Jesus, justification through faith and holy life. They raised Jesus as the forgiver of sins and the most high priests. They never spoke of praying to them for forgiving sins. New Testament is full of verses telling the repentance and believing in Jesus. Some verses are given below.

Act. 23:38-40, 3:19, 4:11-12, 5:30-31, 10:42-43, 17:30-31, 20:21, Rom. 1:16-17, 3:24-35, 5:1-2, 5:8-9, 10:9-11, 1Cori. 1:18-21, 2Cori. 5:5:20-21, Eph.2:5-8, Gal.3:13-14, Col.1:14, 1Thes.5:10, 1Pet. 2:24, Heb.10:12-14, 1Jn.1:7-9, 1:6.

2) Heaven and kingdom of heaven are two. Kingdom of heaven is the church. By using the key of gospel, apostle Peter opened the kingdom of heaven on the day of Pentecost. From that day to how many have been experiencing the great truth. 'God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe' (1 Cori. 1:21). Every believer is responsible to make people enter into the church.

3. Let us think about the forgiving of sins. God is authoritative to forgive sins. Jesus applied this power of God in his public ministry (Mt. 9:2-6, Mk. 2:5-11). Neither apostles nor their successors were given the

authority of forgiving sins (Mt. 16:19, 18:18, Jn. 20:23). By misusing these verses, Pope during 17th century sold the card for forgiving sins and earned money. Unfortunately the churches use the same verses today. What is said Peter in Mt. 16:19 is also mentioned in Jn. 20:23. The term 'you' (Plural) is used in both verses. So we can understand that it does not mean Peter only. The context behind Mt. 18:18 tell us clear that Jesus talks on the brother who sins against you'. We need to forgive others so that the heavenly father also forgives our sins. The church of Corinth had an immoral brother. The believer and apostle Paul with Christ's spirit handed that man to Satan, so that his sinful nature maybe destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord (1 Cori. 5:3-5). When he confessed and returned, Paul requested the church at Corinth to pardon and console him. 'If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him (2 Cori. 2:5-10). Then, his sins are forgiven in the presence of God. If a man commits sin, the presence of God. If a man commits sin the church has to make him understand his sins in the spirit of meekness and maintain him in the spiritual relationship. If that person is not at all come to the Lord, he cannot experience the forgiveness from the church and God (Mt. 18:15-18). This is what Jesus said.

In the next lessons, we will learn more of the false teachings intruded into the church from 4th century. Let us submit ourselves to lead a life which is according to the word of God.

Questions

1. What is the reason behind the formation of different churches? What should we do to understand the truth?
2. How do the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches find their base for false teachings and bad customs? How did the pagan practices intruded into those churches?
3. Priesthood is unbiblical to the New Testament church. Prove the statement with the help of verses from the Bible.
4. Deny the view with Biblical understanding that 'the church is being build on Peter'?
5. There is a teaching that Peter and his successors have the authority for forgiving sins and make entrance possible to them in heaven. Deny this teaching with the Biblical verses