

LESSON 19

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

- Objective** : To lead a Christian life according to the Bible by realizing the false teachings and bad customs intruded in to the church after the time of apostolic period.
- Bible Portion** : Lk.16:19-31,2Cori 5:1-10, 1 Cori 11:23-32, Rom 6:1-11
- Memory Verse** : 2 Pet 2:1-2

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Introduction

Following the conversion of Constantine, the church had been diverted from apostolic teachings. Thus false teachings and pagan practices intruded in to the church. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches maintained the tradition as such. Qurbana and prayer for the dead ones, praying to the saints and Virgin Mary are some of the evil practices. It is common among them that they conduct festivals in the name of saints and visit pilgrim centers. The holy mass commemorating the death of Christ gave way to the sin offering. They established infant baptism also. Let us examine whether these practices have any place in the Bible.

1) Practices and Prayer for the dead

Why prayer for dead and Qurbana is conducted? These churches teach that these practices are necessary for saving their souls. Jesus and disciples made very clearly in to the word of God about the way to be saved. Everyone living in the world should approach Jesus by taking up his yoke and learn from him (Mt. 11:28-30). Those who believe in Jesus have the eternal life (Jn.3:16-18, 8:24, Act.2:38, Rom.10:9, Eph. 2:8,1 Pet.2:24). Paul very clearly asserts that everyone will receive the reward according to his deeds on earth. (2Cori.5:10). Now, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1). Those who do not repent and believe in Christ shall die in their sins (Jn. 8:24). Those who do not repent, shall be perished (Lk.13:3).

Repentance is worldly experience. Jesus made it clear through the story of Lazarus and the rich (Lk. 16:19-21). These verses reveal the following truths.

1. The holy men (Saved after repentance) after death shall go to the place of rest which is made by God. The angels took Lazarus to Abraham's lap (paradise) (Lk.16:22). The criminal saved on the day of Jesus' crucifixion reached paradise the same day (Lk.23:43). The first Christian martyr, Stephen reached paradise when he died (Act.7:55-60). Apostle Paul says that the holy men shall reside with Christ after death (Phili.1:23, II Cor.5:8). The rich who did not receive the salvific experience reached the hell. There is no place vested for the souls of dead in between paradise and hell. They do not flow in the space.

2. The souls of dead can talk and recognize each other. But they cannot move from one place to another. (Lk.16:26). There is a big gap between the paradise and hell. So there is no use of prayer for the dead ones.

3. One should repent when he lives on the earth. If a person dies without repenting, has to bear the painful experience in hell. The rich experienced this truth and begged Abraham to go to his brothers. He believed that they would repent if a dead one visits them (Lk.16:30).

Is there an opportunity for purification of souls after death?

Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches teach that soul will be purified after the ceremonies conducted for the dead ones. So they profess

the view that there is a place of purification. It does not have any base in the Bible. After the death, the believers rest in Christ. So the physical death is referred to as rest and sleeping. It means they are not active. (Rev.14:13, Dan.12:13, I Thes.4:13). They will resurrect with heavenly bodies during the second coming of Jesus Christ. (I Thes.4:16, I Cor.15:49-52). Then, everyone will be presented before the seat of judgement to receive what is due him according to their deeds on earth. (II Cor.5:10). It is very clear that one gets the opportunity to be purified when he lives on the earth. Christ did not teach the disciples of the possibility of purification after the death. So these practices have adapted from Pagan religions.

II Prayer to the saints.

Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches teach and advise the believers to pray to the saints and perform the related ceremonies. They believe that their intercession is equally useful for dead and living ones. The base on their teachings is worldly. As the judges on each receive the recommendation and bribery, perform false judgments. Like them. God will act. It is their belief. There is only one mediator between God and men. Paul, undoubtedly uplift the power of Christ who can mediate. He was become a ransom for many. (I Tim. 2:5-6). Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Heb.7:25). If one commits sin, we have Jesus with God as an advocate (I Jn. 2:1). The above mentioned, verses tell us that there is only one mediator, i.e., Jesus. Old Testament text also witnessed the fact that the intercession for sinners by men is not useful (Jer. 15:1). Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Ezekiel 14:12-20 states that when a nation faces the wrath of God, even if, it has Noah, Daniel and Job with them. They will save their own lives in justice. They can only save their own lives. It has been said in 4 times. It reveals that we have only Jesus as mediator.

Intercession of Virgin Mary

Roman Catholic churches proclaimed Virgin Mary as mother of God, and the queen of heaven. They worship Mary in this way. They adopted it from Babylon. In the Old Testament, the pagans worshipped

queen of heaven and paid tribute to it. It was common that they would prepare bread in the form of queen of heaven (Jer.44:16-19). Virgin Mary is blessed as she became a vehicle of Christ's birth. She like others needs to be saved through Jesus Christ. So she said; "My spirit rejoices in God (Lk.1:47). She prayed with believers for receiving the Holy Spirit. (Act.1:44). Jesus did not indicate much respect to his parents or siblings. He says that the one who does his will is his brothers and sisters. Saint Augustine holds the view that Mary preferred much giving birth to Jesus as a blessing than anything else. Even the apostles in their letters did not mention anything about the intercession of Virgin Mary.

Idolatry

Many of the Christian leaders address the people to bow before the idols of saints. The law of Moses and Prophetic texts strictly prohibited idolatry. It was because of Israelites following the ways of pagan religions and made idols. Thus God punished them. (Ex.20:4-5, Duet.5:8-9, Jer.10:2-5, Eze.14:4-8). In the New Testament also, the idolatry is strictly prohibited. (I Cor.10:14, Rom.1:21-25, I Jn. 5:21, Gal.5:19).

Qurban or divine sacrifice

Jesus came into this world to redeem the people from sin. He died and resurrected from dead according to the word of God. He bore our sins and curses on the cross. The holy mass is established to remember the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus. But Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches changed it into Qurbana or divine sacrifice. Its way of teaching and practice has been different from the apostolic times. Our model is the teachings of Jesus and the apostolic doctrines. (Mt.26:26-29, Mk.14:22-25, Lk.22:19-20, I Cor.10:15-17, I Cor.11:23-32).

1. The changed practice.

Jesus took the bread and wine respectively and had been offered to disciple by praising God. He commanded them to follow the same way he did. But the traditionally oriented churches had changed the pattern of Jesus Christ. Some churches offer only bread to the believers and the priests enjoy the wine fully. Some other churches give the bread partially

dipped in the wine. Do these practices unbiblical? More ever, this simple sacrament transformed into a luxurious one by such churches.

2. The changed doctrines

When priest lifts up the bread and wine in his hands on the occasion of Qurbana, they believe, that the bread and the wine will be transfigured into the body and blood of Jesus respectively. So each Qurbana is considered as sin offerings. Qurbana for dead ones is performed many times in order to confirm their sins are fully forgiven. What does the Bible say? (Heb:10:10-14). We are purified by the blood of Jesus, which had once sacrificed on the cross. Some Priests perform the Qurbanas manytimes. But they are not useful to purify the sinners. Jesus, instead, once became a sacrifice for many and sits at the right side of God to accept and deliver the sinners, the enemy of cross. In Hebrew 10:18 says that there is no sacrifice needed because the deliverance is over on the cross. There are no other sacrifices except the sin offering of Jesus on the cross. So there is no need of priests committing sacrifice to save sinners! The holy mass is given to the church to commemorate Jesus and his sufferings thankfully. It is not a sin offering. Jesus had already told the disciples to remember him and his suffering. By attending the mass, we witness the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The bread is only the symbol of Jesus body. This can be studied along with other metaphors in the bible. 'I am the bread of life' (Jn.8:12) 'I am the door' (Jn.10:11), 'I am the vine' (Jn.15:5), 'That rock was Christ' (I Cor.10:4). Jesus words of bread as his body is also understood in this way.

Infant Baptism

This is not a biblical practice intruded in many churches. Neither Jesus nor disciples baptized infants. They were not commanded to be added to the church. 'Whoever believes and baptized will be saved' (Mk.16:16). 'Repent and be baptized'(Act. 2:38) 'Who heard him believed and was baptized' (Act.18:8). Simon himself believed and was baptized. (Act. 8:12-13). The verses mentioned above tells the fact that those who believe in Jesus must be baptized. Philip, the evangelist baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch, only after believing in Jesus. (Act.8:36-38). Both were came out of the river holds the truth that Eunuch's baptism was full. Jesus also was baptized by John, the Baptist in the same way.

(Mt.3:16,Mk.1:10). Paul explains the meaning and purpose of baptism in Romans.6:3-8. In baptism, a person partakes in the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It points out the immersion in the water.

Now, let us examine the laws related to infant baptism. Below, the views that follow it and the denying of it biblically are described.

1. New Testament portions says the baptism of families. The families might have more infants. (Act.19:47-48.16:14-15,16:32-33,I cor.1:16).

The family members of Cornelius were having the knowledge of listening to the word of God and praising God. We can see members in Lydia's house (Act.16:40). The baptized were mature brothers. The family members of Stephen were capable enough to minister the brothers. (I Cor.16:15).There is no ground of asserting the practice of infant baptism with respect to these verses. In II Sam. 3:1, it is said that there was a long time fight between Saul's and David's house. It does not mean that the infants also had participated in war. Those who were able to fight participated in war. In this way, a family gets baptized means the mature ones participates in it.

2. In I Cor.7:14, it is said that the children be considered holy, if the parents or one of the parents is a believer. So children were baptized.

Here mentions not the holiness to the baptized or entering into the kingdom of heaven. It talks of the holiness needed for a social life. Apostles clam that the parents, a believer and a non believer can lead a Christian life. The children borne out of them have no it does not have any connection with baptism.

3. Israelites get circumcised early (8th day). Baptism is given for circumcision. So infants must get baptized.

The Christians baptized in First century were Jews. All Jews were already circumcised. It was a custom that the gentiles who were baptized and added to the church underwent through the process of circumcision. The instructions for circumcision and baptism were different to each other. Circumcision was meant for men. Baptism was designed to everyone who were repented.

4. Jesus blessed the infants and said that the kingdom of heaven is for them. The Lord commanded to baptize those who believe in gospel. Jesus only blessed them, not ordered the disciples to baptize them.

The above mentioned matters very clearly assert that the infant baptism is not biblical and was a false teaching intruded into the church during dark ages. It was established due to the notion that the infants not baptized will not reach heaven.

Let us decide to lead a holy life according to the word of God.

Questions:

1. Assert the fact that salvation of soul is necessary while living in body?
2. What are the truth Jesus revealed through the story of Lazarus and the rich?
3. Do the souls get purified after the death? Explain.
4. Establish the fact that praying to the saints is not biblical?
5. What are the designations given to Virgin Mary? Establish the fact that they are not biblical?
6. What is the teaching of 'qurbana' in Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches ? How these teachings are contrary from the bible?
7. Clarify that infant baptism is not biblical?
