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THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH

(2 Chron.29: 17)

"The service of the house of the LORD was set in order" (v.35).

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints...Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor.14: 33,40).

As we have entered into another year, shall we examine ourselves to see how our behaviour was last year in the House of God. Have we contributed to order or disorder in His House?

Five steps preceded the setting up of the service of the House of the Lord in order, in the time of Hezekiah. The first of the five steps taken by him in the first month of the first year of his reign, was the step of CONFESSION, and it was out of deep conviction and not mere empty words. The king himself led in that confession: "For our fathers have trespassed...and have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord" (v.6). God's people had become a backslidden and fallen people, and the House of the Lord was filled with filthiness (v.5). In this age of the Laodicean Church, true spirit of confession that was seen in Hezekiah's time is missing, because of the lack of conviction of sin as it is written: "...no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? neither could they blush" (Jer.8: 6,12). Let us like Daniel go even further and say, "We have sinned". Thrice he made that confession (Dan.9: 5,8,11). Let us like him seek God's mercies and forgiveness and ask Him to make His face to shine upon us in this New Year.

The second step was the CALL of Hezekiah to the Levites reminding them that they were the chosen of the Lord to stand before Him to serve Him. Our service can never bring blessing to anyone or to His House if we do not stand before the Lord and await His guidance, His instruction and His infilling both of His Spirit and Word, Let us take a few examples: "...Abraham stood yet before the LORD"(Gen, 18:22), till his prayer on behalf of Lot was answered, Elijah is another example: "...As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand" (1 Kings 17:1), He stood before the Lord that he might receive direction from Him for his ministry, and we know from the following verses how clear those directions were. And we know with what power he spoke to the king as well as to the people. Yet another example is in the New Testament. Gabriel the angel testifies, "...I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee"(Luke 1: 19). God cannot make us a blessing to others, neither can He send us to high or low for His purposes, unless we stand before Him and await His direction and Word, How many of us today in His service take decisions concerning our ministry and His House without standing before Him! We take them in our own carnal wisdom and for our own selfish ends. How much loss we have brought to His House because of this independence from God! The Lord grant us this burden to set the service of the House of the Lord in order by following these steps. "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ...blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa.30: 18).

The third step was the step of CONSECRATION (2 Chron..29:5). Hezekiah directs the Levites very firmly: "And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves" -this is to be set apart wholly to God. The Lord Jesus Himself is an example to us: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). We often boast that we are consecrated to His work, His House, and so on. But without ourselves being consecrated to God, every other consecration, however sincere it might be on our part will never be of any pleasure to or acceptable unto God, because that work, instead of proceeding from God's will has proceeded from ourselves. And God cannot accept anything that proceeds from ourselves. The Macedonian church offers us an exemplary conduct to emulate. Paul writes about them in his letter to the Corinthians. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How...beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, ...And this they did not as we hoped, but FIRST GAVE THEIR OWN SELVES TO THE LORD, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Cor.8: 1-5). Then our service will also be a sweet savour unto the Lord. Let us first consecrate ourselves to the Lord that we may do His pleasure and His will throughout this year.

The fourth step was the CLEANSING of the House of God. And this cleansing started from the inner part of the House of the Lord. "And the priests went into the INNER part of the house of the Lord...and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord" (2: Chron.29: 16). Let us recall how the Lord brought Ezekiel

into the inner court of the Lord's House to show him abominations greater than what he had seen outside (Eze.8: 16). We are the temple of the Lord. Do we examine the inner recesses of our heart -our motives, our desires, our plans, our ambitions? Are we worshipping them? Are our behaviour and ministry directed towards achieving those ends in the House of the Lord? Are we focused on these things to exalt ourselves instead of the Lord? These are the gods that have taken hold of us -gods of power, possession, position, and preeminence. These are the sun, moon and stars that Ezekiel beheld being worshipped by those inside God's House (Eze.8: 15). As Jesus drove out the moneychanger and sellers from the temple, let us also this New Year take this step of cleansing our own temple and His House too, of all such filthiness (2 Cor. 7:1; Eze.43: 12).

Finally, the service of the House of the Lord was set in order when all the congregation worshipped the Lord. And the worship was centered round the burnt offering. Let us also this New Year draw near the CROSS where Jesus offered Himself unto God as a burnt offering, as a sweet smelling savour unto God. May the Lord in this first month of the New Year lead us and help us to put our decisions firmly into these steps that Hezekiah took for himself, for the people of God and for His servants so that God's House and its service may truly be set in order before His coming.

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LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the One Who hath "prepared his throne in the heavens" and whose "kingdom ruleth over all", unto Whom be "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power...for ever and ever". May we be kept under the sovereignty and supremacy of His Throne, "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" and be the recipients of all that He hath planned and prepared for us in Christ this year, and serve Him acceptably in His Kingdom that cannot be moved (Psa.103: 19; Rev.5: 9, 10, 13; Acts9:31; Heb.12:28).

We shall continue our thoughts from the Book of Daniel chapter 5 -spiritual lessons and principles, to capacitate us for our service in His coming Kingdom. In verse 12 of this chapter it is mentioned concerning Daniel, "an excellent spirit" was found in him; also in chapter.6 and verse 3. The story reveals how excellent that spirit was. The chapter is remembered for its story of the folly of Belshazzar, and his condemnation by the writing on the wall. It may be profitable to look at it from Daniel's standpoint, for it shows how marvelously God's sovereignty worked to restore him to his position in Babylon, only just in time.

When the story began Daniel was in obscurity. His former greatness was forgotten. His place of authority gained only by his faithfulness to God had been taken from him. Was this mere chance? Was it the work of intriguing enemies? One thing is certain, and that is, that so complete was his eclipse, that when the need arose for an interpreter, only the old queen mother thought of him. And when the servant of God was brought into the royal presence, the king not recognising him had to ask, "Art thou Daniel.. ?". No doubt it was typical of those capricious times that such a great man could so easily and quickly sink into obscurity . But does not this remind us of other servants of the Lord, who had to wait for "His Time" before they could enter into their ministry? Joseph languished, forgotten in a prison. Moses spent 40 years at the back of the wilderness (Exo.3: 1; Acts 7:30)..Elijah had to hide for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:3; 18:1; James 5:17). John the Baptist was "in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke 1 :80). And no one really knows where Saul of Tarsus was until Barnabas went and fetched him to Antioch (Acts 9:30; 11: 25,26).

All this seems to express the spiritual feature of those who serve in the Kingdom. They must prove that God is the God of resurrection; the One Who can place them or reinstate them, by His own wisdom and power. NO TRUE SERVANT OF GOD HAS TO MAKE A WAY FOR HIMSELF. He may seem for a time neglected or forgotten in the wilderness or the shelf. This is particularly painful when a man knows like Daniel, that he has a work to do, which no

one else can do. The inactivity is most irksome and obscurity painful to the flesh. The temptation to try to extricate or advance himself is almost too great to bear. If however he is a servant of the living God, he must learn to rely only on his God's sovereign power. Unhappily the Christian world is all too familiar with self - advertisement, appeals for influential help, doubtful place -seeking, fighting for personal rights and the rest of it. Daniel was not that kind of man. If he were the Lord's servant, then the Lord must reinstate him. It was not his responsibility to make his way or keep his position. That was His Master's business. All he had to do was to beware of self - assertiveness, and maintain his "excellent spirit." and how right he was!

The story describes the amazing wisdom by which recovery was brought about. Daniel assured Belshazzar that he neither desired favours nor sought a place. But the king clothed him and decked him with a chain of gold on his neck, proclaiming him the third ruler in the kingdom. It was his last act. That night he was slain, so that only just in the nick of time Daniel had been brought back to his place when the new dynasty took charge of the empire. It seems likely that Darius was glad enough to find such a man to govern the new dominion. The very next chapter reveals how quickly Daniel gained favour with this king. What a lesson it gives us in divine sovereignty, and what a proof of how well the Lord is able to look after His own interests, and that of His own servants. if they are prepared to wait upon Him. The next and last chapter instructs of Daniel's prayer life, which we may consider in our next issue.

Let us pray that the word ministered in the Youth Camps or retreats, from the 14th of January for the next few days, be watered by the Holy Spirit, and the decisions and commitments made by the youth in the meetings held in the assemblies at Chennai, Ongole, Pormamilla, Anantapur, Bangalore, Kolhapur, and other sister assemblies, may enable them to be built up in their "most holy faith".

Bro.T.E.Koshy covets our prayers for his health and future ministries as he leaves India on 17th January back to U.S.A. The Lord has been pleased to make his ministry in public as well as prayers and counsels to smaller companies, instructive and corrective of the church, His Body. Let us pray for his visit and itinerary to Thailand, God willing within a few weeks and also for the International Assembly at Syracuse, where he is based.

Bro.G. Moses, servant of God at Godavarikhani, Karimnagar dist. covets our prayers for the construction of their new Prayer House, in the land newly allotted to them by the Singareni Company, in answer to the prayers of the saints. Let us pray for the work and ministry as a whole in the coal belt area, especially after the profitable time they enjoyed, in the Convocation held there last October.

Praying that we all be kept in touch with His Throne, where the Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, able to save us to the uttermost,

I remain yours in His grace,
K. PHILLIP

Heb. 8: 1,10; Psalm 22: 28,30; Dan 4:34

MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU BAKHT SINGH

Scripture Text: John 15

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (verse 11).

Chapters 14-16 of John's Gospel, contain the last message, which our Lord gave to the disciples before He was crucified. That is why; every word of these three chapters is full of deep meaning. You are inspired as you go through these three chapters again and again. The messages in these chapters can be summed up in three small fragments. In John 14:27 our Lord spoke of His peace, in John 15:11 He spoke about His joy, and in 16:33, He spoke of His victory .The Christian life is summed up in these three words: Peace, Joy and Victory. In our previous issues we saw something about true peace, which we have in the Lord Jesus. It is a wonderful experience to have God's peace. If you have not received that peace, we trust that the Lord would give you that peace by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He said, "My peace I give unto you". He spoke the same words when He appeared to His disciples on the day of resurrection: "Peace be unto you". We find the very same words repeated in the beginning of every epistle of Paul. Then again, we see in 2 Peter 1: 2, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord". By faith in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, we

have obtained peace.

Now in John 15:11 we find the second experience of salvation. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full". Again we find that John says in 1 John 1: 4, " And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full". That is the whole purpose of the Bible-our joy may be full. It is very painful to have our sins uncovered. It is very very humiliating when we see our hidden condition, but God does so to make our joy full. Whatever God may do to us, either punish us or chastise us, He does it with the same purpose. He wants to make our joy full. Only then, He is satisfied. We find that the very same message was brought to the earth, by the heavenly host at the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that time some shepherds were watching over their flocks in the fields of Bethlehem. An angel came to the shepherds and said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10). This good tidings of great joy is for all people with no exception. People of all classes and countries can have that joy. Whatever might have been your handicap or failure or condition or sin, this good tidings of great joy is for you. Whosoever you may be, if you have the real experience of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will have this great joy. Otherwise there is something wrong with your salvation. Outwardly you may look very happy, but inwardly you are full of misery .You are not satisfied. We give you this message of good tidings that you too can have that wonderful joy.

Then we see in John 16:24, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". These words were spoken by our Lord to those disciples who were with Him for three years. It is quite evident that their joy was not full. Our Lord knew there was something lacking in their lives. They had forsaken all, they were good people, hard working, and God-fearing. Above all, they knew the Word of God. They knew the prophecies about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They knew how to make sacrifice for God. They also saw many miracles during three years, lived with the Lord Jesus Christ day and night, and heard all His sermons. And yet, our Lord was saying, "I know that your joy is not yet full". If that was said about them, then what about us? So let us make sure, what kind of joy we have. In many cases, we find their joy is not full or real.

(To be contd.)

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