

PREPARE YOUR HEART TO SERVE GOD

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture texts: Ephesians 4:11-16; Ezra 7:10. From Roy H. Enoch 04-17-1994.
- B. Anything important needs preparation.
 - 1. We consider those who do not prepare for important work to be foolish.
 - a. Take an exam w/o reading the text or taking notes is foolish and irresponsible.
 - b. To work at a profession or trade w/o trying to find out what is required is foolish.
 - c. To try to teach w/o out training and study does not work.
 - d. To expect to please the Lord with our life and go to heaven when we die w/o studying His word or doing what He says shows a lack of understanding.
 - 2. If we think we can serve God without preparation we show that we are ignorant of His word.
- C. The Lord has always taught that man must prepare himself to serve and worship Him.
 - 1. The Hebrew word has several related meanings.
 - a. The literal meaning is "being firmly established, being firmly anchored, being firm."
 - b. Abstractly, it means "being established or fixed as to be unchangeable or unchanging."
 - 1) Something can be prepared and fixed in the sense of "being completed."
 - 2) It can be fixed in the sense of "being enduring."
 - c. To prepare can also mean "to be ready," as to prepare for the Passover.
 - 2. The Greek word also means "to make ready" or to have a "firm foundation."
 - 3. Many passages show that one not firmly established cannot serve God.
- D. We want to study the importance of preparing ourselves to serve God.
 - 1. God emphasized in the OT that we must prepare.
 - 2. Jesus emphasized preparation to the apostles.
 - 3. Letters to the churches emphasized preparation.

I. THE OT EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR PREPARATION FOR GOD'S SERVICE.

- A. Under the Law of Moses there was great emphasis on preparation.
 - 1. God gave a detailed law to His people.
 - 2. It described the minute detail of worship and warned of punishment for disobedience.
 - 3. The example of Nahab and Abihu shows the importance (Lev. 10:1-3).
 - 4. Uzzah tried to protect the Ark of the Covenant in the wrong way (2Sam. 6:6,7).
- B. Those who led in the worship had to be sanctified and holy before the Lord.
 - 1. Much of the book of Leviticus is filled with regulations for those who served in God's worship and how the worship was to be carried out and by whom.
 - 2. These detailed regulation taught the people of Israel that God wanted them to take seriously His word and worship.
 - 3. It emphasized that He required pure lives and motives.
 - 4. The penalties taught how bad sin really is.
 - 5. Sinful man does not think that sin is very bad and that it really doesn't matter how we serve God or whether we serve.
- C. The regulations were sometimes misunderstood to believe that all God wanted was ritual and sacrifices.
 - 1. The first chapter of Isaiah shows the fallacy of this.
 - a. V1-9 accused the people of forgetting God and all His blessings.
 - b. V10-15 God would not accept worship from those living in sin and violence.
 - c. V16-20 describes what God really wants from those who would worship Him.
- D. Those who served God prepared themselves.
 - 1. Ezra prepared his heart to serve God (Ezra 7:10).
 - 2. The priests and Levites had studied God's word and were able to help teach it (Neh. 8:1-8).

3. Samuel told Israel that they had to prepare to serve God (1Sam. 7:3).
4. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon did not prepare to serve God (2Chr. 12:14).
5. God told Jeremiah to prepare himself to speak His word (Jer. 1:17).
6. Amos told Israel to prepare to meet God (Amos 4:12).

II. JESUS EMPHASIZED TO THE APOSTLES THE NEED TO PREPARE TO SERVE HIM.

- A. He spent three and a half years preparing them for His service.
 1. When He appointed them apostles he described in detail some of the hardships and persecution that they would suffer (Mt. 10).
 - a. Do not go to the Gentiles.
 - b. Go to the lost of the house of Israel.
 - c. Preach that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - d. Perform miracles freely. (and w/o charge)
 - e. Depend on the people for your support.
 - f. They would be like sheep among wolves.
 - g. They would be beaten and betrayed (Mt. 10:28).
 - h. Do not be afraid.
 - i. Whoever confesses Me before men, I will confess before the Father and the angels.
 - j. I bring not peace but a sword (Mt. 10:37-39).
 - k. He who receives you receives Me.
- B. He also showed them how to be innocent and to accept persecution w/o complaint.
 1. He washed their feet to teach them to serve each other.
 2. He foretold his crucifixion to prepare them for persecution.
 3. He gave them the Holy Spirit as a guide and counselor.
 4. He promised to prepare a place for them (Jn. 14:2,3).
- C. He gave gifts to men to prepare them for His service (Eph. 4:11-16).
 1. "for the equipping of the saints,"
 2. "for the work of ministry,"
 3. "for the deifying of the body of X," (v12).
 4. "till we all come to the unity of the faith" (until all of "the faith" has been revealed).
 5. "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine"
 6. "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him"
 7. that the whole body may grow for the edifying of itself in love.
- D. This takes a lot of preparation.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Are you preparing yourself to serve X?
- B. Are you preparing to fight the good fight of faith?
- C. Are you preparing to meet God in judgment?
- D. You have opportunity today to start that preparation before it is too late.