

■ 76th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

In the ritual of offering the first fruits of the harvest to God, the Israelites presented them at the altar through the priest as an expression of gratitude for God's blessings. The "confession" in this context recalls the roots of the Israelite people. The phrase "a wandering Aramean" refers to Jacob (also known as Israel, the father of Joseph), who migrated from Canaan to Egypt due to famine. Over time, by God's blessing, the Israelites multiplied and became a great nation. Fearing their growing strength, the Egyptians subjected them to harsh labor and oppression. The Israelites cried out to God for help, and God responded to their prayers. He devised a plan for their deliverance from Egypt, sending ten plagues upon the land through Moses and performing miracles such as the parting of the Red Sea. God's salvation plan was fulfilled as He led the Israelites into the Promised Land (Canaan), a land flowing with milk and honey, blessed by God. In response, the Israelites offered their first fruits to God, bowing down in worship before Him (Genesis 17:3; Joshua 5:14; Revelation 4:10).

As stated in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Therefore, worship ideally involves both an inner devotion (heart) and an outward expression (posture).

【First Fruits】

The Israelites, following the Law, offered the first fruits of their harvest to express gratitude to God.

1. By offering the first fruits to God, He promised to bless the entirety of the subsequent harvest (Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Joshua 5:10?12). Other references include Exodus 23:19, Numbers 18:12?13, Deuteronomy 18:4, Deuteronomy 26:4?10, and Leviticus 23:9?14. During the Festival of First Fruits (the day after the Sabbath following Passover), the first sheaf of the barley harvest was offered to God. In the New Testament, Jesus' resurrection took place on this day, signifying Him as the "first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20), guaranteeing the resurrection of believers thereafter.

2. In the Old Testament, offering the first fruits was a way to express gratitude to God and receive His blessings. In the New Testament, believers themselves become the "first fruits" through Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, undergoing sanctification the process of being made worthy to serve God (Romans 11:16; James 1:18).

● Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

Paul explains that the word of salvation is near within reach of the mouth and heart (Deuteronomy 30:14) and can be received immediately by faith. A person is saved by believing in their heart that Jesus was raised from the dead and by confessing with their mouth that "Jesus is Lord." Those who believe in the Lord will not be put to shame, as confirmed by Isaiah 28:16 (though there are variations in the Hebrew and Greek translations). God's salvation is not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles who believe in and follow Him.

【Salvation】

① Deliverance from sin and reconciliation with God (Romans 5:10). ② Receiving eternal life from God (John 17:3). ③ Entry into the new kingdom created by God (Philippians 3:20?21). ④ A gift from God, not attained by personal effort (Ephesians 2:8?9).

● Gospel Reading: Luke 4:1-13

After His baptism by John, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to begin His mission as the Son of God. The wilderness represents a place of testing (Deuteronomy 8:2?3) and is the foundation of Lent a period of fasting, prayer, repentance, and reflection on Jesus' suffering in preparation for Easter. The number 40 is significant, representing

Moses' encounter with God (Exodus 34:28) and the length of Lent.

The temptation to turn stones into bread represents the urge to satisfy personal desires. Jesus rebukes this by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone," rejecting self-centered gratification.

The devil tempts Jesus by offering Him authority over the world's power and glory in exchange for worship, but Jesus counters with Deuteronomy 6:13: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only," rejecting falsehood and temptation.

The devil challenges Jesus to prove His divine sonship by throwing Himself down from the temple, citing Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:16: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test," reinforcing trust in God without testing Him.

After these temptations, the devil departs, waiting for another opportunity (John 13:2; Luke 22:3).

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