**The Answers of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd RUTC:**

 **The Feast of Thanksgiving in the Wilderness (Deuteronomy 16:13-17) 11/22/2020**

Everyone is in the most difficult times due to the COVID-19 pandemic during this Thanksgiving. However, the thanksgiving we offer right now may be the true thanksgiving that God desires. It is because the first feast of thanksgiving was kept in the same way. The Israelites were told to keep the feast of thanksgiving while they were passing through the wilderness after being enslaved for 400 years. A wilderness or wasteland is, as it says, an abandoned or empty land. In terms of life, it may be the times that seem lonely, difficult, and helpless. **The first Thanksgiving in America was the same.** There were 102 people who came on the Mayflower, also called the Pilgrim Fathers. 50 of them died from the cold or starvation, and those who survived through the help of Natives gave their first thanksgiving in tears. It is a historical fact that the United States today received God’s blessing and arose on top of that first thanksgiving. Thus, “God bless America” is not just a saying.

**1. This is why God said to keep three feasts in the wilderness. It is because the covenant is within that.**

A covenant signifies God’s absolute plan for us that was given to us as a promise. Sometimes, there are contracts that are required when making a promise with someone (“suntheke” in Greek). However, there is a promise that is made by making a blessed plan because of love. That is called the covenant of grace (diatheke in Greek). God placed this covenant while the Israelites were passing through the wilderness and told them to keep the three feasts.

**1) The Passover. It is the blessing of salvation.**

**① It was the time the Israelites came out of the 400-year destiny-like curse through the blood of the lamb.**

To us, this symbolizes the covenant of salvation and the blessing of salvation.

**②** **After the fall of Adam in Genesis 3, every life is separated from God and unwittingly bound by the curse of original sin, the curse of Satan, and the curse of hell like destiny.**

God did not create us to live this way. Hence, He leads His Son to die and allows us to come out of all curses and granted us to be children and people who will enjoy God’s blessing.

**2) The Pentecost. It is a blessing that the saved person will enjoy.**

**① We are no longer alone the moment we are saved. The Holy Spirit is with us (John 14:16-18, 1 Corinthians 3:16).**

This is why the Holy Spirit comes upon the people of God who believe in Christ and receive salvation just as the promise of Acts 2. This is so that we may walk with the Holy Spirit, receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and experience the works of the Holy Spirit within our wilderness-like life.

**②** **Despite being saved, why do I live a life that is lonely, failing, and without answers?**

It is because we lose hold of this covenant and blessing of the Pentecost and live according to my own standard, the standard of the flesh, and worldly standard.

**3) The Feast of Thanksgiving is also called the Feast Tabernacles or Feast of Ingathering. It is the blessing of life’s conclusion that the saved person will enjoy.**

**① It is called the Feast of Ingathering because they harvest fruits and put them in storage.**

Each of our lives is God’s fruit. Do not misunderstand that you are living your own life. God planted life within me, heals and guides me who is insufficient through the word, and will surely raise me as a witness before the world and posterity. Other fruits will arise through me in that way (evangelism and mission).

**②** **It is called the Feast of Tabernacles (Tent) because they built temporary tents while in the wilderness. They were to never forget that.**

Our lives on earth are like building temporary tents. Do not be so infatuated with things of the flesh and world. They are all passing away (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

**③ Then, where is the destination or original hometown we must go to? It is eternal heaven.**

It is the new heaven and earth where Christ will reign as the eternal king when He returns (Revelations 21:1-4). This means there is a time set aside where there are no tears or suffering but one where we enjoy eternal life, rest, and peace. Hence, we are told to stack our treasures in heaven, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-20), to look at things above and not of earth (Colossians 3:1-3), and to look to only Christ as we run the race of faith towards that day (Hebrews 12:1-2). We call this journey and/or progress.

**2. How were they told to keep these feasts? Shouldn’t there be a meaning in keeping this feast?**

**1) The people of God were told to be joyful during this feast (verse 14-15).**

**① What were they to be joyful for? It does not say to be joyful for what they have already received.**

They were told to be joyful “For the Lord your God will bless you in all the work of your hands.” Thanksgiving is a feast to reflect on the past year and simultaneously to prepare for the upcoming new year. Within this, there are five things to do in advance (see, hold onto, enjoy, experience, and challenge God’s plan in advance).

**②** **The difficult time of this pandemic must become a time to prepare for the future.**

Therefore, spend more deep time with God, become healthy, and discover the real mission. Eventually, the person who sees, enjoys, and himself in advance will lead this age and stand in the place of a leader and summit.

**③ Who must you share that time with? Aside from rightfully sharing with my family, it says to share with the Levites and especially the foreigners and fatherless and widows.**

They are the people who must become oneness in this covenant. This is evangelism and missions. Look to all the people who have given their labor during this feast, and those who may be lonely and accurately plant the covenant.

**2) Do not come empty-handed in this feast but give in proportion to the way the Lord has blessed you (verse 16-17).**

Thanksgiving is the last core of the three feasts. This is why we prepare and give a special thanksgiving offering as well.

**① There is something God wants to train as He teaches this thanksgiving. That is gospelization (evangelization).**

The gospel is within these three feasts. The problem is that the gospel must become my gospel, my enjoyment, and my everything. To become my everything means that I have experienced it being that worthy and precious.

**②** **Change everything into thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7). God’s absolute power (miracle) will be revealed in that just as promised.**

Start by reflecting on what I have received and giving thanks. Later on, you will give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). You will start to give thanks in suffering (Job), give thanks despite knowing you will be thrown into a lion’s den (Daniel), give thanks despite having no harvest (Habakkuk), give thanks before the crisis of death and mighty storms (Paul). They were the witnesses and evangelists of that age. The world and the devil tried to bring them down but failed to do so. The world was not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38).

**Conclusion** – We are people who are in the absolute covenant. The absolute solution (Christ), absolute conclusion (World Evangelization), absolute plan (witness) is within that. Change everything into thanksgiving and prepare for the future during this current time of difficulty. May you become those whom the world is not worthy of.