

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Lesson 2

#### YAHWEH THE TRUE GOD

Aim: To understand that Yahweh is the true God and that everything happened according to his wish.

Israel is God's chosen people. Their history starts with Abraham "Father of the faithful." 'Go to the land I want to show you' was God's order to Abraham. According to that, he started out from Haran, crossed River Euphrates, turned west and reached Canaan. First he stayed at Shechem and later lived in the land between Bethel and Ai and worshipped God.

God tested Abraham's faith. He was ready to sacrifice his only son. When Abraham was coming down Mount Moriah with his son, he heard God's message, " All the nations will be blessed because of your descendants."

Because of Joseph, who was Pharaoh's minister, Jacob and his sons came to Egypt and settled in Goshon. They became a strong clan in Egypt but were persecuted and harassed by the Egyptians in many ways. To liberate them from slavery, God chose Moses who grew up in the palace. God's wrath came upon Egypt and the Pharaoh and his people were punished with 10 plagues before the Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go away from Egypt. The huge crowd of people, which started for Canaan, included adult males numbering more than 600,000. God parted the red Sea and led them to the other shore. They traveled for about 40 years through the deserts. God fed them with Manna and Quails and gave them water from rock. When his death was nearing, Moses called all the people and gave them the last message, which was not to forget the true God. At the age of 120, Moses climbed Mount Nebo and standing on Pisgah Peak, saw the Promised Land and died. Then Joshua became the leader. In the same way Moses crossed the Red Sea, Joshua and the Israelites crossed River Jordan and put up tents at Gilgal. After capturing Jericho, they captured the town of Ai, south and North Canaan. At Mount Ebal God's commandments were written on stone and God made them strong and steadfast in faith.

After Joshua, judges were chosen to lead Israelites. Including Deborah, the prophetess, 15 judges took up leadership of Israelites. When they started living in Palestine, their unity was lost. Forgetting the true God, they started worshipping Baal of the heathens. They lost their moral values also. Lack of strong leadership was evident. This led to the rule of kings.

Reign of the Kings (B.C. 1050 – 586)

Saul belonging to the tribe of Benjamin was ordained as the first king of Israel by Samuel. He was able to instill a sense of unity into people and made Israel a powerful nation. After Saul's death, David became King of Israel (BC 1010 –970) He expanded the empire. He wanted to build a beautiful temple in Jerusalem. For that, he brought the Covenant box from Baalah in Judah and kept it in the tent that David had set up for it. David's immoral act of marrying Uriah's wife Bathsheba angered God. But prophet Nathan made him understand the depth of his sins and David repented and wrote Psalm 51. He chose Solomon as his successor. Solomon's reign was a period of prosperity (970 – 930) In 7 year's time; he built the beautiful temple at Jerusalem. Solomon initially trusted in the true God but later forgot him. He made altars for his many wives to worship their many heathen gods. . As a result, after the wise King Solomon's death, Israel was divided into two. The northern part known as Israel came to be ruled by 10 tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam. The Southern part known as Judah was ruled by Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Israel's capital was Samaria and Judea's capital was Jerusalem.

#### **Kings of Israel**

19 kings belonging to various tribes ruled Israel. Most of them were weak rulers and idol worshippers. They did not follow the commandments given to Moses. During the reign of King Ahab, prophet Elijah proved who the true God was. Israel was attacked by Assyria Empire several times and majority of the people were taken as prisoners to Assyria. As a result, Israel became non-existent. Foreigners started living in Samaria. Children of their descendants and the local residents are known as Samaritans.

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**Judah**

After the fall of the northern region, Judah existed for about 150 years only. 20 kings ruled Judah one after the other. All of them were from David's tribe. Prophet Isaiah urged people to depend on God instead of foreign powers. Still, kings gave tribute to enemy kings and continued as puppet kings. During the reign of Zedekiah, in the war with Nebuchadnezzar, Judea was defeated badly in BC 586. The king and a good number of Jews were taken as slaves to Babylon. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed completely. All the silver and gold things were taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem and the land of Judah, which was once ruled by mighty kings, became nearly non-existent in the 6th century.

Questions:

1. How did God miraculously look after the Israelites during their journey through the desert?
2. Explain the circumstances by which the rule of kings started in Israel.
3. Explain the circumstances by which David wrote Psalms 51.
4. How did Jerusalem and Judea come into non-existence by 6th century BC?

Fill in the blanks:

Capital of Israel was \_\_\_\_\_.

Capital of Judea was \_\_\_\_\_.

**Memory Verse:**

**Isaiah 11:1 – The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise among David's descendants.**

**Lesson 3**

**YAHWEH THE TRUE GOD (CONTINUATION)**

**PERIOD OF EXILE (BC 586-516)**

Most of the people who were taken as prisoners by the enemy kings from the land of Canaan to Babylon engaged themselves in farming and business. One group of people was attracted to idol worship and they rejected the true faith. Few people like Daniel were favoured by the king and held offices in the government. Most of the people lived a life of unhappiness and despair. Prophet Ezekiel lived amongst such people comforting and encouraging them to lead a pious life. Under the shade of trees and riverbanks, they used to get together to worship and pray.

In the history of the Babylonian empire, the rule of king Nebuchadnezzar is known as the golden period. But his successors were not efficient or strong like him. So, Persian king Cyrus invaded Babylon in 538 BC and defeated it. That was the end of Babylon Empire and beginning of Persian Empire. He allowed the Jews to go back to Palestine and to re-establish the Jerusalem temple. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Most of the exiled people returned. King Cyrus allowed them to take back the bowls and cups of worship of the temple.

After returning to Palestine, they started rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem. Asking "My people, why should you be living in well-built houses while God's Temple lies in ruins?" Prophet Haggai encouraged them. Another prophet who encouraged them was Zechariah. Despite the protests from Samaritans, in B.C. 516, they renovated the temple of Jerusalem and held the big festival of Passover there. Arrangements were made for regular worship. Thus, the 70 years of exile which prophet Jeremiah prophesized was fulfilled.

In BC 458, under the leadership of priest Ezra, and in BC 445, under the leadership of Nehemiah, the exile people returned to Palestine from Babylon. Nehemiah was the wine filler of King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was the leader who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Along with Ezra, Nehemiah abolished many evil practices among the Jews. They re started the practice of observing the Sabbath Day. They tried to bring up the social status of the poor people.

Reign of the Greeks. BC 333

Emperor Alexander the Great conquered countries like Persia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt in BC 333. Therefore, Greek language and Greek culture spread to these countries. Alexander was kind to the Jews. When he died in BC 323, his empire was divided amongst his army leaders. Egypt and Palestine came to be ruled by Ptolemy and Syria under Seleucus Nicator. Ptolemy II translated Septuagint Old Testament into Greek language. One of the successors of Seleucus called Antiochus III defeated Ptolemy in BC 198. Thus, land of Canaan came to be ruled by Antiochus. Greek culture spread to Jerusalem also. In BC 168, Antiochus IV invaded the temple of Jerusalem, made it unholy and installed a Greek God in it. He persecuted the Jews. The family who protested strongly against this persecution belonged to Mathathias. Later they came to be known as Macabees.

Macabees ( B. C. 167 –63)

When Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanus forced the worship of idol gods, the family which preferred martyrdom belonged to Mathathias. Priest Mathathias protested against the Syrian government and destroyed the alters of heathen gods and supported his own people. When he died in BC 166, his son Judah Maccabi became the leader.

From him the clan name Macabees originated. He defeated the Greeks. In BC 165 he consecrated the temple and restarted worship. Festival of the Dedication of the Temple was celebrated. When he died, brothers Jonathan and Simon ruled successively. Simon was a strong ruler. Later his third son, John Hirkanus, son of John Hirkanus, Aristobulus, brother of Aristobulus, Alexander Janius, took up leadership. Sons of Alexander Janius, Aristobulus and Hirkanus, had arguments regarding right to the throne. That time, both asked the help of Roman General, Pompeii, who was ruling Damascus to intervene. In BC 63, Pompeii conquered Jerusalem. He made Hirkanus Governor and chief Priest. He sent Aristobulus in exile to Rome. Thus, the Jews, who were free for many years, came to be ruled by the Roman Empire due to their own civil wars and riots.

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Roman reign B.C. 63

Hirkanus was a namesake ruler. The country was really ruled by an Edomian called Antipather. He was the governor of Judea. He was assassinated by the Jews in B.C. 43. With the help of roman government, Herod son of Antipather became the ruler of Judea in B.C. 37. He tried to please the Jews. Building the temple of Jerusalem was a great achievement for him. Ruins of the wall he built still exist in Jerusalem and is known as the Wailing Wall. Though he respected Jewish rituals Herod was hard hearted. History calls him Herod the Great During his reign Jesus Christ savior of the world was born in Bethlehem. Related to the birth of Jesus Christ he got many children killed in and around Bethlehem. [Matthew 2-16]. Herod died in B.C. 4.

Internal riots and fights made Jews a reason for laughter and ridicule among others. When they forgot the true god, and disobeyed his commandments, God's chosen people had to live as exiles. When they were ridiculed and mocked at, they called upon God and heard the comforting voice, "Jacob, I will not forsake you." They repented and turned towards God. They returned to their own land and restarted worshipping Yahweh. The Jews had always lived anticipating the birth of a Savior. Living under roman leadership, they were unable to recognize the arrival of that Savior. Their eyes were on palaces of kings and mansions of lords for him. But the sound of resurrection was first heard by the poor and humble shepherds. The redeemer of sins, the Savior of the world, thus came into the hearts of people.

Questions:

1. Which Persian king allowed the Jews to return to Palestine?
2. Name the prophets who encouraged the people to built the temple of Jerusalem.
3. What service was done by Mathathias the priest? How did his clan get the name Macabees?
4. Describe how Jews came under Roman rule.
5. Herod the Great was hard-hearted. What was the evidence for that?

***Memory Verse:***

**Titus 2:11 – For God has revealed his grace for the salvation of all mankind.**

#### Lesson 4

### YAHWEH THE TRUE GOD –CONTINUATION

After the death of Herod, Palestine was divided into three and ruled by his sons. Judea was ruled by Archelaus (Matthew 2:22). He was ousted in AD 6 and Judea came under the direct rule of the Roman Governor. Territory of Iturea and Traconitis that lay on the north of Sea of Galilee came under the rule of Philip (Luke 3: 1). Caesarea Philippi is the capital, which he built.

Herod Antipas ruler of Galilee was keeping his brother's wife Herodias as his wife. (Mat 14:3). He beheaded John the Baptist who objected to this (Matthew 14:6-12). Jesus referred to Herod Antipas as 'fox'. After imprisoning Jesus, Pilate sent him to Herod for trial (Luke 23:6). Herod was exiled in AD 39.

Agrippa, grandson of Herod the great ruled from AD 37-54. He persecuted the Christians to please the Jews (Acts 12:1-19). He executed Apostle James (Mar Yacoob) and imprisoned Apostle Peter. God punished him with death penalty. (Acts 12:21-24). His son Agrippa 11 was kind to the Jews. Along with governor Festus he was at the trial of Apostle Paul (Acts 25: 13-26).

Jesus was born during the reign of Emperor Augustus (BC 27-AD 14). Tiberius reigned later (AD 14-37). During his reign Jesus was crucified. Caligula, Claudius and Nero were the later rulers. Emperor Nero persecuted Christians very brutally. The first Jewish revolt took place during Nero's reign. In Judea, governor was the ruler and commander in chief of army. Caesarea was the headquarters of the ruler and also that of the army. Only the governor had the authority to instate death penalty. In the Jewish community the council ruled rest of the departments. Pontius Pilate who ordered Jesus to be crucified was the 5th governor of Judea. Forgetting justice and longing to please Jews he ordered Jesus to be crucified. When the Jews shouted, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar", he got frightened (John 19:12). Pilate was soon called back to Rome. Later Felix and Festus became governors.

Opposition to the Roman rule was the basic reason for the Jewish revolt. The Greeks in Caesarea built shops and closed the road to synagogue. Also 17 tolas of gold were removed from the temple of Jerusalem. The above reasons led to the revolt. People fought with the army. The famous historian Josephus Flavius was the leader of the Jewish revolt in Galilee. Roman lieutenant Vespasian defeated the people who revolted in Galilee. Later when he became the Emperor, his son Titus suppressed the revolt and conquered Jerusalem. Roman soldiers looted the temple, stole the golden lamp stand and the table for the bread offered to God. The temple was burnt and destroyed. There was mass genocide of the Jews. In AD 70 the town was destroyed completely. Jesus had predicted this destruction of Jerusalem. The second Jewish revolt that took place from AD 132-135 was also suppressed. Jews live with the hope that the temple will be renovated and that Jerusalem will be the center of their religion and country. In 1948 the state of Israel came into existence in Canaan but the place where the temple stood is not included in the state. In the war of AD 1967, which lasted 6 days, the region of Jerusalem came completely under the control of Israel.

#### Questions

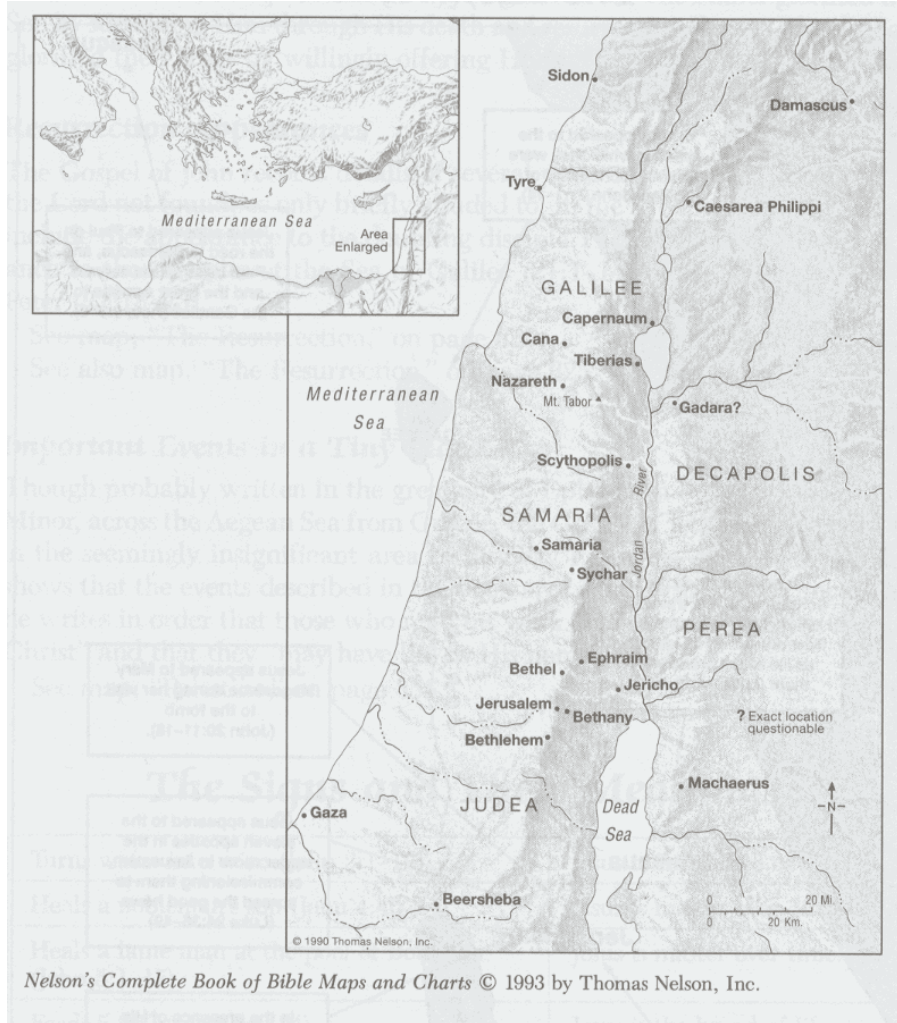
1. Which ruler was called 'fox' by Jesus?
2. Name the Emperor who ruled at the time of Jesus birth.
3. Name the Roman Emperor at the time of crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
4. Pilate forgot justice in the case of Jesus Christ. Why?
5. What was the basic reason for the Jewish revolt? What provoked their anger?
6. When was country of Israel established? When did Jerusalem come under the control of Israel?

#### Memory Verse

**Revelation 1:7 " Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen"**

LESSON 5

Land of Palestine



Aim: To learn that God sustained the land of flowing milk and honey for His people.

Land of Palestine is known by many names such as Land of Canaan, Holy land and Israel. It is a land on the eastern side of Mediterranean Sea and is 120 miles in length. Romans gave the name Palestine to the Land of Canaan. The name Palestine is not found in the Bible. Jesus always referred to this land as Canaan. Palestine means the land belonging to the Palestinian people. Borders of this land are on the north Lebanon and Hermon Mountains, on the south stream of Misraim, Basan land and Arabian Desert on the east and Mediterranean Sea on the west. For a long time the land of Palestine was not controlled by the Jews.

According to physical characteristics the land can be divided into:

1. Coastal plains
2. Middle mountainous land
3. Valley of Jordan
4. Mountainous land beyond Jordan

## **Coastal Plains**

The plateaus of Phoenicia, Sharon and Palestine are situated on the coastal region of Mediterranean Sea. Ancient traders of Phoenicia lived in the Phoenician plateau. Sor and Sidon were their important cities. Jesus heals the daughter of a lady (Canaanite) from this region. (Mat.15:21-28)

Plateau of Palestine is quite large. Palestinians originally came from the island of Crete. They entered Palestine plateau and settled on the eastern side. Their cities were safe and secure with forts around. Israelites and Palestinians are enemies. Acron; Gath, Gaza, Ashdod and Askalon are the five Palestinian cities.

Plateau of Sharon extends from Joppa to Carmel. Length of this land is about 50 miles. The land is beautiful with olive and oak trees and other flowering plants. The rose of Sharon is famous. (Song of Songs 2:1) On the western coast lying between Sharon plateau and Phoenicia is Mount Carmel. Here Prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and the fire from heaven came and burnt Elijah's offering.

## **Middle mountainous land**

Cities of Galilee, Samaria and Judea constitute the middle mountainous land. Mountains of Lebanon and Hermon lie towards the north of Galilee. River Jordan originates from the western slope of mount Hermon. Lebanon is famous for its cedar wood (Jeremiah 22:23). When King Solomon built the temple, King Hiram sent cedar wood from Lebanon (1King5:9). In the valley of this mountain, grapes, olives and figs grow in abundance. The name Lebanon comes from the whiteness of snow.

Mount Hermon

It lies parallel to Lebanon on the east. In psalms 133:3 it is written about the Hermon dew which falls on mount Zion. Hermon valley is suitable for agriculture. Rivers Abana and Pharpar which flow eastwards from this mountain make Syria fertile. Town of Caesarea Philippi is situated on the south of this mountain.

## **Galilee**

This country is full of mountains and hills. Flowing through the southern side of Esdralon Plain, river Kishon flows north westerly and falls into the Mediterranean Sea. Lake Galilee is on the eastern side. Mount Carmel lies on south western side and mount Gilboa on southern side. Jesus spent his youth in Nazareth of Galilee. Mount Tabor lies on southeastern side. On the hill slopes people do sheep rearing and agriculture.

## **Sea of Galilee**

It is also known as Sea of Kinnereth (Numbers 34:11), Lake Gannesaret (Luke5:1) and Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1). It is really a backwater. River Jordan falls into it from northern side and then flows towards south. Since it is surrounded by mountains and hills there are chances of strong winds (Mark 6:48-52). For people living in the coastal region fishing is the means of livelihood. Towns of Capernaum, Korasin, Bethsaida, Magdala, and Tiberias are situated on its shores. The coastal regions are one of the most fertile regions of Palestine. The region is thickly populated. It is a health resort also.

## **Land of Samaria**

It lies between Galilee and Judea. Rain is scanty here. In the valleys wheat, maize, grapes and olives grow in abundance. Shechem and Samaria are important towns. On the western side of Samaria, between the hills of Gerizem and Ebal, Shechem is situated. Shechem is the place where Abraham settled first in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). It is the name of the place where Jacob also lived. (Genesis 33:18-19). Moses carried the bones of Joseph with him when he left Egypt and Joshua buried them in Shechem. Sychar where Jacob's well is situated is near Shechem. Samaria was the most beautiful capital of Israel. Shiloh, Shechem and Bethel were places of worship. Bethel means house of God. Jacob had heavenly vision here.

Samaria was conquered by many foreigners. In 8th century BC Emperor of Asshur attacked it and took people as prisoners. Instead they brought people from Asshur to live there. Descendents of the mixed blood of Israelites and people of Asshur later came to be known as the Samaritans. They worshipped at mount Gerizim.

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They had no contact with the Jews. But Jesus Christ was quite friendly with them. The incident where Jesus Christ asks water from the Samaritan lady takes place at the city of Sychar in Samaria (John 4:4-42).

### **Land of Judea**

It is a plateau famous for its hills and valleys. Rain is scanty here. On the western side lies the plateau of Palestine and the Dead Sea on the eastern side. Valleys are fertile. Lemon, grapes, wheat, maize and corn are cultivated here. Many of the cities are built on hills. Jerusalem the capital is built on the highest hill. Mount Zion and Mount Moriah are also situated at a higher altitude. Moriah is the place where Abraham tried to sacrifice his son (Genesis22:2) Later King Solomon built the temple here (2 Chronicles 3:1). It is believed that Salem where Melchizedek ruled is Jerusalem. (Genesis14:18)This city has witnessed many historical events. This is the holy city where our Lord was crucified resurrected and ascended into heaven. Mount Calvary where Jesus Christ was crucified is on the northwestern side of Jerusalem.

Mount Olives and stream of Kidron are on the eastern side of this town. Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven from Mount of Olives (Acts1:12).Gethsemane is situated on the western slope of this mountain .On the southern side Jehosafath valley, Hinnom valley and Bethlehem are situated. About 6 miles southward from Jerusalem is the town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem means house of food. Rachel was buried and David was anointed here (Genesis35:16-19, 1 Samuel 16:11-13).Bethlehem is also famous as David's town. Initially it was known as Ephrath. Bethlehem is very beautiful. Fields where shepherds live guarding their flocks of sheep at night are a common sight here (Luke 2:8). World famous Christian church of nativity is situated on top of mount Bethlehem.

Bethphage and Bethany are two villages on south eastern side of Bethlehem. Bethphage means house of figs and Bethany means shore. House of Lazarus who was raised from death by Jesus was in Bethany. Village of Emmaus is on northern side of Jerusalem. Jesus after the resurrection appeared to disciples who were going to Emmaus (Luke 24:13). Jericho is one of the important towns of Judea. The incidents described in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) takes place on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. For travelers Jericho was a place of comfort and rest. Jericho is the first fort and town which Israelites captured at Canaan. Tax collector Zacchaeus and blind man Bartimaeus were from this place.

Hebron is an important town in south Judea. Cave of Machpelah (Genesis25:9) is situated here. David's first capital was Hebron. One very old oak tree is still seen in Hebron. It is believed that Abraham entertained the angels in the shades of this tree.

### **Beersheba**

In the Holy Bible, in several places it is written that Beersheba which is on the southern side of Judea is the border of land of Canaan. At the time of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem was under the control of the Roman Empire. In the 7th century AD Muslims conquered Jerusalem. Now a mosque is situated where the old temple was. Jerusalem is under the control of Israel now. The rulers are trying to shift the capital of Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

### **Questions**

1. What is the meaning of the word Palestine? What are the other names of that land?
2. Name the cities of the land of Palestine.
3. Name the lands that constitute the middle mountainous land. What is the importance of this land in relation to the holy Bible?
4. Fill up the blanks  
Rivers ....., ..... flowing eastwards from .....mountain make the land of Syria fertile.



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*Memory verse*

**Acts 1:8- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth".**

Lesson 6

Land of Palestine (Continuation)



Valley of Jordan

River Jordan is situated in this land. Lake Galilee and Dead Sea are also in this land. Many rivers and streams flow and reach here from the highlands. The land between Sea of Galilee and Dead Sea is known as 'Thickets' (Jeremiah 12:5). The Jordan valley is agriculturally important, is densely populated and is very fertile (Genesis 13:10 Joshua 3:15)

Dead Sea

The other names for Dead Sea are the Salt Sea and Sea of Arabah (Deuteronomy 3:17, Joshua 3:16) and Eastern Sea (Ezekiel 47:18). It is known as the Salt Sea because the density of salt in it is very high. Since any kind of life is not possible due to the high salt and mineral content it is called Dead Sea. The name East Sea is given since it is situated on the eastern side of the land of Judea. Dead sea is situated 1312 meters below sea level. It is 47 miles long and 9 miles wide. Evaporation of the water instead of flowing and the depth of the sea lead to the high salt content of the Dead Sea. Jordan River falls into the Dead Sea. Apart from thorny plants and shrubs there is no vegetation on the shores. People cannot drown in the Dead Sea due to the high salt content. It is the lowest point on earth below sea level. On the east side of the sea is the fort called Makheres where John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded. Valley of Siddim where Sodom and Gomorrah were situated is on the southern side

of Dead Sea. On the western side in the middle is the strongholds called En-Gedi where David hid himself from Saul (1 Samuel 23:29) Massada, the historically famous fort is situated near the Dead Sea. Qumran cave is situated 7 km away on the northern border of the Dead Sea. It is in this cave that the Dead Sea scrolls were found in 1947.

Damascus

Situated 120 miles north easterly from Jerusalem is the ancient beautiful city of Damascus. It is the capital of Syria. Rivers Abana and Pharppar make the plateau fertile. Surrounding Damascus are gardens, fields and agricultural lands. It is a place of comfort, rest, and stopover for merchants. Damascus silk is famous.

Damascus holds an important place in the history of Bible. The Arameans of Damascus and Israelites were enemies. Abraham pursued the enemy kings who attacked Lot, as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. (Genesis 14:15) David captured this city (2 Samuel 8:5) Naaman the leper was from Damascus. Apostle Paul was converted on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31)

From AD 1st to the 7th century Damascus was under Roman rule. Later Muslims captured the city and is still under them.

The headquarters of Patriarch of Antioch, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox church is in Damascus. There is a beautiful church and Patriarchal mansion here.

Mountainous land beyond Jordan

This is the land on the eastern side of Jordan valley. Moab, Gilead and Bashan are the places in this valley. Bashan is famous for its wheat grains and cattle. (Deuteronomy 32:14). In Ruth 1:1 we read about the crop in

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Moab and the famine .The perfume plants and trees of Gilead are famous. Mount Nebo is situated on the northeastern side of Dead Sea. Standing on top of the Pisgah peak of Mount Nebo Moses saw the Promised Land.

Decapolis is on the northeastern side of Gilead. Decapolis means land of ten cities. Jesus heals the two demon people in Gadara one of the important town of Decapolis. (Matthew 8:28 Mark 5:1-14). Caesarea Philippi is on the northern side of Decapolis. It is here that Peter says Jesus is the son of God. (Matthew16:13-21) and Jesus Christ predicts his death. (Matthew16:21-28)Town of Bethesda is near to this place and it is in Bethesda that Jesus Christ feeds five thousand people with five loaves of bread.

### **Climate and vegetation**

Winter with plenty of rain and a dry summer is the climate characteristic of Palestine. People wait for the rain to wet the land dry and broken due to the summer heat. Early rains come in October. The rain in April and May help to ripen the crops. (Joel 2:23, Amos 4:7).Mist is common here. The eastern wind which blows often is dry and causes a lot of damage. (Isaiah 27:8,Ezekiel 17:10)Since the wind which blows at noon is fiery hot as it comes from the hot sand, it is common for the people in Palestine to pray to save them from that wind.

Palestine is rich in a variety of vegetation. Large forests are found in Palestine. Shrubs and meadows are seen in plenty. The land is rich in grassland for the cattle. Desert land is also found in Palestine. Fruits and grains are exported. Export of flowers is another source of income. Farming and cattle rearing are the main occupations.

### **Questions**

1. What are the other names of the Dead Sea?
2. In the history of Christianity and church Damascus has an important place. Explain.
3. Where is mount Nebo situated? What is the importance of this mountain?
4. Early rains and late rains are in which months? How does it help the crop?

### **Memory Verse**

**Psalms 91: 5. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.**

## Lesson 7

### The Jewish Family

Aim: - To learn about the social customs, education system and occupations of the Jewish society.

Ancestors of the Jews lived in tents. They were nomads shifting from one place to the other with their cattle and sheep. Abraham and his family did the same. They wore clothes made from the fur of sheep or camel. Their diet consisted of milk, fruits, vegetables and meat. Later, the Jews residing in Egypt made houses of brick and lived in them. They started cultivating agricultural crops. They also became experts in art and craft, mathematics, architecture, astronomy and metal works. In the course of time the Jews were freed from their slavery in Egypt and reached Canaan. They defeated the local people and started living there permanently. They built stone houses. The houses were constructed with terrace and attics where one could pray. The Jews had a joint family system where father mother and children lived together. Father was the head of the family. In the early days father was the priest too and offered sacrifices. Different families constituted a clan. Chiefs of the clans were known as elders. Different clans constituted a tribe. Initially everyone had only one wife e.g. Noah, but later polygamy came into practice and this caused many problems. Birth of a baby especially that of a boy was a time of happiness. Responsibility to look after the family and to carry on the traditions was given to the boys. The eldest son got the right to two thirds of the father's property. This is called 'right of the firstborn' (Deuteronomy 21:17). First born males were considered special to God and were given important place in the family. Circumcision of the male baby on the eighth day was a special holy occasion. By circumcision they believed that they were entering into a special pact with the true God. The baby becomes member of the Jewish community after circumcision. Girls were cared for in the Jewish society. They learnt the art of cooking and home management from their mothers.

#### Education

In the early days children studied at home. Parents taught children religious stories and psalms. Later Rabbis taught children. Synagogues were schools also. Children were taught to read and write. The Jews gave importance to religious studies. Schooling started at the age of six. The age to obey laws was 13 and age of marriage 18.

With Greek influence schools were established in Palestine. A Jewish boy had to study the mother tongue Syriac (Aramaic) and the biblical language Hebrew. Greek was the popular language of literature. Only those who knew Hebrew and Greek were considered learned during that times. Gamaliel, who was the teacher of St. Paul, was the grandson of the famous teacher Hillel. Scribes explained the laws and did copywriting of the biblical verses.

#### Occupation

All Jewish boys were required to learn a trade. Jesus was a carpenter. St. Paul was a tent maker. Agriculture, sheep and cattle rearing and commercial trading were the main occupations of the people. Since water was not available in plenty everywhere, women were mainly responsible to fetch water from faraway streams and wells in pots or leather bags. Fishing was the main occupation of the people who lived in the coastal regions.

#### Marriage and marriage customs

Marriage was looked upon with respect and dignity in the Jewish community. Marriageable age was 18 for man and 12 for girls. Relationship between a husband and wife was considered sacred and an occasion to love and serve each other. Adultery was a punishable offence. It was forbidden to marry from another caste.

Betrothal (Engagement) was given lot of importance. It was considered equal to marriage. Engaged couple were not allowed to separate. Mary who was just pledged to be married to Joseph is called as his wife in the scriptures (Matthew 1:18-21). Dowry system was prevalent. Man used to give dowry to the girl. Mainly ornaments were given as dowry. We read in Genesis 24:53 that on behalf of Abraham, Eliezer gives clothes gold

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and silver ornaments to Rebecca in her father's house when she was engaged to Isaac. Engagement is sealed with a written deal or a gift. Usually marriage takes place within one year of the betrothal.

Marriage functions usually last for a week. On the evening of the marriage the bride is taken to the groom's house with lot of celebration. The girl wearing wedding dress and decked with ornaments is accompanied by the friends and relatives of the groom and bride. Special music and lights add glamour to the occasion. When the marriage procession is nearing the groom's house they are welcomed by young virgin girls with oil in their lamps. When everyone enters the house door is closed. Then the banquet follows. All the invited guests will participate in the feast. White dress is worn for the feast. If needed white dress is given to the guest. The uninvited are thrown out. The master of the banquet was in charge of all the activities related to the feast. Marriage was indeed a sacred occasion for the Jews.

### **Dress of the Jews**

In early days the Jews wore leather dress and later clothes made of sheep fur and jute. In winter woolen dresses were worn. They wore dress covering the whole body. An over cloak also was part of the dress. They tied a girdle (sash) over the inside long dress. The poor would tie a rope instead (Isiah3:24). The skillfully woven girdle of the priests was decorated with gold blue purple and scarlet yarn (Exodus28:8). The soldiers decided by lot for the garment Jesus wore (John19:23-24). Sandals were popular in those days. Men and women wore headdress covering the head. Men wore caps or turbans sometimes. It was common for the ladies to wear veils (Isiah3:23)

### **Food of the Jews**

Wheat and maize were the favorite grains. They ate bread with soup, wine, figs and olives. Main meals were lunch and supper. Jews liked fish and meat. Of animals birds and fish, only the clean ones were eaten (Leviticus 11:23, Deuteronomy 14:11). Milk butter and eggs were consumed in plenty.

Great care was taken to wash hands before meals (Mark 7:3). In earlier days they used to sit down on the floor for meals. Later tables were used. Praises to God was said before meals.

For the invited important guests servants will pour water to wash their feet. Perfumed oil was provided to be put on hair. Mariam poured perfumed oil on the head of Jesus (Matthew 26:7) Guests will come wearing special dress (Matthew 22:11) Place of honor was provided for the special guests at the banquet hall (Matthew23:6)

### **Questions**

1. Write about the changes, life in Egypt made in the lifestyle of the Jews.
2. What is right of the first born?
3. What is the importance of circumcision?
4. Amongst Jews betrothal was sealed with a deal or a gift. Write an example to prove this.
5. Marriage was a sacred occasion for the Jews. Write about the customs associated with marriage.
6. Write short notes on:
  - A. Dress of the Jews
  - B. Food habits of the Jews

### **Memory Verse**

**Hebrews 3:4 For every house is built by someone; But God is the builder of everything.**

## Lesson 8

### The Jewish Family (Continuation)

Aim: - Learn about the religious rituals, death and life after death, and judiciary.

#### Religious customs and rituals of the Jews

Religion is the breath of life for the Jews. Religious education is given from early childhood. Boys are circumcised on the eighth day. On the 40th day they are offered at the temple. With these rituals, the relationship between God religion and society is made strong. Later religious education is given. Individual as well as group prayers had an important place in the Jewish society. Jews used to pray two times in a day. There were people who prayed three times in a day also. (Daniel 6:10 Psalms55:17).They prayed kneeling down (Daniel 6:10, Acts 7:60) and while in distress falling facedown (Matthew26:39).Some prayed looking up and holding hands stretched upwards. They prayed after washing hands. It was to signify that sins are washed away. In the temple they prayed and offered sacrifices. With the destruction of the temple sacrifices were not possible and so they prayed, meditated and read religious verses in the synagogues. Psalms was the religious book used for daily prayers. One of the most important rituals was fasting. It was done to show grief also. They did fasting to avert Gods anger, to cleanse oneself and to get nearer to God. Fasting was done individually and as a society. Moses received the laws from Moses after fasting for forty days (Exodus 34:28).David prayed fasting for his child (2 Samuel 12:16) Nehemiah fasted and prayed for the sins of Israelites (Nehemiah 1:4) Daniel fasted and prayed for the people. (Daniel 9:3) Esther, maids and all the Jews prayed for thee days fasting. (Esther 4:16)Fasting of the Nineveh people is also famous. In many places the word fasting is used to mean humble one self. David talks about humbling himself with fasting (Psalms35:13).On the Day of Atonement it was the law that all the Israelites should fast .That day they were required to spend the whole day in fasting and prayer and not to work (Leviticus 16:29-31, 23:21-32).Moses enforced the fasting which is observed once in a year. Apart from this they fasted another four days in memory of historical events. (Zechariah7:5,8:19).In the fourth month it was in remembrance of the Babylonian army entering the city for the first time (Jeremiah52).In the 5th month it was for the remembrance of the destruction of the city and temple (Jeremiah52:12-13).In memory of the murder of Gedaliah and the Jews with him they fasted in the 7th month (Jeremiah 41).In remembrance of the sanctions against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 41) fasting was practiced in the 10th month. All these were days of grief.The Pharisees fasted two days in a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. (Luke 18:12).Monday was to remember the day Moses went to get the laws from Mount Sinai and Thursday was to remember the day he returned. They did not eat any food till evening on days of fast. In later years they were mere acts of show (Isiah58:4, Joel 2; 2).Jesus has criticized the mere acts of fast of the Pharisees.

#### Death and Life after Death

Long life was considered as a fortune by the Jews. Old people were well respected. Pharisees, one group of the Jews believed that life does not end with death, soul is forever and that there is resurrection after death. But Sadducees another group of Jews rejected all these beliefs. (Acts 23:8).This belief became stronger from the prophetic times. In Daniel 12:2 we read that "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt". We read in Ezekiel 37:1-14 that 'I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life". Hosea13:14 says, "I will redeem them from death". They believed that the good people have victory over death and hell and that bad people have sufferings in this world and in the other world too. Martha says about Lazarus "I know he will rise again in the resurrection" (John11:24). They believed that the evil souls went to hell. Psalm 16:10 says "Because you will not abandon me to the grave". But some believed that the dead people are silent for ever and unable to do anything. But this was not the popular belief. Sadducees did not believe that there was life after death and that the soul is eternal, but the common belief was that there is life after death, that the souls of the departed can help the living ones and those souls had the ability to think and act. In 1Samuel 28 we see that the spirit of Samuel was called as wanted by Saul. The Psalmist says, "Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you"? (Psalm 88:10)

## Rituals After death

The Jews described death as sleep, journey, rest, and to be with the fathers. When a person died his eyelids were closed and the near and dear ones kissed him. This is saying goodbye for the last time. Then the body is washed and laid. The body is covered in burial cloth and anointed with perfume. Body and head are covered in separate clothes. St .Peter saw the cloth which was used to cover the head of our lord Jesus Christ. The dead body is buried within 24 hours after death. Bodies were buried either in ground or in caves. Sometimes tombs were cut out in rocks. There were family tombs. Specially made tombs were also there. The body of Jesus was buried in a special tomb. Jews had the practice of fasting for the souls of the dead person (1 Samuel 31:13). When Moses died (Deuteronomy 34:8 and Aaron died (Numbers 20:29) Israelites grieved for 30 days. For Jacob the Egyptians mourned for 70 days (Genesis50: 3)

## Law Enforcement

The Jews were very strict about law enforcement. Public prosecution was done in front of elders and the guilty were punished. Eye for eye and tooth for tooth was the law. The affected ones had the right to take revenge even without trial. But in the case of murder there were cities of refuge where the accused could seek protection. This was to avoid revenge without trial. If it was proved that the murder was committed unintentionally the accused could live in the cities of refuge till the death of the high priest and then could go free to his house. But for intentional murder, punishment was given even if one entered the cities of refuge .Punishments varied from penalty with money, whip beatings, imprisonment, and death by stoning, beheading and crucifixion, depending on the severity of the crime. For crimes of public importance the council conducted the trial sand decided the punishment. But the council did not have the authority for death penalty. Roman law insisted that the trial should not be conducted at night and that more than one witness is needed to prove anybody guilty. It was against the law to finish the trial in one day and to pronounce judgment. All these rules were not followed in the case of Jesus Christ.

## Cities of refuge

Joshua designated the 6 cities of refuge in different parts of Israel as instructed by God so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. They were Kedesh in Gallilee, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and Hebron in the hill country of Judah. On the east side of the Jordan of Jericho they designated Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead and Golan in Bashan. The accused were safe as long as they lived in the cities of refuge.(Numbers35: 10-15,Joshua 20: 1-9,Deuteronomy19:1-6)

## Days and Time

The Jews calculated days from one evening to next evening. But hours were calculated from 6a.m.When they say 3rd hour it means 9 am. It is written that there was darkness between the 6th and 9th hours when our lord Jesus Christ was crucified. That is from 12noon to 3pm. (Matthew 27:45).1st day of the week was Sunday. Saturday, the 7th day was the Sabbath day.

## Questions

1. The Jews prayed after washing their hands .What is the meaning of this?
2. Why did the jaws fast? Write down the occasions when fasting was for the community.
3. What were the occasions of grief and fasting?
4. About life after death which group had separate view?  
What was the common belief?
5. What were the rituals after death?
6. The rules regarding trial were not followed in the case of Jesus Christ. What were they?

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7. What is meant by cities of refuge? Name them.

***Memory verse***

**Acts 5:31 - God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.**



## LESSON 9

### Temple of God

Aim: - To learn how the tabernacle became the temple of God



Rescued from the slavery in Egypt, the Israelites crossed the red sea and under the leadership of Moses and Aaron traveled towards the Promised Land. God guided them as the cloud which protected them from the heat of the sun during day time and as the pillar of fire giving light at night time. During the course of the journey he called their leader Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments.

God wanted Israel as his chosen people and he wanted them to worship him the only true God. So through Moses, God let the people know his wish that he wanted to live amongst his people. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell amongst them" (Exodus25:8).God ordered Moses to make a tent which can be carried from place to place. This tent is called the tabernacle.

Tabernacle was the beautiful tent set up in the middle of the people for the purpose of worship. When the Israelites reached Canaan the tabernacle was kept at Shiloh (Joshua18:1). After the Philistines confiscated the Ark of the Covenant, till the reign of Solomon the tabernacle was at Gibeon (1chronicles16:39,2chronicles 1:13). David made a tent at Jerusalem to keep the ark of covenant. (2 Samuel 6:17).With great celebration, the Ark was later kept in the temple which Solomon built (1Kings8:4)

Moses had specific instructions regarding the details of the making of the tabernacle. It was instructed that all the materials needed will be given at free will by the people and that the people themselves had to build the tabernacle. Bezalel and Oholiab two spirit filled people were chosen to give training to the others to build the Ark artistically and beautifully. (Exodus 31:1-16).People cooperated wholeheartedly in the building of the tabernacle. Things were brought in abundance and Moses had to stop them finally from giving. They brought gold, silver, jewels, wood and fine woven cloth. Ladies participated in artistically weaving the carpets, curtains and other upholstery of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was built with wooden planks, cloth and leather. So it was easy to be carried from place to place. .There was clear instruction about the things that should be in the tabernacle, how they should be made and where they should be kept.

The tabernacle was placed in the middle of the settlement in the east west direction. Men from the Levi tribe were chosen to serve at the tabernacle. Moses and Aaron had their abodes on the eastern side of the tabernacle at the entrance. Arrangements were made so that three tribes were living on each side of the tabernacle. The tabernacle had three places called (1) most holy place (2) holy place and (3) courtyard.

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The courtyard was all around the tabernacle. From east to west it was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. All four sides were covered with curtains. Standing here, the common people participated in the service. Door for the tabernacle was on the eastern side of the tabernacle. This door had a 30 feet long curtain covering it. This curtain was made with blue purple scarlet and white threads and had artistic work on it. Blue colour is for divinity of Christ, purple for his human nature, scarlet for his royalty and redemption and white the purity of life. In 1Peter:18-19, it is written that, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect".

### **Bronze Altar (Exodus 27:1-8, 38:1-7)**

At the entrance of the courtyard there was the altar of burnt offering. It was a square box made of acacia wood, five cubits long five cubits wide and three cubits high and easy to be transported from one place to the other. The box was covered with bronze to make it fireproof. There were horns at each corner. These horns were to tie the sacrificial animals. These horns denote the human nature, slavery, royalty and divine natures of Christ. The altar had poles and handles for easy transportation.

### **The Bronze Basin (Exodus 30:17-21, 38:8)**

Water was kept in this basin so that the priests could wash their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle. This was kept in between the tabernacle and the altar. The priests washed their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle and before offering sacrifice. So we have to infer that the Jews taught the importance of cleanliness and purity before approaching God. In Exodus 30:20-21 we read "Whenever they enter the Tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water so that they will not die".

### **Holy Place**

This was 30 feet long. It was situated east westerly. The western end was 10 feet long and called 'Holy of Holies' and the rest 'Holy Place'. A curtain separated both the places. On the eastern end of the holy place was the entrance. This was covered with curtain.

Objects at the holy place

#### 1. The altar of incense

This was a table covered with gold. (Exodus 30:1) Incense was burnt here everyday morning and evening.

#### 2. The Golden Lamp stand

The lamp stand was made of pure gold. It was built in such a way that in the centre stalk there was a single lamp and 3 lamps each on right and left side branches. It was placed on the southern side of the altar of incense. Olive oil was used in the lamp. The lamp was kept burning day and night (Exodus 25:31-40)

"I am the light of the world .Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". (John 8:12)

#### 3. Table to keep showbread (Bread of the Presence)

This was kept on the northern side of the altar of incense. This is a small table covered with gold. 12 loaves of unleavened bread were kept in two rows on it. On each Sabbath day new bread was kept and old ones were eaten by the priests. (Exodus 25:23-30). "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty". (John 6:36)

#### 4. Holy of Holies

This is the holiest place. The high priest entered there once in an year to repent and offer sacrifice for himself and the people. (Hebrews 9:7)

### Things kept at Holy of Holies

1. The covenant ark

This was two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high. It was covered with pure gold. Inside the ark the two slabs where the ten commandments were written, the golden plate where manna was kept and the "budded rod" of Aaron was kept. (Exodus 25: 10-16)

2. The mercy seat on top of the ark

This shows God's presence. It was made of pure gold. It was covered with the clouds and in the clouds God used to talk to Moses. (Exodus 25: 17-22)

3. Cherubim on the mercy seat

The two cherubims were facing each other and with the wings spread upwards covered the mercy seat. Their faces were towards the mercy seat. Standing in the midst of the cherubim God spoke to Moses. (Exodus 25: 18) When the tabernacle was placed in the middle of the Israeli settlement, God's grace was on it. During day time the pillar of cloud and at night the pillar of fire was on the tabernacle. The people saw it and felt the presence of God amongst them. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14).

### Questions

1. What is tabernacle?
2. What are the parts of the tabernacle?
3. What are the objects in the Holy place? Pertaining to Jesus what is the significance?
4. What were the objects kept at the most holy place?
5. How did the people know that God lived amongst them?

### *Memory verse*

**John 14:6. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"**

## Lesson 10

### The Tabernacle

Aim: - To learn about the similarities and differences between the Jerusalem temple and the churches of today.

The Jerusalem temple was constructed on Mount Moriah which is on the northern side of the mountain situated on the eastern side of Jerusalem. David planned to build the temple on mount Moriah where God revealed himself to David, but his son Solomon built the first temple. Everyone participated in the construction of the temple. When the construction finished the consecration ceremony was conducted with great pomp and the ark of covenant was brought with great respect to the temple and placed in the temple. The temple was constructed in the same model as the tabernacle but length and breadth were double. Like the tabernacle it was divided into two. Apart from that, there were three halls, one for the priests, one for the Israelites and one for the gentiles. There were two courtyards. Everybody could enter the outside courtyard but the inside one was restricted to the priests.

#### Daily worship in the church

The priests woke up early morning daily, took bath, wore official garments and put lots to assign people for daily chores. At sunrise the doors of the temple are opened and the sacrificial goats are killed and the altar of incense is kept ready. Then incense is burnt, the slaughtered goats are offered as sacrifice and prayers are said. When the people are kneeling down and praying, the priest will enter the holy place through the door at the front hall carrying the incense burner. After the prayer he will come to the front door of the hall and bless the people. Then the sacrificed animals are burnt at the bronze altar. Then the singers belonging to the Levi tribe sing the psalms assigned for each day. That time two priests will blow the horn. This time people will kneel down and pray. Public prayer finishes with the singing of the psalms. Then people who have come to offer sacrifice for personal reasons do it. Every evening 4pm the same worship is repeated. In BC588 King Babel destroyed the Jerusalem temple. In BC 536 the Israelites came back from exile under the leadership of Zerubabel and put foundation for the temple in BC 536 and finished the construction in BC 516. This temple lasted for about 400 years. In BC 20 King Herod built the third temple of Jerusalem. This was the temple present during the time of Jesus Christ. In AD 70 Titus, the Roman military leader destroyed it.

#### The church and its parts

For the Jewish church which was the shadow of the Christian church, according to the instructions from God, the temple which Solomon built is the model of all the present churches. Like the temple, our churches also have courtyard, Holy Place and Most Holy Place. The center is similar to the golden incense burner of old times. At the most holy place i.e. madbaha, instead of Aaron's budding rod is the cross, the Qurbana which is in essence the manna, as completion of laws the Bible and brightly burning lamps signifying the cherubim. Old Testament sacrifice was conducted in the Holy Place but the New Testament one is conducted in the Holiest of Holy place. Madbaha means place of sacrifice.

God's blessed presence was always there in between the cherubim at the ark of covenant. In the same way, in a church built in the name of a blessed person and anointed with oil and consecrated by the rightly ordained bishop with apostolic succession, God's divine presence will always be there. Instead of the lamp stand with seven branches in our church there are the seven sacraments which shine divine light. All the believers spread the light from Jesus. From the verse "I am the light of the world and let your light be shown in front of others", it is understood that Jesus is the main trunk of the lamp stand and the believers are the branches. If any branch is away from Christ it cannot produce good result and cannot shine.

In place of the table where bread was kept in tabernacle, there is the 'throne' in our church and instead of the basin for purification the stone basin for baptism. After baptism one becomes God's child. In Jerusalem temple only the priests had the right to eat the bread. Since priestly status is given to everyone in church, we have the right to eat the bread and to enter the holy place (1 Peter 2:9)

#### Questions

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1. What were the differences between Jerusalem temple and the tabernacle?
2. Describe the daily service at the temple.
3. Write a short history of the Jerusalem temple. What is the status of the temple now?
4. Temple of Jerusalem is the model of the present church. How?

***Memory verse***

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light

## Lesson 11

### Worship in the Temple

Aim: To understand the greatness of the sacrifice Jesus did

The most important part of the Jewish worship was the offering made or the sacrifice. We see that from the early days the Jewish people offered sacrifices to God individually or as head of the family. God accepted the offering of Abel and rejected that of Cain (Genesis 4:3-5, Hebrews 11:4). Tribal heads like Noah, Abraham and Jacob offered sacrifices to God (Genesis 8:21). Sacrifice became the most important part of the worship at the time of Moses. The positions of high priest, priest and Levi came into existence during that time. Special places were designated at the tabernacle for the sacrifice. Moses arranged everything according to the instructions from God (Exodus 40).

Important Offerings

#### 1. Whole burnt offering

Sheep, goat, calf, bull, dove or young pigeons were used for whole burnt offering. It was important that these were without any defect. If goat or a calf, it was brought to the entrance of the tabernacle, the person making the offering would place his hands on the head and pray and then kill the animal. The priest will sprinkle the blood on the table and the animal will be burnt as a whole. If the offering is a dove or a young pigeon, the priest himself will kill it and burn it. Priests would do offering in the morning and evening. (Leviticus 1, Genesis 29). Burnt offerings were done for individuals and for the congregation. Whole burnt offering is without any impurity. It further proclaimed complete submission.

#### 2. Sin Offerings

This was done for unintentional sins. For a priest a calf, for a lord a goat, for the church a calf and for an ordinary person a lamb had to be sacrificed. All animals had to be without defect. For a very poor person a pigeon was enough. The rituals were similar to that of the whole burnt offerings. The person bringing the offering will bring the calf to the door of the temple, place his hands on the head of the animal and pray, then kill it. The priest will take the blood and sprinkle it in front of the curtain seven times, smear some blood on the horns of the bronze altar and pour rest of the blood at the foot of the altar. All the fat is burnt at the altar. The priest will pray for the sinner and the remains of the animal are taken outside the settlement and burnt. One portion of it belongs to the priest. (Leviticus 4, 5:1-13). Then his sins are forgiven. Sin offering signifies the state where the sinner seeks deliverance from God.

#### 3. Peace offering

Peace offerings were of three kinds.-thanksgiving, vows and offerings out of self will. Thanksgiving was to remember God's blessings. Vows and offerings out of self will were in anticipation of blessings. Articles of offerings were similar to that of whole burnt offerings. One portion of the offering is burnt. One portion is for the priest and one for the person offering it (Leviticus 7:11-12). After the reconciliation between man and God, the state of living with a heart full of gratitude is denoted by the peace offering.

#### 4. Trespass Offering

If unknowingly involved in mistakes related to religious matters, doing things forbidden by God, committing sins in the dealings with others, as penance trespass offering is done. One ram is the article of offering. Rest of the rituals are similar to those of the peace offering. Since trespass offering is a penalty for taking undeserved things, in addition to giving back the undeserved things, one fifth of the price has to be given in addition (Leviticus 5:14,6:7).

## 5. Meal Offerings

Diluted batter, unleavened cakes and unleavened wafers were used for this. It was forbidden to add honey or yeast to this. One portion of the offering was burnt and the rest given to the priest. (Leviticus 2). It was used along with whole burnt offering and peace offering (Numbers 15:8-9, Leviticus 7:11-13). This was as a symbol of offering agricultural products to God.

## 6. Drink Offerings

Oil and wine were used for drink offerings. This, like the meal offering was offered along with the other offerings (Numbers 15:1-10). All the Old Testament offerings were forerunners and shadows of the self offering of Jesus Christ for once and for all. The blessings which were incomplete as the result of Old Testament offerings became complete as a result of the death of Jesus Christ. We can know from Numbers 15:31 that there is no offering for deliberately committed sins. Too many rituals are not appreciated by God (Isaiah 1:11). God says, "Wash yourselves clean". Through the offering of Jesus Christ, with the blood that was flowing at Calvary the whole world is cleansed. According to New Testament the faithful have to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5).

The faithful should offer

1. Their bodies (Romans 12:1)
2. People who repented because of them. (Romans 15:15-16)
3. Prayers and thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15)
4. Good deeds. (Hebrews 13:16)
5. Offerings (Philippians 4:18)
6. Faith and service (Philippians 2:17)

## Questions

1. What was the most important part in the worship?
2. What were the Old Testament offerings? Write about the importance of each one.
3. What was the sacrifice for the purification of the whole world?
4. According to the New Testament what should be offered to God?

## Memory Verse

Isaiah 1:1 "Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong".

**Lesson 12**

**Feasts of the Jews – MAJOR FEASTS**

Aim: Get to know Jesus by celebrating the feasts.

For Jews feasts were occasions of happiness and celebration. Feasts were celebrated with great pomp and gaiety

**1. Passover Feast (Exodus12:21-27)**

Pass over was the most important feast of the Jews. Initially it was a spring festival. To surrender the firstborns to God was the most important ritual. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, the firstborn in the Egyptian families got killed and then only the Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go. It is to remember this incident that the pass over festival was celebrated every year. All the Jews used to gather at Jerusalem for the festival. It was also known as the feast of the unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6).The Passover festival is for seven days from April 14th. From the first day of the feast all the leavened batter is removed from all houses. For the next seven days it is forbidden to eat leavened bread. A lamb is slaughtered at the temple. The priest will sprinkle the blood down the alter. The fat is burnt. At about 10 pm the Passover feast is eaten in houses. The celebrations included eating the meat of the slaughtered lamb with unleavened bread and bitter spinach drinking wine and singing psalms. (Psalms113-118).The Jews remember with gratitude how God redeemed them and celebrate this festival. When Jesus was having the feast with his disciples he decided on the Eucharist (Matthew 26: 17-30, Mark14: 7-26, Luke 22: 14-20).Instead of the Passover feast Christians follow the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb slaughtered for us.

**2. The Pentecost (Leviticus 23:16)**

Pentecost means 50th. It is celebrated 50 days after the Passover. It is celebrated either end of May or beginning of June. Other names are 'Feast of Weeks' (Exodus 34:22) 'Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 34:22) and 'Harvest Festival' (Exodus23: 16).

Pentecost was an occasion of happiness celebration and praises. Special offerings were done that day. (Leviticus 23:18).

For the meal offering leavened bread with fresh flour was used.(Leviticus23: 15-21).

Since the Holy Spirit came on the disciples on Pentecost, it a feast for Christians also. Since 3000 people became Christians it is a harvest festival for the New Testament church also.

**3. Feast of Tabernacle**

(Leviticus 23: 34-36, Deuteronomy16: 13, John7: 37)

It was celebrated for 8 days from 15-22 of Thisri month. It is at the end of September or October beginning. It is also known as the feast of vegetables and fruits. It was celebrated after collecting wine, oil and varieties of fruits and vegetables. Remembering how the almighty God guided the Jews for forty years in the desert and how they lived in tents during their journey through desert ,they used to live in small houses made of branches of trees outside their houses for seven days. Feast of the tabernacle was a time of happiness. They offered whole burnt offerings and meal offerings. Songs, love feast and exchanging gifts were part of the celebrations. Ladies bringing water from the Shiloh pond and pouring it at the foot of the alter was a ritual associated with this feast. Based on this ritual Jesus Christ says "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7: 37-38). During the festival period, in the hall of the ladies, 4 lighted golden lamps were kept. Looking at this Jesus said that he is the light of the world. (John8: 12)



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**Questions**

1. Describe how the Jews celebrated pass over.
2. Who is the Passover lamb slaughtered for us?
3. Pentecost became a harvest festival for the Christians. How?
4. Which was the ritual Jesus was referring to when he said "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink".

***Memory verse***

**Revelation 21:6 "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."**

**Lesson 13**

**Feasts of the Jews -continuation**

**THE MINOR FEASTS**

**1. Day of Repentance**

This was a day of fast. Church gathering was done that day. It was celebrated on September 30th. There were large scale celebrations. It was a day of forgiveness of sins.

After the morning offerings, preparations were done. Two rams were brought, lots were cast and the one for sacrifice was decided. Bull was also kept ready for the offering. The chief priest will enter the most holy place with the censer with burning coal and incense and fill the whole place with smoke. He will re enter with the blood of the sacrificed bull and sprinkle it twice on the mercy seat and seven times on the ark of covenant. Then he purifies the holy place, alter and the whole temple with the blood of the bull and ram. Next is the purification of the people. The remaining lamb is sent to the forest for Azazel. Israelites considered Azazel as the evil in the jungle. To put the sins of the people on Azazel, that the lamb was sent. The high priest will put his hand on the head of the lamb and will say the sins of the people. One person will be entrusted with the lamb that is carrying all the sins of the world. He will leave it in the uninhabited jungle. During New Testament times the Jews would take the lamb to a sloping hill 12 miles away from Jerusalem and push it down and kill it. The high priest would take bath, and offer whole burnt offerings for himself and the people. The body of the sacrificial animals are taken away and burnt.

The words of John about Jesus that he is the lamb carrying the sins of the whole world are really full of meaning.

**2. Purim**

It is one of the smaller feasts celebrated by the Jews. When Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish tribe, Mordecai and Esther saved them. (Esther 9:25). Purim feast is to remember this incident. This feast was celebrated with great pomp on 14th and 15th of the 12th month called Odor. These days the story of Esther will be read. Mordecai would be praised. When mentioning about Haman, people will stamp the ground with their feet and produce a groaning sound. Faith in the working of God's unseen hand behind human events is shown by this festival.

**3. Feast of Dedication (John 10:12)**

Jerusalem temple which was made unholy by the pagan king Epiphanies in BC168, was made clean and worship restarted in BC165 by Judah Maccaabi. To remember this incident feast of dedication is celebrated every year for 8 days from 25th of the Jewish month of kisleb (December). People would have feast in the house and go to the temple holding tender palm leaves and singing psalms of praise (Psalms 113-118). Houses and the temple would be decorated with lights. So this was also called festival of lights. December 25th which the Jews celebrated as Feast of Dedication is celebrated as Christmas the birthday of our lord Jesus Christ by us.

**4. Feast of wood offering (Nehemiah 10:34, 13:31)**

It was customary to take firewood eight days in a year to the church for offering. The most important of these days was 15th of Abib month. So this was the day of the feast of wood offering. When the temple was destroyed this feast came to an end.

**5. Feast of trumpets (Numbers 29:16, Leviticus 23:23-32)**

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The feast of trumpets was celebrated on the 1st of the seventh month. That day, from sunrise to sunset trumpets are blown. This feast is to remember the incident when God gave the ten laws to Moses at Mount Sinai. Many offerings are done at the temple. To prepare oneself for the sin repentance day which would come after eight days and to wake oneself up from spiritual slumber, this day is used.

### **6. Harvest Festival (Leviticus 23:9-14)**

This is the time of barley harvest. When the barley is ready for harvesting some men will go to the fields with the priests and the barley is harvested as sheaves. With great pleasure the sheaves are taken to the temple and given to the priests. Until the first sheaf is offered to God, nobody would eat the barley.

### **7. Sabbath (Exodus 16:23-30, Exodus 20:8)**

Sabbath was very important for the Jews. This is celebrated every week. It is celebrated on the seventh day. God took rest from all the creative activity on the seventh day. So God blessed and made the day seventh day pure. The number seven is considered holy. To observe Sabbath is one of the ten laws. Sabbath is the day of rest from mental and physical activities, but the day is not for idleness but to worship God. Those who desecrated Sabbath were given death penalty. (Exodus 31: 14-15). Jesus criticized the Jewish mentality where people were satisfied just by observing laws but had no kindness in their hearts. Jesus did kind deeds on Sabbath day and proved that he is the Lord of the Sabbath and that doing good things is the right attitude needed for mental purification on Sabbath day. In the Christian church Sabbath is considered as the Lord's day and is celebrated on Sundays.

Related to Sabbath

First day of the month was important for the Jews. Special burnt offerings and meal offerings were done that day (Numbers 28: 11-15). Relatives would get together and have a feast that day.

First day of the seventh month was celebrated as the 'Feast of the Trumpets'. Seventh year (Sabbath year) was celebrated as 'Freedom Year'. For people and slaves and earth it was a year of rest. The slaves would get freedom and debts would be reduced. 50th year was celebrated as 'Jubilee Year'. The land and fields were not cultivated. It was necessary to get back all the pledged articles. There were arrangements to reduce debt amount and to give freedom for slaves. The Israelites believed that the Jubilee Year indicated the prosperous time when the kingdom of God will be established.

### **Questions**

1. Which are the small feasts of the Jews?
2. 'Lamb that holds the sins of the world'- Write how these words are related to Jesus
3. Write about the feast which the Jews celebrated on 25th December, the day we celebrate as birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. How did Jesus prove that he is the Lord of Sabbath also?

### **Memory Verse**

**John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"**

**THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**Lesson 14**

**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

Aim: To understand the contents and nobleness of the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7 and Luke 6:20-49)

On Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God and gave it to the people. From a mountainside, Jesus Christ uttered words of wisdom, which is called the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is a summary of all the teachings of Jesus Christ. The moral and ethical Christian life is pictured here. Theologians, philosophers and other great people have seen, accepted and praised the goodness of these teachings. Important persons like Abraham Lincoln, Tolstoy, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa absorbed the greatness of these teachings and showed its goodness in their own lives. The Sermon on the Mount also influenced people like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi.

The moral and ethical responsibilities of Christian life are detailed in the Sermon on the Mount. We can make it practical in our own life only if we are close to our comforting God. It touches the conscious, subconscious levels and all other important aspects of life. Like Apostle Paul said, "Its no longer me but Christ living in me", it is the new vision of a Christian who is born again in Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave importance not to the enforcement of laws and rituals but for good deeds and the attitude behind it. The Pharisee appreciated this Christian viewpoint and called Him "good teacher".

Contents of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 1-7, 7:29)

Who are the blessed (5:1-12)

Role of the disciples (5:13-16)

New laws that are the fulfillment of the old ones (5:17-48)

New dimensions to old rituals (6:1-18)

Path towards purity (6:19, 7:29)

Who are the blessed? (5:1-12)

In the beginning Jesus tells a list of the blessed. By worldly standards people who are wealthy, beautiful, educated and capable are considered blessed. Our savior's view is quite different. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted because of righteousness are blessed according to Him. He continues to say, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:11-12)

Role of the disciples (5:13-16)

Jesus gives the example of salt and light to the place of disciples in society. "You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world", Jesus told about the disciples. Salt enhances the taste of food and is a preservative to keep meat and fish from going stale. Likewise, the followers of Jesus should set a good example in life as well as work hard to keep up the moral status of society.

The lamp's duty is to give light. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the disciples of Christ to spread the light from Jesus, who is the lamp for the whole world (John 9:5). A lighted lamp is kept on a lamp stand and not under a bowl. Then it gives light to everyone in the house (Matthew 5:15). Obstacles like our wealth, greed, selfishness and comforts of life should not cover the light, which is our Christian life. That should always be kept at a high

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place. "Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) Our good Christian life should be an example to others. The lives of many of the dedicated Christians is like the lamp kept on the lamp stand. Receiving light from the true light of the world that is Jesus Christ, we must try to spread spiritual light in the society.

New laws that are the fulfillment of the old ones (5:17-48)

Jews criticized Jesus Christ and his disciples for ignoring the teachings of Moses and other prophets. As a reply to that, Jesus says, "Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point, nor the smallest detail of the law will be done away with - not until the end of all things." (Matthew 5:18) Jesus Christ came into this world to show the real messages of Old Testament and to reveal that it is being fulfilled through Him so that the world can be saved.

"I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires." (Matthew 5:20) From the above verse, it is clear that the morality of a Christian should be above that of others. This morality is Christian love, ability to love enemies and to love one's neighbor as oneself. The Old Testament laws and the laws of the world allow punishment but Jesus advised not to take revenge. Since killing is the result of revenge, Jesus taught that even the thought of taking revenge is equal to murder. "But now I tell you: if you are angry with your brother you will be brought to trial, if you call your brother 'You good-for-nothing!' you will be brought before the council, and if you call your brother a worthless fool, you will be in danger of going to the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:22) If eyes and hands lead anybody towards sin, it should be controlled and directed towards good deeds. Jesus teaches not to use any vow when making a promise and also not to swear. Though the Old Testament law allows to hate enemies, Jesus told his disciples, "But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well." (Matthew 5:39-40) "But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44) Jesus gave the above new laws to his disciples to make the world a better place to live in. The Hindu vision "Loka samastha sukino bhavanthu" is worth mentioning here. Like the above prayer, which wishes happiness for everyone, the Sermon on the Mount attracts and influences everybody as an excellent example of morals and principles.

New dimensions to old rituals (6:1-18)

Jews believed that giving alms, praying and fasting increased their faith. They gave a lot of importance to the above rituals. Jesus Christ explained how to carry these out properly. Jesus taught that religious practices should not be done to gain appreciation from man, but it should be done to please God. The aim of fasting, praying and donating to charity should also be to please God. Jesus advised to refrain from boasting about charitable acts. "When you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you." (Matthew 6:3-4) The love and Christian care for the poor and helpless people should be our aim through charitable deeds.

Individual prayer and group prayer are equally important. Jesus Christ tells to forgive each other in the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4). The condition for God to forgive us is that we should forgive each other. "If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

Lent and fasting hold an important place in a Christian's life. They should help in self-control and repentance. Devotion with a pure heart is needed.

Things to be taken care of in the path towards purity

"The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light". When Jesus said so He meant that to act properly a correct outlook and vision is needed. (Matthew 6:22-23, Luke 11:34-36)

"You cannot be a slave of two masters: you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24) Anybody who is a slave to wealth cannot live a life pleasing to both man and God.

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Followers of Jesus should not be of a worrying and anxious nature. "Do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body". (Matthew 6:25) Our heavenly father looks after the birds too. "Look at the birds. They do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in the barns; yet your father in heaven takes care of them. It is God who clothes the wild grass, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Be concerned above everything else with the kingdom of God and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow." (Matthew 6:33-34) Deep and complete faith in God takes away anxiety and worry.

"First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eyes." (Matthew 7:5) Here, Jesus talks about people who forget about their big mistakes and talk about the small mistakes of other people.

Three things are important in prayer. "Ask and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be open to you." (Matthew 7:7) "Do for others what you want them to do for you." (Matthew 7:12) This message which Jesus gives the whole world has the essence of the Sermon on the Mount. It includes all the laws and prophecies.

Two ways (Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 13:24)

One path leads to destruction and the other towards eternal life. The first one is easier to travel. More number of people choose this one. The second path is narrow and filled with obstacles. This leads towards eternal life. This path is Jesus himself. Jesus told us that He is the way, the truth and the life.

Two kinds of prophets (Matthew 7:15-20, Luke 6:43-44)

By looking at the words and deeds, we can find out if a prophet is real or false. The false prophets are compared to wild wolves. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

Words and actions

It's not the lip service of calling "Lord, Lord", but to carry out the work of our Heavenly Father that is pleasing to Him. "Not everyone who calls me "Lord, Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do what my Father in Heaven wants them to do." (Matthew 7:21-23)

The foolish man and the wise man (Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49)

A life with its foundation on Jesus, the strong rock, will survive the obstacles of life. A person who listens to the words of Jesus is a clever man. One who does not listen and obeys the words of Jesus Christ is a foolish man.

When Jesus said these words, the crowd was amazed. "He wasn't like the teachers of the law; instead he taught with authority" (Matthew 7:28-29).

Questions:

1. Name three famous people who practiced the messages of the Sermon on the Mount in their own lives.
2. Who are the blessed?
3. What are the duties of the disciples of Jesus?
4. What is the new law that Jesus Christ gave his disciples?
5. In the path towards purity, what are the things we should be careful about?
6. What contains the laws and all prophecies?

**Memory verse:**

**Matthew 7:12 - Do for others what you want them to do for you.**

**LESSON - 15**

**CHRIST**

**Aim:** To learn about the incarnation and relationship between the New and Old Testaments

The New Testament is the completion of the Old Testament. Adam and Eve became the slaves of Satan due to their sins. The New Testament is the explanation of God's plan to release Adam and Eve and their children i.e. the entire humankind from Satan's slavery.

In Isaiah 7:14 it is written, "Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Immanuel." In Genesis 3:15 we read, "Her offspring and yours will be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head and you will bite their heel."

The above portions are predictions about the New Testament in the Old Testament.

"I have made my servant David king by anointing him with Holy oil." (Psalms 89:19-20). So the predictions of prophets came true with the passage of time.

God the Father decided to save the humans who were deep into sin and death. He sent His own Son into the earth for this. The Son, who is the second one in the Trinity, became man through St. Mary and arrived on earth. Angel Gabriel told Virgin Mary the good news that she will bear and deliver a son. The everlasting God was born as man in a manger in Bethlehem. This incident which is beyond human thinking is called Incarnation.

"The child grew and became strong; He was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon them." (Luke 2:40). At the age of thirty, Jesus Christ started his public ministry. He chose the Apostles and gave them all the authority and established His church.

On the day of Pentecost all the believers had gathered in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky, which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. This was the first stage in the growth of the early church.

In the New Testament we read about the birth of Jesus Christ, his miracles, public ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. Now He is with the Father Almighty and pleading for mercy for the whole world. It is also written that once the gospel has reached every corner of the earth, He will come again. Then all the dead will be resurrected and all the living will be transfigured. Every one has to face judgment according to their deeds. Good people will be taken to a life of eternity in heaven and the evil ones will be thrown into hell for eternal suffering.

Only the Father knows when the second coming of Jesus will take place. So now is the time to repent and wait for His second coming. Further explanations about this will be given in the lessons ahead.

Several names are given to Jesus Christ in the Bible. Jesus means - one who will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

1) Immanuel

"A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel which means God is with us." (Matthew 1: 21)

2) Saviour

Since Jesus was born to release the world from the bondage of sin, He is the saviour. "With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all people." (Luke 2: 30-31)

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3) Lamb

In the Old Testament times, lambs used to be sacrificed in the Jerusalem temple as the penalty for sins. Jesus was sacrificed at Golgotha for the sins of the whole world. That's how He is referred to as the lamb. The next day John saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) In Revelations 5:6 it is written, "Then I saw a Lamb standing in the center of the throne, surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb appeared to have been killed."

4) Son of David

Jesus was born into the family of David. "A new king will arise from among David's descendants." (Isaiah 11:1) Born as a son into David's family, Jesus Christ died and was resurrected. He will live as a king in the hearts of people forever.

5) Redeemer

"I will come to Jerusalem to defend you and to save all of you that turn from your sins." (Isaiah 59:20) "By him we are put right with God; we become God's holy people and are set free." (Corinthians 1: 30) "Turn to me now and be saved, people all over the world! I am the only God there is." (Isaiah 59: 20)

The Incarnation took place to redeem humanity who had become slaves of Satan due to the sins of Adam and Eve. He became the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the whole world, shed His blood and died. He was resurrected later. The Son of God shed his blood to release man from the bondages of Satan and to lead him towards the path of salvation. People who lead good lives according to the rule of the Lord will be taken into a life of blissful eternity. Then His work of redemption will be complete.

Questions:

- 1) What is Incarnation?
- 2) What is the aim of the Lord's second coming?
- 3) Write down the names Jesus is referred to in the Bible.
- 4) When will His work of redemption be complete?



**Lesson 16**

**PROPHESIES ABOUT JESUS CHRIST**

**Aim:** To understand that all prophecies about incarnation have been fulfilled and that all the prophecies about his second coming will be fulfilled in the future.

Prophets have prophesied about incarnation and the events that follow centuries ago:

1. Jesus Christ will be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). A virgin will deliver a son (Isaiah 7:14) He will be born as a Jew in the house of David.
2. Wise men will bring gifts (Isaiah 60: 3-6, Psalms 72: 12-15)
3. Related to the birth of Jesus, boys under the age of two will be killed. (Jeremiah 31: 15)
4. Prophets have mentioned that Joseph and Mary will be forced to go to Egypt with baby Jesus. Later they will return and live in Nazareth.
5. It has been foretold about the public ministry of Jesus (Isaiah 61:1-4).

Jesus reads out the above portion to people in the temple. Isaiah 9:1-7 is the verses of prophecy about the public ministry of Jesus Christ at Galilee.

6. Miracles of Jesus were also foretold (Isaiah 35:5-6) - the blind will see, the deaf will hear and the dumb will speak.
7. There are prophecies also about the sufferings of Jesus. The prophecy that Jesus will ride a donkey is in Zechariah 9:9. Betrayal by a friend is mentioned in Psalms 41:9. "Even my best friend, the one I trusted most, the one who shared my food, has turned against me." The trial of Jesus is mentioned in Isaiah 53:7-9. "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be shorn, He never said a word."
8. Like these, there are many prophecies especially about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In Psalms 35:11, we read about false testimony and in Isaiah 50:6 about the persecutions Jesus has to undergo, like getting slapped and being spat on the face. In Psalms 22:16 it is written about the crucifixion and in Psalms 69:21 about drinking vinegar. Zechariah 13:1 talks about getting pierced in the chest. Zechariah 12:10 says, "I will fill the descendants of David and the other people of Jerusalem with the spirit of mercy and the spirit of prayer. They will look at the one they stabbed to death." In Amos 8:9 it is prophesied that when Jesus Christ is crucified the sun will go down at midday. "The time is coming when I will make the sun go down at midday and the earth grow dark during the day."
9. Psalms 16:10 mentions the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "You protect me from the power of death. And you will not abandon me to the world of the dead." Apostle Peter quotes this portion and starts his speech on the day of Pentecost. Like this there are many other prophecies.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was prophesied centuries ago. All prophecies were fulfilled. So we can believe that all prophecies about his second coming will also come true. Jesus himself promised us that He would come again.

Questions:

1. What are the main prophecies about the birth of Jesus Christ? Which prophet foretold about the birthplace of Jesus?
2. Who prophesied about the killing of infants? Write the verse.
3. Write the verses of prophesy about the public ministry of Jesus Christ, which is the verse that Jesus read in the temple.
4. Who prophesied that Jesus would ride a donkey? Write the verse.
5. Who prophesied that Jesus Christ will be pierced in the chest and that blood and water would flow? Write the verse.

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6. Write the prophecies about the persecutions of Jesus with supporting verses.

**LESSON 17**

**THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS**

Aim: To learn that the second coming of Jesus is a certainty.

The risen Christ promised us that He will come again. In John 21:22 the risen Christ tells Peter, "If I want him to live until I come, what is that to you?" In Matthew 24: 14 Jesus says, "And this good news about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all people; and the end will come." In Matthew 24:27 He says, "For the Son of Man will come like the lightning which flashes across the sky from the east to the west." Like these, Jesus told about his second coming many times to his disciples and to the people who listened to Him.

Nobody, not even the Son of God can predict the exact day or time of the second coming of Jesus. Only God the Father knows it. (Matthew 24:36). But there will be signs of His second coming according to the Bible and the prophets.

**What are the signs?**

Matthew 24:29-31 says, "Soon after the trouble of those days, the sun will grow dark, the moon will no longer shine, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in space will be driven from their courses. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky; and all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other."

Prophet Joel had prophesized in Joel 2:28-32 - "Afterwards I will pour out my Spirit on every one: your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your old people will have dreams, and your young people will see visions. At that time I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, both men and women. I will give warnings of that day in the sky and on the earth; there will be bloodshed, fire, and clouds of smoke. The sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. But all who ask the Lord for help will be saved. As the Lord has said, 'Some in Jerusalem will escape; those whom I chose will survive.' "

Acts 2:17-21 says the same things. Repeated earthquakes are signs of the end. 2 Peter 3:9-13 says, "The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins. But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day, the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon – the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home."

In Revelations 20:11-15 there is a description about His second coming and the judgment day – "Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sits on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence and were seen no more. And I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened, and then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded by the books. Death and the world of the dead also gave up the dead they held. And all were judged according to what they had done. Then death and the world of the dead were thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the second death.) Those who did not have their name written in the book of the living were thrown into the lake of fire." From the above verse it is certain that He will come again and that there will be a day of judgment. So while alive we should do good things and live a life pleasing to the Lord. Eternal bliss is the reward for those who lead good lives and eternal hell for the evil ones.

The gospel is being spread all over the world. In Russia during communist rule preachers were barred and churches were sealed. When the communist regime collapsed, evangelists and gospel workers from all over the world flew to Moscow and gave sermons. Leningrad was again named St. Peters Square.

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Recently, gospel preaching reached a new dimension. From Pretoria the world-renowned evangelist Billy Graham spoke in English and satellite arrangements were made so that in selected stations people could hear the message in their own language. So the message given in English was heard in different languages all over the world. At Kottayam arrangements were made to hear the sermon in Malayalam. Thousands heard the message in their mother tongue. In India, the message was broadcasted from 8 stations in different languages.

During the Gulf War, according to the instructions of Saddam Hussein, the oil wells of Kuwait were set ablaze and the world witnessed fire and pillars of smoke, which lasted for months. On 20th July 1994 the comet called Shumaker Levi hit mars and there appeared on its surface a crater bigger than the earth. The scientists who predicted the above event have announced that a comet called Smith Tatin will hit the earth on 14th August 2116. Considering events like the above we can assume that the second coming of Jesus is nearing.

In the prayer 'Anugrahangaal nirangirikunnavene' we pray for blessings for the ones who died in the faith of the Lord and who were looking forward to His second coming.

During the holy Qurbana when the priest comes towards the west holding the paten and chalice (Kasa and Peelasa) he says, "From Your atoning altar, may atonement descend upon Your servants, O Son of God, Who came for our salvation and will come for our resurrection and the restoration of our kind, forever." Here great importance is given to the hope for the second coming of Jesus Christ. In our prayers in many places we pray, "We look forward to your second coming." We have to give importance to the fact that He is coming to save all who are looking forward to His second coming.

Therefore, the church and all Christians have the duty to spread the message of repentance and salvation so that the whole humankind will become a community that awaits the second coming of the Lord.

**Questions:**

1. What did Jesus Christ say about His second coming?
2. According to the Gospel of Matthew, what are the signs of the second coming of the Lord?
3. What is the prophecy of prophet Joel about the Lord's second coming?
4. Give a description of Judgment Day according to the book of Revelations.
5. since the second coming of the Lord will happen soon, what are we supposed to do?

**Lesson 18**

**PLAN FOR REDEMPTION**

**Aim:** To learn about judgment and redemption, which will happen at the second coming of Jesus.

The incarnation of Jesus took place to save the whole humankind, who had become slaves to Satan due to the sins of Adam and Eve. That was his first coming. Christ who shed his blood on the cross and died for the sins of the whole world is right now in heaven and is continuously pleading mercy for us to God the Father.

Jesus saved humanity from the clutches of slavery from Satan and gave the right to salvation. But to achieve salvation, we should live a life pleasing to God, do good things and become one in Jesus Christ through the holy sacrament of Qurbana. It is the objective of the church to help people achieve this.

With His second coming, all the living and the resurrected dead will be judged and given eternal heaven or eternal hell according to their deeds. The plan of redemption of Jesus Christ is to separate the deserving and reward them with eternal bliss in heaven forever.

For this, Jesus will appear in the sky with his angels blowing the trumpet. Just before this the sign of the cross will appear in the sky. Revelation 20:11-15 says that the good people who are dead will be transfigured and taken into the clouds along with the living good people who will be transformed. All this will happen in a matter of seconds. The verse that one of the two women at the mill will be taken away (Matthew 24: 41) is to stress the fact that everything will happen very quickly.

Jesus will live on the earth again with his angels and the selected people at his second coming. This is the new earth and heaven, which John sees in his vision. Revelation 21:1-5 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne; "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared." Then the one sits on the throne said "And now I make all things new!" He also said to me, "Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted.""

So let us pledge to know Jesus, repent and live a life pleasing to Him and await for His second coming.

As written in Revelation 22:20, "He who gives his testimony to all this says, "Yes indeed! I am coming soon!""

**Questions:**

1. Explain the plan of salvation by our Lord.
2. When the Lord comes again, what will be the changes to the living and the dead?
3. At his second coming, what shall we do to be among his chosen people on the judgment day?

**LESSON 19**

**THE SALVATION THEORY**

Aim: To learn in detail how to achieve salvation.

Revelation 7:10 says, "They called out in a loud voice 'salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb.'" God gives salvation only to those who deserve it. So what shall we do to make ourselves eligible for salvation?

1) Through Holy baptism

Through the holy baptism we are granted the right to be God's children. All the sins are washed away through Baptism. Baptism is done with water and spirit. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go then to peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Acts 2: 38 says that sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is granted through baptism.

2) Through strong faith

Acts 16:31 says, "believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your family." All those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He shed his blood on the cross to save us from the slavery of Satan to grant us the right to salvation, that he died and was resurrected and is sitting on the right hand of God the Father, that he will come again at the time designated by God the father, and will redeem us, will be saved. "If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved." (Romans 10: 9)

3) By living a life pleasing to God, obeying His laws.

"For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his deeds." (Matthew 16:21). In Matthew 1: 21-22 we read about the advice Jesus Christ gives a man about the things one must do to receive eternal life.

4) Through the holy sacrament of Qurbana we live in Christ and Christ lives in us.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 we read, "The cup we use in the Lord's Supper and for which we give thanks to God: when we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And the bread we break: when we eat it, we are sharing in the body of Christ. Because there is the one loaf of bread, all of us, though many, are one body, for we all share the same loaf." Luke 22: 17-21 clearly states that in the Holy Qurbana, the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. Participating in the holy sacrament of Qurbana makes us eligible for salvation. Read John 6: 53-54: "I am telling you the truth; if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on the last day."

The thief who was crucified along with Jesus on his right side was taken to paradise due to his deep faith. Jesus gifted salvation to him. All those who receive salvation will live in heaven with all heavenly comforts.

What is heavenly experience?

In heaven, there is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, angels and the faithful. With them we will be able to live eternally, singing praises to God the Father.

It is written in Revelation 21: 4 - "He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain."

"But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of the living will enter the city" - Revelation 21: 27. "They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads." - Revelation 22: 4. Matthew 5:8 refers to the same thing.

By the holy sacrament of baptism, one becomes member of the church. He gets nearer to God through the holy sacrament of Qurbana. Anybody who is close to God will be leading a life of prayer, will love his neighbor as

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himself, will be caring for the poor and needy and will respect priesthood. We will prove ourselves worthy of the gift of salvation by doing the above things.

Questions:

- 1) How can we achieve salvation?
- 2) What shall we do to get the gift of salvation from God?
- 3) What is heavenly experience?
- 4) Quote Bible verses and describe how we can achieve salvation through the Holy Sacrament of Qurbana.

**Lesson 20**

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Aim: To learn in detail what is meant by Kingdom of God.

A place where God is the king or God is in authority is the Kingdom of God. A society where God's wishes are fulfilled can be called God's Kingdom. In a broad sense, a society faithful to God, a home true to his words and hearts of people leading sacrificial lives pleasing to God are all Kingdoms of God. During His sermon Jesus himself says that the Kingdom of God is amongst you. In John 3: 3 Jesus tells Nicodemus, "I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again." John 3:5 says, "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit." From the phrases 'see the Kingdom of God' and 'enter the Kingdom of God' we understand that Kingdom of God is a special place or a specific way of existence. In John 14: 2, Jesus says that there are many rooms in His Father's house. Here rooms mean Kingdom of God.

Let us examine what Apostle Paul has to say about this. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 we read, "For we know that when this tent we live in -our body here on earth - is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last for ever." In Romans 14:17 we read, "For god's kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of the righteousness, peace, and joy which the Holy Spirit gives."

In Jesus' sermon he refers to the 'Good News about the Kingdom'. In Matthew 24:14 we read, "And this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all people; and then the end will come." Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." It means praying for heavenly presence and rule on earth.

The Kingdom of God has no geographical limits. God's Kingdom cannot be seen with naked eyes. Each one of us is a visible form of God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is an ever-growing phenomenon. Theologians have different opinions about the subject on whether heaven and God's Kingdom are the same or not.

Heaven is the place where God resides. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in heaven. Angels are also there praising the Lord continuously. Revelations 4: 2-11 describes the heaven John saw in his vision. "There in heaven was a throne with someone sitting on it. His face gleamed like such precious stones as jasper and carnelian." "Day and night they never stop singing: 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.'" Similar descriptions about heaven is given in Revelations 19: 1-10. After the second coming of Jesus and judgment, the deserving selected will live in heaven with God. In Revelation chapter 21 we can read the description about the new heaven and the new earth. The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven, God's home will be with people and he will live with them. Here we have to understand that after the second coming of Jesus, God's kingdom and heaven will be the same and it will be on earth.

To have the right to enter this kingdom of God while on earth, we should repent, do good deeds and try to live as true Christians.

**Questions:**

1. What is meant by the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the view of Apostle Paul about the Kingdom of God?
3. What is the meaning of 'Good news about the Kingdom'?
4. What is heavenly Kingdom?



**Lesson 21**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Aim:** To learn more about the Holy Spirit, which is one of the Holy Trinity.

In Godliness there are three personalities or entities called the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The three together constitute the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son. In the Nicene Creed it is written about the Holy Spirit as follows - 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life to all, Who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the Prophets and Apostles.' From chapter 4 of the Acts of the Apostles we know that the Holy Spirit is one of the entities of the Holy Trinity. Describing the form of the Holy Spirit, it is referred to as 'He' in the gospel of John (John chapters 14, 15 and 16). When Jesus was baptized in river Jordan, the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove. On Pentecostal day the Holy Spirit came down in the form of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is the same as the Father and the Son in terms of behaviour, characteristics, glory and authority.

John 15: 26 says, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything." John 16:14 says, "He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you." All the sacraments of the church are blessed and fulfilled when the Holy Spirit dwells on them

Descriptions of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Bible

The Holy Spirit is eternal - Hebrews 9:14

The Holy Spirit is everywhere – Psalms 139: 7

The Holy Spirit knows everything – 1 Corinthians 2: 10 and is powerful – Luke 1: 35, Romans 15: 19

The Holy Spirit is glorious - 1 Peter 4: 14

The Holy Spirit is creator – Genesis 1: 26-27

The Holy Spirit is the Lord of being born again - John 3: 6-7

The Holy Spirit is the controller of prophetic messages - 2 Peter 1: 20-21

The Holy Spirit appoints Gospel workers – Acts 13: 2-4, Matthew 9:38

The Holy Spirit decides the place where the gospel should be preached – Acts 16: 6

The Holy Spirit helps - 2 Corinthians 1:3

The Holy Spirit gives life to everything - Romans 8:11

The Holy Spirit enlightens the world about sin, righteousness and judgment - John 16:8

The Holy Spirit lives with righteous people - John 14: 17

The Holy Spirit lives in the church and in the bodies of holy people - 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

The Holy Spirit has given priests the authority to forgive sins - John 20:22

What is the Holy Spirit compared to?

Water that cleans the dirt, rejuvenates and is given free of cost - John 7:38-39.

Fire which purifies and shines - Matthew 3:11

Powerful wind – Acts 2:2

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Oil which is soothing – Psalms 23: 5, 45: 7

Dove which is gentle and innocent - Matthew 3:16

Inner voice-which speaks and knows the way – Acts 16: 6-7

Stamp-mark of truth and guarantee – Ephesians 1: 13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22

Tongues of fire – Acts 2:3

The spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness, humility and self-control.

#### Sins against the Holy Spirit

Sins against the Holy Spirit are very serious and difficult to be forgiven. They are:

To test the Holy Spirit – Acts 5:9

To lie to the Holy Spirit, to protest against it, to ignore the gifts given, to make it sad - Ephesians 4:30

To say evil things against the Holy Spirit - Matthew 12: 31-32

Such sins will not be forgiven. As written in Matthew 12: 31-32, "And so I tell you that people can be forgiven any sin and any evil thing they say but whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who says something against the Son of Man can be forgiven; but whoever says something against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven - now or ever." The Holy Spirit makes us aware of sins. The sins, which are not repented, become sins against the Spirit and will not be forgiven.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man, and died on the cross for the sins of the whole humankind. He was buried and the third day He was resurrected. He ascended into heaven and is now pleading to God the Father for our sake. As promised, He sent the Holy Spirit to comfort us. Since then, the major force working on earth till the second coming of Jesus is the Holy Spirit. When His second coming is nearing, the Holy Spirit will be very active and powerful.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, being aware of sins and repenting for it, let us live as a big community looking and working towards the second coming of Jesus.

#### Questions:

1. What is written in the Nicene Creed about The Holy spirit?
2. What is the Holy Trinity?
3. In the Holy Bible, how is the Holy Sprit described?
4. What is the Holy Spirit compared to?
5. What are the sins against the Holy Spirit?

## HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

### LESSON-22

#### THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Aim To Learn about the early stages of the Christian church.

AD 30-70 which is the early stage in the church can be called the 'apostolic period'. Luke writes history of the church at this stage in the book, 'The acts of the Apostles'. Initially the Roman Government and the gentiles considered the early Christian church as a modified form of the Jewish religion. Even after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, the Apostles and other believers used to go to the temple of Jerusalem for prayers (Acts 3:1). But after Stephen became a martyr, Christians came to be known as a separate group. As we know resurrection of Jesus Christ was the driving force behind Christianity. For the same reason, Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection became enemies of the Christians. During this period the gospel was preached amongst the gentiles too. Saul of Tarsus who was strongly against the Christians was converted into Christianity and later came to be known as Paul. He did a lot of gospel work among the gentiles. Decisions taken at the Jerusalem council in AD 51 encouraged the gospel work and growth of the church.

In AD 70 Romans destroyed the temple of Jerusalem completely. A large number of people were killed. Remaining people fled to distant places to save their lives. The period from AD 70-110 can be called 'the apostolic disciples period'. The followers who learnt directly from the apostles led the church during this time. Most of the books of the New Testament were prevalent during this time. With the downfall of Jerusalem town the Jewish Christians were no more important. The largest cities in the world that time were Rome, Antioch and Alexandria. These three cities became the important centers of the Christian church. These cities are in the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa respectively.

The roman people used to worship idols and the emperors who ruled the country from time to time. The Christians who refused to do this were branded as atheists. The Christians who were denied the right to worship used to get together in secret places and worship at night. From AD 55 when Emperor Nero was the ruler till AD 313 till the rule of Diocletian, for two and a half centuries the Christian church was persecuted continuously. The Christians who protested against slaves fighting against animals for the sake of entertainment for the Romans were persecuted. Christian ladies were given the status of slaves only amongst the gentiles. Since the Christian church was a prohibited establishment, it did not enjoy the freedom of expression and worship. To be a Christian was a crime in itself. The Roman people used to hate the Christians. During this period of persecution many Christians were murdered and others subjected to various persecutions and humiliations. In spite of all this the church was growing daily. Since membership in the church was a disadvantage financially, only the real faithful were members of church.

After the death of Emperor Diocletian the Roman Empire was divided. Constantine who was chief of the army became ruler of one part of the empire. While the war was raging, Constantine saw the sign of cross in the sky in a vision while crossing Melvishan Bridge and heard the voice, "With this you will win". Constantine believed in the vision and got the sign of cross marked on all weapons and on the flags. He won the war that followed. Later he became the emperor of the whole of Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine removed all the restrictions imposed on Christians by his predecessors and made a decree in the town of Milan in Italy. This historically important 'Edict of Milan in AD 313' declared complete religious freedom to all the people in the country. All Sundays were declared public holidays. Following this, Christians started their worship on Sunday daytime.

Later Emperor Constantine became a Christian and the best thing he did for the growth of the church was to conduct the first ecumenical council in AD 325 in the city of Nicea in Asia Minor. From various parts of the world 138 bishops attended the various meetings of the council Mar Osthathevos, Patriarch of Antioch was the president for most of the meetings. The heresy of Arius that rebuked the divinity of Jesus Christ was declared as cursed at the Nicea council. The council established the doctrine that God the father and God the son are of the same essence. It was decided that the baptism of the heretics will not be accepted and that resurrection will be celebrated only on Sundays even if dates are not corresponding.

Under the leadership of Queen Helene, mother of Emperor Constantine, a group of people went to Jerusalem and searched for the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified and found it. Church celebrates the remembrance of this event on September 14th as 'Sleeba perunnal'.

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Emperor Constantine renovated the ancient city of Byzantium, which is situated in southeastern Europe on the eastern shore of Bosferus. To make his name part of history; he renamed the city Constantinople and made it his capital. The Christian church grew there also. This city is now known as Istanbul.

Makadonius, the bishop of Constantinople started teaching that though Jesus Christ son of God, is same as God the Father in divinity, the Holy Sprit is not equal to father and son. The aim of the 2nd council at Constantinople in AD 381 was to officially rebuke this heresy of Makadonius. The convener of this council was Emperor Theodosius, who was the ruler that time and the president was the Patriarch of Antioch, Mar Milithios. Since a regional council was going on at Rome at the same time, the Bishops from that region did not attend the Constantinople council. But the Pope in Rome later accepted the decisions taken at the council. While the council was in progress, Mar Milithios who was the president passed away and the rest of the meetings were conducted with St. Nakhtarios as the president. The wrong teachings of Makadonius were rejected as heresy and the true faith about the Holy Spirit was added on to the Nicene Creed. The Cappadoccean fathers have written in details about the explanations of the true faith.

Another heresy started in the church in the later years. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius who rejected the heresy of Arius and Makadonius, started the trouble this time. He taught that Jesus had the personalities and characteristics of both man and God in him and that the sufferings were undertaken by the human personality of Jesus. He also said that Mother Mary was the mother of Jesus Christ for his human nature and personality only and so it is wrong to call her mother of God. The most important person who raised his voice against this heresy was St.Koorilose, (Cyril) the Patriarch of Alexandria. It was to oppose this heresy, the ecumenical council was held at Ephesus in AD 431 .Mar Koorilose was the president of the council. It was declared at this council that Jesus Christ, son of god had a single complete personality combining both human and divine natures. It was also declared that it is right to call Virgin Mary mother of God.

Apart from these ecumenical councils, regional synods were held to solve problems of the places concerned.

When the question of double personality arguments that were declared as heresy at the council of Ephesus in 413 cropped up again, to suppress them, the emperor called for another council in Ephesus .Mar Diascorus of Alexandria presided the council. Most of the church leaders including the representatives from Rome took part in this council. Pope Leo of Rome sent a message known in history as the 'Tome of Leo' to be read at the council. Since the contents of the message were contradictory to the convictions of the previous councils, the president did not allow the message to be read at the council The Pope was angry with Mar Dioscorus for this.

Following this, according to the wishes of Pope Leo, in AD 451 Roman emperor Malkian arranged a council at Chalcedon in Asia Minor. Here Mar Diascorus who was the president of the second council at Ephesus was rebuked in public and declared guilty. The people under the leadership of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria did not accept the Chalcedonian heresy, which was already declared as cursed and null at the council of Ephesus, but the Patriarch of Constantinople remained as an ally of Rome.

#### Questions

- 1) Which are the years known as 'the apostolic period' and 'the apostolic disciples period'?
- 2) What benefits did the church enjoy during the reign of Emperor Constantine?
- 3) What is the significance of 'Sleeba Perunnal'?
- 4) What were the heresy teachings of Arius and Macadonius?
- 5) Why was Pope Leo angry with Mar Diascorus?

## LESSON 23

### THE DIVIDED CHURCH

As capital of the empire and being a big city, Rome was famous and important from the beginning. The Episcopa of Rome also was important. When Constantinople became the capital of the eastern empire, that city also gained importance.

When the cities of Rome and Constantinople were important as centers of power and administration, Antioch and Alexandria became famous as centers of learning and knowledge. The learned theologians of Antioch and Alexandria took the responsibility of establishing and explaining the faith and doctrines at the three councils. Mar Athanasius and Mar Koorilose were the leaders for the same.

The European churches of Rome and Constantinople did not achieve a theological growth comparable to that of the churches of Antioch and Alexandria so at the council meetings when matters of faith and doctrine were discussed, the representatives from the European churches could not play an active part. The church in Rome which was politically important did not like this state of affairs.

When Constantine became Emperor, period of persecution for the Christians came to an end and the golden period started. Along with this greed for power and rivalry among churches also grew. The church in Rome, which claimed more importance, tried various ways to establish its supremacy over the other churches. They thought that this would give them an opportunity to grow equal to the churches of Antioch and Alexandria in the field of theology. Leo, the Episcopa of Rome was waiting for an opportunity for this and it happened when it was decided to hold the council at Ephesus to discuss about the heresy of Evuthicos

Leo saw it as .the chance to establish Rome's position in the field of theology. Therefore though he did not attend, Leo sent an essay (Tome) through his representatives, to be read at the council. Mar Diascorus, president of the council did not allow the 'tome' to be read at the council as many of the ideas in it were similar to that of Nestorius which were already declared as cursed at the council of Ephesus in AD 431.

For Leo, who was trying to establish the supremacy of the Roman church, this was a big blow. Leon's later efforts were to take revenge on Diascorus. Leo wished to defeat Alexandria which was the leader in theology and to establish the influence and supremacy of Rome there also. To achieve this he decided to conduct another council and to make all the churches agree to the 'tome'. His wish was not fulfilled during the reign of Emperor Theodosius 11, who was the ruler that time.

Emperor Theodosius died soon and Emperor Martian who became the next ruler agreed to Leo and called another council. This council started in AD 451 at Chalcedon. Instead of AD and BC modern day writers prefer to use the terms CE. (Christian Era) and BCE (Before Christian Era).Aims of this council was:

- 1) To defeat Dioscorus
- 2) To accept the Tome of Leo
- 3) To establish the supremacy of Rome in the field of Theology.

The council publicly acquitted him and declared him guilty. Leon's tome was accepted. So the Nestorian argument of dual personality, which the council of Ephesus in AD 431 rejected, was accepted with some alterations.

Nestorius argued that Jesus Christ had two personalities and two kinds of nature. The decision at the council of Ephesus in Ad431 was that the personality of Jesus Christ cannot be separated as human and god and his nature into human and divine. Mar Koorilose explains it as 'one nature of the incarnate word'.

Evuthicos taught that human nature and divine nature merges and become one but church has not accepted this. Human nature does not become divine nature and divine nature does not become human. They do not mingle or merge and become one and one nature does not destroy the other. Instead divine nature in completeness and human nature in completeness except for sin are inseparable in one essence. This is the teaching of our church.

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Therefore after incarnation also Jesus Christ was complete man and complete God. After this inseparable union, actions and nature of Christ cannot be separated as some human and some divine. It is against the faith to teach that divine nature of Jesus raised Lazarus from death and that it was his human nature that lamented on the cross because in Jesus Christ there is inseparable union of divine and human natures in their completeness.

According to the Tome of Leo the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ are separate and all his activities can be divided into human and divine. This theory was completely against the convictions of the AD 431 council. So the churches of Antioch and Alexandria did not agree to the decisions of the Chalcedon synod.

The four oriental churches including the Syrian orthodox church follow the faith decided at the AD 431 Ephesus council. After the Chalcedon council in 451 AD which the oriental orthodox churches never accepted, the Roman church and the eastern orthodox churches which came under Constantinople misunderstood and considered them as accepting the false faith. Recently the discussions which took place between the Catholic Church and oriental orthodox churches have cleared the misunderstandings. The crowning example of this is the common proclamation which Pope, supreme head of Catholic Church and H.H.Patriarch, supreme head of Syrian Orthodox Church made in 1982 about the single personality faith.

The church which stood in one faith was split into two after the Chalcedon council. Church in Rome and church in Constantinople accepted the Chalcedon council and the decisions taken there. (But the council held at Constantinople in AD 553 came to the conclusion that many of the decisions at the Chalcedon council were wrong and so some decisions were reformed and some discarded). Churches in Antioch and Alexandria did not accept the decisions of the Chalcedon council. So the church was divided into two (1) Those accepting the Chalcedon faith and (2) Those not accepting the Chalcedon faith. The oriental orthodox churches have so far stood steadfast under the faith proclaimed at the three councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus. But the western church and the Eastern Orthodox Church (Byzantine) held councils later and made changes in the faith and broke away from the ancient church.

The churches who did not accept the double personality theory are known as the oriental orthodox churches today. Syrian orthodox, Coptic orthodox, Armenian orthodox and Abyssinian orthodox (Ethiopian) churches belong to this group. All these churches have the same faith and liturgy.

**Questions**

1. What is the teaching of Nestor and Evuthicos about the nature of Jesus?
2. In Tome of Leo what is different to the decisions at the A.D. 431 Ephesus council ?
3. What is our faith about the nature of Jesus Christ?
4. Which are the orthodox churches with the same faith?

**LESSON – 24**

**THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH**

Syrian Orthodox Church is under the throne of Antioch. Of all the Patriarch thrones organized at the Nicea council (Antioch, Alexandria and Rome) the throne of Antioch is the most ancient. It is important to note that the followers of Jesus Christ were called Christians for the first time in Antioch. Also it was at Antioch that St. Peter established his apostolic throne.

In the early centuries of the Christian Era, Antioch had a very important place. Antioch was the third biggest town of the Roman empire. According to E.S.Burchiar in his book about the history of Antioch, in the 4th century 5 lakhs of people lived in 1 lakh houses in a radius of 15 miles. Antioch in the 4th century was much bigger than many of the modern Indian cities today.

Antioch was the center of Greek culture and learning. It was famous as a center of trade also. Prominent countries of that time like Greece, Egypt and Syria had trade relationships with Antioch. Since traders from various parts of the world visited Antioch, travel and communications with other parts of the world was easy from Antioch. All these must have prompted St. Peter to establish his throne at Antioch.

From B.C.300 when Emperor Seluchus Nicater established Antioch till the 6th century when Persia conquered it, Antioch remained famous. When the great Emperor Constantinople became Christian, he built a beautiful church in Antioch. Many Emperors after him followed the tradition. Also the rich Christians of that time built many churches. So till the Persians and Arabs destroyed it, Antioch continued to be the center of Christian culture.

From 5th century onwards the town of Antioch and the Christian church became weak. There were four reasons for this :-

1. Persecution from the double personality (dyophysite) group after the Chalcedon council.
2. The earthquake in the first half of the 6th century.
3. The Persian attack in AD 538. The city was nearly completely destroyed in this attack.
4. In AD 638 when Arabs invaded and conquered Antioch, it became isolated from the Christian world. It was AD538, the same year of demise of Mar Sevarios that Antioch was destroyed completely. After him the throne was shifted from Antioch.

**Dayara Movement**

Many fathers till Yacoob Burdana suffered much to keep the faith pure. All of these fathers were people belonging to Dayara. At least from the 3rd century Dayara movement started in Syrian Orthodox church. Though inmates of these Dayaras are few these days due to unfavourable circumstances, for centuries they were the centers of spirituality, knowledge and service.

**Dayara of Mar Mathai**

The Dayara of Mar Mathai situated near Mosul in Iraq was founded in the 4th century and is an important one. Apart from Mar Mathai who established it, Abraham, Zaki and Daniel were the other leaders in the Dayara in the beginning. One Arabic historian has recorded that there were about thousand people who lived a Dayara life there. In the middle ages this Dayara was well known as a centre of learning. One of the most famous ascetics of the Syrian church, Maphriyano Bar Hebraya lived here for long time and wrote many books while living there. Since the 10th century, for long time it was the headquarters of the Maphriyano. We lost all the invaluable books in the library. They are kept in places like the British Library, Vatican library and in different places of Europe where ancient manuscripts are kept. Only few original hand written books of not so much importance are there now. Thousands visit the place as tourists and pilgrims.

**Dayara of Mar Barsouma**

Another important Dayara was the one established by Mar Barsouma who was called to eternal rest in AD 457. He was respected by everybody. Though he was not a Metropolitan he held an important place than many

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of the Metropolitans that time. Emperor Theodosius specially invited him to take part in the 449 Ephesus council to discuss the heresy of Evuthicos. Of all the people who attended the council he was the only one who was not a Metropolitan. The church has acknowledged his purity and his name is included in the 5th Tubden where the deceased fathers are remembered though he was not a Metropolitan.

Since the 8th century (some historians say 9th century) till 1239 our Patriarchs lived in this dayara. Michael the Syrian who wrote our church history lived in this Dayara (1166-99). Before becoming Maphriyano Bar Hebraya also lived in this Dayara. In the middle of the 14th century the Kurd tribal people destroyed the Dayara. It was not renovated again.

#### Dayara of Mar Haniya

Another important Dayara called 'Dayara of Haniya' was established by Mar Haniya the Metropolitan of Mardine in AD 800. From the beginning itself there were 80 inmates there. The library there made it world famous. From 1293 onwards the Patriarchs used to live there. Of the inmates who were members of this Dayara there were 21 Patriarchs, 9 Maphriyano and not less than 130 bishops.

There were Dayaras for nuns also. Most of them got destroyed though some are still existing.

Apart from the people who lived together in Dayaras, there were ascetics who lived in caves. There were others who lived ascetic life on high rising pillars. Such people were called Destuno Mar. Semavoon Destoona whose name is mentioned in the 5th Tubaden is the first one to do that (389-459). Since he had special gifts and powers wherever he went people went in search of him. So it was to avoid disturbance from people while meditating that he decided to meditate from the top of a pillar which was 60 feet tall. But soon the place became thickly populated.

Once Emperor Theodosius sent a group of Metropolitans to Semavoon Destono, requesting him to go and live in the palace of the Roman Emperor. He refused the request. He was interested in meditating in the most difficult way. While living in Dayara once he was sent out of the Dayara by the in-charge for self-inflicting serious injuries. Later the in-charge regretted and called him back.

When Semavoon destono died in 459AD, six Metropolitans and 600 soldiers kept vigil for the body. The body was taken to a place called Kasiyanoos first. Later the body was taken to the headquarters of the Patriarchs and buried there.

Following his footpath many used to meditate standing on top of pillars. The practice was prevalent in African and European churches also. Mar Michael used to meditate from the pillar till the age of 105 when he died. In 19th century also there were ascetics who followed the practice. Syria and neighboring regions where people of single faith lived came under the rule of the Arabs in 7th century. With this the persecution from the Chalcedonians ended and there was peace in the church. The only condition of the Arab rulers was that the Christians should not work against Islam religion and its rulers. All non-Muslims had to pay tax also. This cannot be considered a burden, Military service was compulsory for the Muslims. Because the Christians were exempted from this they had to pay tax instead. Priests and ascetics were exempted from tax.

The Muslim rule before the crusade helped the Christians in many ways. The Muslim rulers were keen to make use of the knowledge of the Christians. That was good for the Christians. Secondly since the countries of Syria, Persia and Mesopotamia got united politically gospel spread to many places.

Since there was no more support from the Royals the double personality people lost their strength and the need to confront them was not there anymore. The peaceful atmosphere allowed them to improve their pursuits in other fields. In fields like science, medicine. Astrology, history and theology Syrian Christians made significant contributions.

The first Maphriyano Mar Maruthja, Musebar Keepa and Mar Yacoob of Edessa lived during this time.

Since Christians were more educated than the Arabs they held important positions under the Khalifas. Their growth in the field of trade helped them financially also. Although few rulers were against the Christians generally till the crusade, the Muslim dominated period was a time of peace and progress for the Christians.

#### Questions



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1. What is the importance of Antioch in the history of the Church?
2. Write about the ancient Dayara movement in the Syrian Orthodox Church.
3. What were the considerations given to the Christians during the Muslim rule?

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**Lesson 25**

**THE COPTIC CHURCH**

The Patriarchal throne at Alexandria was established at the Council of Nicea. Today, the Church which comes under this throne is known as the Coptic Church. Most of the members of this Church are Egyptians. It is called the Coptic Church because Coptic language is used for the liturgy. Till the 13th century this was the language that people spoke.

The land called Misraim in Bible is the Egypt of today. This land has a lot of connection with the Bible and the history of Israel. In the Bible there is reference to Abraham going and living in Egypt. Israeli people grew in number while in Egypt. Apart from all these, according to the instruction of the angel, Joseph and Mary took baby Jesus to Egypt. So this land had the fortune to make a safe place for the Lord Savior of the world.

The traditional belief is that Apostle Mark established the Church in Egypt as instructed by Apostle Paul. The probable time of his arrival in Egypt is between AD 48 and 61. Historians are unable to pinpoint the exact year. But it is sure that he was martyred in AD 68.

A cobbler named Anianus was the first person to believe in Jesus on hearing the gospel from Mark. Later his family members and many others believed in Jesus. The growth of Christianity amazed others. They wanted to kill Mark. Mark sensing the danger wanted the Church to grow even if he was killed. So he ordained Anianus as the Episcopa. He ordained three priests and seven deacons. After the time of Mark, Anianus led the Church. The Coptic Church considers Mark as the first Patriarch and Anianus as the second Patriarch.

In AD 68 in a place called Bokalis, while celebrating Easter Mark and other believers were attacked by enemies. Mark was tied in ropes and pulled along the streets. He was tortured the following day also and he died a martyr on the next day of Easter.

#### The School of Theology at Alexandria

In the early centuries, all the achievements in theological learning and faith can be attributed to the school of theology in Alexandria. Tradition says that it was established by Apostle Mark, but there is no document to prove when it was established. For centuries it remained as the theological capital of the world. This school gave birth to many accomplished leaders. World famous learned theologians used to be in charge of the school.

Pantenus was the first most important person who was in charge of the school (It is believed that he died in AD190). While he was the head, The Patriarch of Antioch Demetrious sent him to India to spread the gospel. After Pantenus, Mar Clemes, Oregon and Dionysios the great were in charge of the institution. Fathers Mar Athanasius and Mar Koorilose studied in this school.

Later, due to the persecution of the Arabs, this school became weak. A school similar to that or learned people equal to the ones at that time were never found in the history of Church again. Absence of priests with good theological knowledge led to the weakening of the Church. Today this Church is on a revival path. Regarding steadfastness in faith and in Dayara movement this Church was always in the forefront.

#### Persecution faced by the Coptic Church

Coptic Church did not grow up under the care of the royals or due to religious tolerance. Kings who were idol worshippers, westerners with the double personality theory and later non Christian rulers tortured this Church.

During the rule of Patriarch Dematris1 (188-230), persecution by Emperor Septimius Severus was the first persecution by a ruler. In 202 he passed a law prohibiting conversion to Christianity. He sealed the school at Alexandria (secretly it continued to function ).Many, including father of Oregon became martyrs. Still the Church continued to prosper. In 211 by the time the Emperor died the number of bishops increased from 3 to 20.

In 250, during the reign of Emperor Deiyus, the next persecution started. He passed a law by which everyone had to obtain a certificate from the regional magistrate that offerings were given to idols. Thousands who refused were martyred. This torture continued till 262 when Emperor Paulinos passed the order of religious tolerance.

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In 302, Emperor Diocletian started persecuting the Church again. All the believers were expelled from the army. Churches were demolished, books were destroyed and wealth of the Christians confiscated. Christians were terminated from government jobs and all Church meetings were prohibited. Those who objected were given death penalty. Christians protested against these laws. Terrible persecution was the result. Including Peter I the 17th Patriarch, many were martyred. It is said that the number of martyrs was around one and a half lakhs. With the famous Edict of Milan by Emperor Constantinople, persecution from gentile kings came to an end.

It was towards the Alexandrian Patriarch Mor Diascoros who presided the 449 Ephesus ecumenical council that Pope Leon had the maximum hatred. After the Chalcedon council, with the support of the Emperor, the Roman Church started torturing Diascoros and the believers who were with him. The aim of Rome was to bring the double personality believers into authority and by that to bring the whole of the Church under the double personality faith. Diascoros was ousted and sent in exile. Instead, the double faith follower Proterias was made Patriarch. But the faithful did not accept it. They chose Timotheos Ilurus as the Patriarch. He was also exiled. Then the split in the Church worsened and the Church parted ways, one group as 'Melkites' and other group as single personality supporters.

In 482 Emperor Seno Herotiburn tried to bring unity in the Church through proclamation but did not succeed. In A.D 567 Emperor Justin II acknowledged both groups.

In 630, the Church again had to bear the persecution from Cyrus, Patriarch of the Melkites. He had the support of Emperor Hiraclius. Many including Menaze the brother of Patriarch Binyamin were tortured and killed. Cyrus with all military preparations visited each town and village and put many faithful in jail and killed many others. He confiscated the wealth of the Christians and looted Churches. He had the same policy towards Dayaras and the inmates there. Bishops like Victor and Cyrus were scared and joined the Melkite group but most of the priests, Church members and Metropolitans faced this persecution bravely.

In 641, Arabs invaded Alexandria. and they levied heavy taxes on the Christians. Patriarch Alexandrios II was put in jail and his wealth was confiscated. In 705 Khalifa Abdul Malik banned the Coptic language and made learning of Arabic compulsory. So by the 13th century, the Coptic language was no longer used as conversation language. Now it is used only for liturgy.

Persecutions like these weakened the Church. Since there were obstacles to the learning of theology and Bible, the Church became weak and never regained its old glory.

#### Coptic-Catholic relationship

In the 13th century, from the time of Patriarch Koorilose III (1235-1243) onwards, there were attempts to bring the Coptic Church under the Catholic Church. In the Leon council (1274) and in the Florence council (1439) conducted under the Roman Catholic Church, representatives of the Coptic Church took part. Those who took part in the Florence council denounced the single personality faith and pledged allegiance to the double personality faith. A deed was also signed there. But the people objected to this decision taken by the authorities only and in practical terms the decision became null.

Later during the time of Patriarch Yuhanon XIV, Gabriel VII and Gabriel VIII, there were attempts to bring the Church under Rome. All those attempts failed. In 1630 one mission belonging to the Capuchin missionaries of the Catholic Church was established in Egypt. Towards the end of the 18th century and in the beginning of the 19th century, work of the European missionaries caused trouble in the Church. In 1899, Pope Leon XIII joined the Catholics and ordained a Patriarch for the Coptic Church members. There are only very few members under this Patriarch.

#### Church Associations

In 1875 a council called Majlis – Al- Mili was established by the Church members. The council argued that they wanted the authority to rule and to decide who should be ordained as priests. But the priests and one group of

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Church members opposed this move. But things got worse and in 1892 the Patriarch was ousted and forced to live in a monastery.

The ordinary people could not accept this act against the Patriarch. The faithful protested strongly. Though the Patriarch was brought back into authority 5 months later, the conflict between the Patriarch and Majlis- al- Mili continued. In 1954 the Patriarch was again ousted. Because of the troubles which followed, the government imposed many restrictions and the Church lost many rights.

#### THE COPTIC CHURCH TODAY

The headquarters of the Church today is Cairo in Egypt. Though in the early days the Patriarchs used to live in Alexandria, for various reasons they shifted to the Dayara of Makarios in Nithria in the 6th century and later in the 11th century to Cairo.

About a million people belonging to Egypt, Sudan other African countries and neighboring Middle Eastern countries belong to this Church. The early gospel work helped the Church to grow to this dimension. The people, who fled to far away places due to persecution, spread the gospel in all the places they settled and made the Church grow.

Under the Patriarch there are 39 dioceses, 12 monasteries and 6 convents. The committee consisting of Church members, priests and Metropolitans choose the Patriarch. The Patriarch carries out the Mooron Koodasha and ordains Metropolitans. Synod has the main role in administrative matters. There is a committee to help the Patriarch in administration. It is a rule that those considered for the post of Bishop should have completed 50 years and only those who have completed 25years ordained as priests.

Different from us, the Coptic Church celebrates Christmas on January 6th. Easter is celebrated one week after the Passover of the Jews.

#### Questions

1. What caused the Coptic Church to split?
2. What is the importance of the theological school at Alexandria?
3. Write a short note about the administrative set up of the Coptic Church.

**Lesson 26**

**THE ARMENIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Armenia is the first country which accepted Christianity as the official religion. In A.D 313, emperor Constantine of Rome became a Christian. Much before that in 301, the king, officials and the people of Armenia accepted Christianity as their religion. This country which was first to accept the religion was also the first one to suffer persecution. Even in the 20th century they were cruelly persecuted. During the First World War about one-third of the Armenian population was mass murdered. There cannot be these many numbers of martyrs in any other Church.

According to the traditional belief of the Armenian Church, apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew were the apostles who spread the gospel in Armenia. In the early centuries itself, it was an accepted fact in many Churches that Bartholomew went and spoke in Armenia. But there are differences of opinion regarding who St. Thaddeus was. According to one tradition, he was the brother of St. Thomas called Didimos and according to another tradition he was Judas Thaddeus with the other name Levi.

St. Thaddeus preached the gospel in Armenia for 23 years from AD 43. St. Bartholomew preached there from AD 60 to 68. Because of their gospel work, many believed in Jesus Christ. This led to the enmity of the gentiles. In AD 66, Thaddeus and in AD 68 Bartholomew was martyred. It is believed that many others were martyred along with them. In the place called Arthas, the grave of Thaddeus and in the place called Alpak the grave of Bartholomew is still present.

So, even though established apostolically, there are no documents about the condition of the Church for two and a half centuries. Probably, the Church was growing because even in AD 301 there are signs to indicate that Christianity was the most important religion in Armenia.

It was a person called Gregor Partov who was responsible for the conversion of the emperor and thereby that of the whole nation. He was called Lusaverich (person spreading light) by the Armenians. More than one reason led Emperor Tiridatus III for the conversion. When the Emperor was sick, Gregor who was in jail miraculously cured him. The encouragement of the Emperor's sister was another reason. The martyrdom of 37 nuns influenced the king a lot. The king wanted to marry one of the nuns who reached Armenia fearing persecution. But the nun was not willing. This led to the murder of 37 nuns. Their bravery and their strong faith in Jesus led the king to the Christian religion.

With the effort of King Tiridatus III and Gregor most of the people in the country believed in Jesus. Though Gregor was a lay man, due to his contributions for spreading the gospel, in AD 302 he was ordained as Bishop. He was appointed as Catholicos by Tiridatus III and the Metropolitan of Casarea, Leorange ordained him. When Gregor came back as Metropolitan in the king's chariot accompanied by the army, he was welcomed by the king himself. Many who witnessed this became Christians.

The message spread very fast during the time of Gregory. The king Tiridatus was with him during many of his journeys to spread the gospel. Gentiles joined the Church in large numbers. Many of their temples were converted into places of Christian worship. When Gregory was the Catholicos, by-laws were written for the Church. Canons also were established. Church was divided into different dioceses, headquarters built and Bishops ordained for each. He sent missionaries to Georgia. In short, Gregor Partov was one of the greatest missionaries and administrator the world has ever seen. In 325 he was called to his heavenly abode.

From the time of Gregor Partov, the head of Armenian Church was known as Catholicos. After the death of Gregor Partov, his son Aristaris became Catholicos. Later his elder brother Vrutchanis took over. Later for a long time dynastic succession followed. The period between AD 353-373, when Nersis the great ruled, is an important period in the history of the Armenian Church. This period and the period between 387 and 439 when St. Isahak ruled can be called the golden period in the history of the Armenian Church. At the synod which Nersis convened in 365, important decisions were taken regarding administration in the Church and in the government. The synod banned marriage between blood relatives. All pagan customs and rituals were strictly forbidden. Tax was levied and the Synod decided that the money should be used for building hospitals, leprosy sanitariums, and houses for blind people, orphans and widows, rest houses for travelers, and monasteries for Dayara people.

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As a result, about 2000 such institutions came up in the country. So, the Church was shining as the light of the whole country of Armenia.

The rule of St. Isaac was a period of growth, culturally and spiritually. It was because of his effort that the Armenian language had a script and the Bible and other books of worship were translated into the Armenian language. Until the 4th century, Armenian language had no script. For conversation, the colloquial language differed in many places.

Because of the above reasons, Greek and Syriac bibles were used. There were no books in the Armenian language. So, during worship, there were people who were specially trained to read the Bible and to translate it into the local language. A priest called Mesrom was appointed to make the script for the Armenian language. Later, a group consisting of 100 people was appointed to translate the Bible. They translated from Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) and peshita (Syrian Bible) into the Armenian language Bible. It took the effort of 100 people for 29 years for this task.

The liturgy which Mar Baselios organized for baptism, marriage, burial and consecration of the Church were also translated into Armenian language. Along with this, life history of the holy fathers and the books they wrote were also translated. To teach the people to read and write, educational institutions were established by the Church throughout the country. With the spread of the Bible, and other spiritual messages, superstitions and rituals became less. This also helped to prevent heresies.

It was in the provinces of the Roman Empire that most of the early century Christians lived. Arguments and discussions regarding faith took place between people or Churches within the Roman Empire. Armenia which was not a Roman province was not much affected by these arguments. Though the council at Nicea was the only one they attended, they consider the councils at Constantinople and Ephesus as affecting them also. In AD 435, at Ashtishath, a regional Synod was convened and the decisions taken at the Ephesus Synod accepted upon. The word "theokos" (mother of God) describing Mother Mary was also accepted.

The Armenian representatives did not take part in the controversial chalcedonic council of AD 451 Oct 8. That was a time when the Armenian Church was facing serious persecution. Most of the Metropolitans were either exiled or were put in prison. But later, when they came to know about the decisions at the Synod, they rejected them as it was against their faith.

In AD 506, the Synod at Dwin officially rejected the chalcedonic council and the decisions taken there. In 564, another synod was convened at Dwin and reconfirmed that the decisions at chalcedonic Synod were wrong and that those at 431 Ephesus Synod were correct. In 726, a Synod was convened at Mansikert and declared the Monophysite faith as the official faith of the Church. This meeting which was held with Howanus Ottsoon Catholicose as the president was attended by the Metropolitans from the Syrian Church also.

There were attempts many times to bring the Armenian Church under Constantinople and to make them accept the dual nature theory. In the 7th century, Emperor Hiraclis tried to do the same. In AD 870, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch called Fotias wrote a long letter to the then Armenian Patriarch Zaccharias asking him to accept the chalcedonic council decisions. The Catholicos wrote back that the chalcedonic decisions were not acceptable to him as they were against the true faith and against the decisions of the three Ecumenical councils.

Later during the 13th century when the Armenian Church established relationship with the Catholic Church it did not change the faith. It was the enmity towards the Arabs and the distrust in the Greeks that prompted the Armenians to have contact with the Catholics. Even under this situation, the Armenian Church did not accept the dual nature theory of the Roman Catholics. In 1248 when the representative of the pope asked 15 questions regarding faith, the Catholicos took quite a different stand from that of Rome. In 1268 the Armenian Church completely dejected the 'filioque clause' of the western Church

The three Ecumenical Councils have agreed upon the faith that the Holy Spirit comes from the father and is respected and praised along with the father and son. The same we say at the Nicene Creed. The Catholic Church later changed this. They brought the new theory that the Holy Spirit comes from the father and the son and they made the changes accordingly in the creed. The added portion in the creed is known as the 'filioque clause'. Since this new theory of the Roman Church was not Biblical and not agreeing with theology, all the other Churches existing that time rejected it including the Church in Constantinople which stood with the Roman Church till that time. Today the Churches known as the eastern Orthodox Churches broke away from the Catholic Church in 1054 on this issue.

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15 Churches are known as the Eastern Orthodox Churches or the Byzantine Churches. The four small Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople who accept the dual nature theory and the autocephalous Churches of Russia, Cyprus, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Poland and Sinai belong to this group.

In 18th century with the help of the French, the Catholic Church again tried to bring the Armenian Church under the control of Rome through negotiations and when that failed, using force they tried to bring the Armenians under their control. They abducted Patriarch Avedik and in 1711 tortured and killed him in France as he did not denounce the true faith. The Bishops of Mardin and Aleppo decided to join the Catholic Church for personal benefits. But the people continued in their ancient faith and rejected the Bishops. In 1742 Pope Benedict XIV ordained a Catholic Patriarch for the Armenian Church but only very few people accepted this Patriarch who was the representative of the Roman Catholic Church. Now also there is a small community which follows this Patriarch.

The Armenian Church suffered much due to the change of regimes. During the rule of Arabs and Ottoman Turks there was much persecution in the Church. The head of the Church, the Patriarch, did not even have a proper headquarters during this time. During attacks and persecutions the headquarters had to be shifted often.

There was mass murder of the Armenians during the rule of Sultan between 1894-95. It is written in history that blood of the murdered Armenians was flowing like river. On Christmas day in 1895, 1200 Armenians were burnt to death in the Church in Ulfa. More than 2500 villages were set on fire. About a lakh of Armenians fled the country and became refugees.

The Armenian Church developed its liturgy based on the liturgy of St. Basil the Great, Mar Evanos with the golden tongue and that of the Syrian Church. While all the other oriental orthodox Churches use sour bread for Qurbana, the Armenian Church uses bread which is not sour. They do not have the tradition of mixing water in wine. Priests wear black robes and caps. Dayara priests wear head dress also.

In one year 157 days are for fasting. Christmas is celebrated on January 6th. Like in our Church, there is Qurbana on Sundays and on all maranaya feast days. In big congregations there is Qurbana on Saturdays also.

#### Questions

1. Which was the first country that accepted Christianity as its official religion?
2. Describe the achievements of the Armenian Church under Catholicos Gregor.
3. Why was the rule of St. Isacc a period of spiritual reformation for the Armenian Church?
4. What were the various persecutions that the Armenian Church faced from time to time?

**Lesson 27**

**THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

The Ethiopian Church is one of the oldest in the world. It is the largest of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Opinions of historians differ as to when Christianity reached Ethiopia. It is believed that long before they became Christians, even during the time of King Solomon, the Ethiopians used to worship one God only. When queen Sheba married King Solomon, worshipping one God reached that country. Later Menelik I the son of queen Sheba reached Jerusalem and met his father. He was given the title 'Lion of Judea'. Legend is that through Queen Sheba and King Menelik, the Ethiopians started believing in one God.

The incident of Philip and Eunuch points to the fact that gospel reached Ethiopia in the 1st century itself (Acts 8:26-40). But till the 4th century not much gospel work was done in Ethiopia.

The Coptic missionaries Frumentius and Eddesius put the foundation for the Ethiopian Church. It was not their personal decision to go to Ethiopia for gospel work. It can be said that God led them there for it.

Merchants from Alexandria, Frumentius and Eddesius started on a journey to India in a merchant ship. While the ship was sailing through the red sea, there was shipwreck while near the Ethiopian coast. Frumentius and Eddesius were saved by the Ethiopian King Ella Amida's people. The King appointed Eddesius as his wine carrier and Frumentius as his secretary and teacher to the Prince. Frumentius taught Prince Esena Christian faith. When Esena became king, he and his people were baptized and Christianity was officially declared as the religion of the country.

After some time the king allowed Frumentius and Eddesius to go back to their own country. After reaching Alexandria, Frumentius met the Coptic Patriarch Athanasius and requested him to ordain a Metropolitan for Ethiopia. This Athanasius is the one we remember in the 5th Thubden. Athanasius anointed Frumentius as the first Metropolitan of Ethiopia. In 356, he reached Ethiopia along with some priests.

Frumentius was member of the Alexandrian Coptic Church. So Ethiopian Church existed as a diocese of the Coptic Church. The Metropolitan known as 'Aboona' and ordained by the Coptic Patriarch used to rule the Ethiopian Church. Though Ethiopia was geographically separate, faith and liturgy was the same as that of the Coptic Church. After the chalcedonic council when there was trouble in the Church, the arrival of Syrian fathers of the Monophysite faith in 480 helped the Ethiopian Church to have a steadfast faith. The Ethiopian Church had connections with the Syrian Orthodox Church also. In about AD 480, nine fathers reached Ethiopia from Syria. They are known as the nine saints. The leader of this group Amba Michael Arashavi started the first monastery in Debra Damo.

The Church achieved tremendous growth during this period. Many monasteries were established during this time. From Greek, Syrian and Coptic languages Christian books were translated into the local language Geez.

For centuries, Ethiopia was ruled by a Christian dynasty which traced their ancestry to King Solomon. The whole of Ethiopia was under this king. But the situation changed with the arrival of the Arabs in the 8th century. When their power increased the Christians migrated to the mountains and the Muslims occupied the plains.

Details about the history of Church from the 6th to the 13th century are not clear. The ancient dynasty lost power in between. In AD 920 a Jew came into power and persecuted the Christians. In 960 another Christian dynasty came into power. In 1268 the same dynasty which claimed their ancestry to King Solomon came into power again.

Though the Muslims established power in a major part of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Churches never faced persecution like the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Christians. There are two reasons for this. (1) Christians lived in the mountainous areas and the Muslims in the plains. (2) Most of the times Christian kings were ruling Ethiopia. During the reign of King Shara Jacob the Church achieved great success in its intellectual and missionary pursuits.

**Relationship with Catholic Church**

From the 13th century onwards there were attempts to bring the Ethiopian Church under the Roman Catholic Church. Many missionaries were sent to Ethiopia from Rome for this. In the 1441-42 Florence synod (The



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Catholic Church synod) Ethiopian Church representatives attended. They accepted the conditions to join the Catholic Church. But since Emperor Shara Jacob and other Church members did not agree, the decisions were never enforced.

In the 16th century, there were attempts by the catholic missionary Bermudez to make the Ethiopians join the Catholic Church. Bermudez asked King Claudius, the ruler that time to accept the supremacy of the Pope. But the king requested the Patriarch to send more Metropolitans so that faith is preserved (The headquarters of the Patriarch was at Alexandria in Egypt). Also Bermudez was imprisoned for several months and exiled to Goa.

In 1558 the Catholic Bishop called Ovido reached Ethiopia. He decided to use force to bring the Ethiopians under the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote to Europe to send Portuguese army for the same. But soon Ovido and the other missionaries with him died. So once again the Church was saved from the clutches of the Roman Catholic Church.

Later two missionaries called Padropaes and Antonio were sent to Ethiopia. They were involved in a shipwreck and the Arabs caught them and made them slaves for seven years. Another two missionaries who took up the mission were murdered.

The Arch bishop of Goa Menesis sent a converted Brahmin called D'silva to Ethiopia. Padropaes who escaped from the Arabs also joined him. Taking advantage of the political conflicts at that time in Ethiopia they tried to establish Roman Catholic authority there.

Ethiopia was passing through a political crisis then. From king Malak Sagad I, Prince Jacob forcibly took over the reign. With the belief that if agreed to Roman supremacy, Rome will help with army, Prince Jacob approached Padropaes. But the faithful refused to change. They stood firm behind Aboona. This conflict continued for about 20 years. When Malak Sagad III became king he declared that everybody should agree to Roman authority.

When the Pope ordained Alphonso Mendez as Patriarch and sent him to Ethiopia, the situation became worse. He excommunicated Aboona and his followers. Mendez visited each and every congregation to make them agree to the Roman supremacy. He baptized the Christians and consecrated the Churches again. The earthly remains of the buried holy fathers were taken out and made unholy. Latin Qurbana was made compulsory instead of the Ethiopian one.

Anyone who protested was persecuted severely. There were riots in the country. In the war at the place called Vayira Dega, 8000 faithful died. Later, even the King turned against Mendez. In 1632 till Basilidez became Emperor, this unpleasant situation continued. As soon as Basilidez became Emperor he exiled the Catholic missionaries. Mendez escaped to Goa. With this there was a temporary stop to the efforts to bring the Ethiopian Church under Rome.

Later also the Catholic Church sent missionaries to Ethiopia. Many were killed. Later there was a proclamation banning the entry of Catholics into Ethiopia. In 1936 when Italy conquered Ethiopia, Catholic missionary activities started again. Many gentiles joined the Catholic Church. There is a small congregation in Ethiopia today which is under the Roman Catholic Church.

#### Coptic Ethiopian Relationship

From the early days, with the name 'Aboona' the Coptic person ordained by the Coptic Patriarch ruled the Ethiopian Church. Such a system came into existence because the Ethiopian Church was the result of the missionary work of the Coptic Church. So faith, liturgy and administration were the same as that of the Coptic Church.

But Emperor Johannes IV who came into power in 1872 wanted to make the Ethiopian Church an independent one. With this aim the Armenian Patriarch at Constantinople was asked to send bishops. But people objected to this. So the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria was asked to send an Arch bishop and 3 bishops.

In 1926 when Aboona Mathews died request was put up to ordain an Ethiopian as the Aboona. After discussion, in 1929 a new administration came into existence. According to this, a Coptic was ordained as Aboona and 4 Ethiopians were ordained as bishops under him. In 1948, an Ethiopian was ordained as Aboona for the first time. On June 29 1959, Baselius became the first Patriarch of Ethiopia. Today the Ethiopian Church is an independent one.

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### Faith and Sacraments

Since it was established by the Coptic missionaries and nurtured under their care, in faith and liturgy their tradition is followed. They accept only the three Ecumenical councils that are agreed upon by the other three oriental Churches. There is unity with the Syrian Armenian and Coptic Churches regarding trinity and Monophysite theory.

But in worship practices, the Ethiopian Church has its own special features. It is believed that when Menelik I came to Ethiopia, some Jews also went along with him. Probably due to this connection with Solomon there are many Jewish rituals in the Ethiopian Church. Like the Jews Saturday is Sabbath day for the Ethiopians also. According to the Old Testament laws, circumcision, purification, avoiding forbidden food etc still exist. Like the Levi people who danced in front of the tabernacle, a group of people called Debterus dance during processions. They dance holding a T shaped stick in one hand and a musical instrument in the other hand.

Members of the Church are very punctual about sacraments and fasting. About 250 days in one year are fasting days for the Church. Only vegetarian food is consumed during fasting. During fasting days, except on Saturdays and Sundays, till 3pm no food will be eaten.

Primary education is given related to Church and liturgy. Along with the most important subject which is mathematics, Psalms, songs of praise of Jesus and St. Mary and prayer in geez language are taught. Geez is the ancient language of Ethiopia. It is important only as the language of liturgy. People talk in Amaric language. About three million people are members of this Church. Addis Ababa is the headquarters of the Church. 53 ascetic groups are in the Church. Christmas is celebrated on 7th January.

### Questions

1. Who all put the foundation for the Ethiopian Church?
2. Describe the efforts to bring the Ethiopian Church under Roman Church.
3. Describe briefly the faith and rituals of the Ethiopian Church.

## Lesson 28

### THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

**Aim:** To understand that everyone should be one in Jesus Christ.

John 17:21 says, "That all of them may be one, Father just as you are in me and I am in you". Theologians describe this as the prayer of the big priest for the universal church.

This verse touched the hearts of many faithful, and as a result the ecumenical movement started. The English word 'ecumenical' originated from the Greek word 'oikoumenikos'. It means, 'the whole inhabited world'. The Christian ecumenical movement as a result of different Christian Churches joining together is different from the associations which different political parties or different countries make. As centuries passed by, different regions accepted different rituals and ways of administration in the Church. Then each church looked and focused on the differences between them and the other churches. But the belief and hope that while individual differences in faith and liturgy and rituals are respected, different churches can work together in other aspects, led to the emergence of the ecumenical movement. It is not clear who started it or when it was started. There are various fields where different churches can cooperate and work together.

Translation of the bible into various languages helped this movement. When the British and foreign Bible society was established in 1840, the ecumenical movement got a lot of encouragement. Though the Bible society was started by the Anglican Church, from the beginning they allowed half of the members of the director board to be from other churches. In 1816 when the American Bible society was started, members from different churches forgot individual differences and co-operated.

The Y.M.C.A which is spread all over the world started in 1844 in England and later spread to America and other countries. Y.W.C.A which started in 1872 in America also has branches worldwide. In 1895 S.C.A (Student Christian Association) started. All these associations did not consider the individual differences between the different churches. So all these associations got international recognition.

In 1910 there was an international missionary meeting in Edinburgh. In 1921 the international missionary council was established. Under the guidance of the council, missionary meetings were held in Tambaram in 1928. These meetings urged the members to work together for various projects.

In 1937, representatives from 122 protestant churches took part in the meeting held at Edinburgh to discuss the matters of unification in faith and rituals. The meeting held at Utrecht in Netherlands in 1938 decided to form the world council of churches. William Temple who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury was the president of this meeting. Since world war II started, there was a ten years wait before the idea became practical.

In 1948 the first world council of churches meeting was held at Amsterdam. Representatives of 147 churches belonging to protestant and eastern churches took part in this. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, all the other major churches sent their representatives. The following is part of the prayer of the council, "We humbly accept that the factions in the church are against the wishes of Jesus Christ. We pray to the abundant grace of God that the number of divided days is reduced and that we are united and led into completeness in the Holy Spirit.

So, for the first time in history an official independent association of churches came into existence. The fact that a meeting of the council was held in New Delhi in 1961 is a matter of pride for us.

#### Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word ecumenism?
2. What is the biblical verse which gave encouragement for the ecumenical movement?
3. It was the success of some associations that gave the idea of ecumenical movement. Name those associations.
4. What is the biggest achievement of the ecumenical movement so far?

## THE TRUE FAITH (ORTHODOXY)

### LESSON 29

#### INNER SPIRITUALITY

The word 'spirituality' has meanings like related to spirit, regarding spirit and holiness. Adding words inner and spirituality, we get the word inner spirituality. It means giving importance to the spirit.

Inner spirituality is the total sum of one's beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and religious life. Different religions and different denominations of the same religion have different viewpoints regarding this. To become participants in the mystery of incarnation of God is Christian inner spirituality.

#### BIBLICAL BASIS OF INNER SPIRITUALITY

The biblical basis of inner spirituality is best understood by closely examining the Old and New Testaments.

##### 1. INNER SPIRITUALITY IN OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH

Old Testament inner spirituality is experiencing God and the total metamorphosis of man. Throughout the Old Testament, there are incidents where God takes the upper hand to communicate with man, gives them missions to be fulfilled and to be united with man. Moses is the father of the Old Testament spirituality. God calls Moses (Exodus 3:1-10). Moses' rebellion to god's call (Exodus 3:11) God's promise that he is powerful. Moses' submission (Exodus 3:12) When Moses was in god's presence, he was transformed and that reflected on his face. The same happened to Israelites and prophet Elijah on mount Sinai. (1 king 19:1-21) The fear of god is the central point of Old Testament spirituality. This fear doesn't keep man away from God, but the fear that leads to complete submission and trust in God.

##### 2. NEW TESTAMENT INNER SPIRITUALITY

The New Testament inner spirituality is related to experiencing god and participating in the mystery of incarnation of God. This fact we can understand from the life of apostle Paul. The incident in the life of Apostle Paul at the gates of Damascus is the turning point in his conversion. (Act 9:3-9, 22:6-10, 26:12-16)

Apostle Paul rightly knew the importance of incarnation of Jesus Christ. By experiencing God he could rightly understand the depths of that mystery. This is reflected in many of his epistles. Romans 8:26-30 is a proof of that. St. Mary is also a good example of New Testament spirituality. She was able to participate in the incarnation of God due to her purity of life and total submission to God from her childhood. In accordance to her spirituality she absorbed the messages of the angel and the privilege to bear Jesus Christ.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of Christian spirituality?
2. What is special about Old Testament spirituality?
3. How is spirituality experienced in Apostle Paul's life?
4. Why is St. Mary called example of New Testament spirituality?

**LESSON – 30**

**HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN INNER SPIRITUALITY**

The spirituality of the early Christian church is similar to the spirituality of Jesus Christ. To understand this it is just not enough to know few incidents in the life of Jesus Christ but the way that God showed by offering Jesus to the world i.e. To understand the methods of salvation from the creation of first man till the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Though the ancient church lacked an accepted form of theology it had its own spirituality with special characteristics. Spirituality of ancient church had 3 special features.

1. Because of the faith that Jesus Christ's second coming will occur quickly, one should be ready always to receive Him was one of the basic faiths of the ancient church. Therefore we can say that the spirituality of ancient church was eschatological.
2. Through breaking of the bread, sharing God's message and prayer the spirituality in those days was centered on Jesus Christ who was born, died and rose again. Therefore the spirituality of ancient church was 'CHRISTO CENTRIC'.
3. Early Christian churches considered martyrdom as a hopeful sacrifice. So they saw s martyrdom as a practical method of spirituality. So we can say that early Christian church was based on martyrdom.

Gradually changes happened to this faith. During the period between 3rd and 8th centuries the occasion to be a martyr were rather rare. Therefore some people centered spirituality on asceticism and celibacy, living solitary lives in forests and deserts, creating another form of spirituality. For the sake of spirituality, leading a separated life led to the formation of monasteries (Dayaras). Later rules and regulations were chartered and monasteries started flourishing in large numbers. In eastern regions several Dayaras were established and they were excellent centers of practical Christian spirituality. The ascetics and monks who lived in Dayaras were learned and respected people. Some of them had a deep knowledge not only of the Bible and theology but also medicine, history, philosophy and biology.

From 9th century onwards spirituality started to be based mainly on religion. These movements grew steadily. From 16th century onwards nation based spirituality came into existence. So there came into existence spirituality of India, Spirituality of England, Spirituality of Italy etc which were all nation-based.

Questions:

- 1) What are the special features of ancient church spirituality?
- 2) Describe the origin and growth of Dayaras in the ancient churches.

## LESSON 31

### EASTERN SPIRITUALITY

Eastern spirituality means the spirituality that generally exists in the eastern churches and eastern countries. Eastern spirituality is based on the Holy Bible and is a continuation of the spirituality of the 1st century early Christian church. Compared to western spirituality, eastern spirituality has its own special characteristics. Eastern churches give importance to the spirituality which each believer feels through the holy sacraments and which he experiences in his life in this world itself. Since the presence of God and divine actions through the Holy Spirit are realities of the present day, working of the Holy Spirit is given great importance in eastern spirituality.

While westerners consider spirituality and understanding God as two different subjects, knowing God based on spirituality is the eastern way of thinking. While westerners separate divine things and worldly things, easterners like to merge divinity into worldliness. Westerners give importance to intellectual thinking and written codes of practice while easterners give importance to the divine intervention that is beyond human intelligence. That's the reason why easterners see and feel divine presence during the holy sacraments. Westerners consider spirituality as something special to each individual while easterners give a social outlook to spirituality. In short, eastern spirituality is based on eastern theological understanding of God and is different from western spirituality, because eastern and western spirituality give importance to different facts and aspects.

Important facts about eastern spirituality

#### 1- Centered on the TRINITY

The spirituality, which exists in eastern churches, is centered on the Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The spirituality of western churches is based mainly on Jesus Christ. We can see God's boundless love in the creation of earth and man. Total submission in front of this love, and to sing and praise him, is the real spirituality. Man receives God's protection and blessings through Christ. Every baptized believer is considered to have received the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ.

#### 2- Giving importance to the working of the Holy Spirit

Stressing the importance of the working of the Holy Spirit in individuals and in the church is characteristic of the spirituality in eastern churches. Holy Trinity works today among the believers and fulfills the holy sacraments, which are the mediums of salvation, through the Holy Spirit. Eastern churches believe that the holy sacraments reach their climax when the Holy Spirit dwells on them. Apostle Paul has defined Christian life as a life in the Holy Spirit. What he meant is that God's Holy Spirit lives in each faithful person and leads him.

#### 3- Eastern spirituality is based on sacraments

Eastern churches have stressed the great importance of the holy sacraments. Eastern churches see the sacraments as the medium towards salvation. By receiving the holy sacraments, each person becomes a part of the spirituality of Jesus Christ. By participating in the Holy Sacraments, each person is transformed into an inseparable part of the salvation that Jesus Christ defined. A person who receives the sacraments grows in spirit and is led by spirit to the completeness of Jesus Christ. This growth starts from the holy baptism, which is the sacrament of being 'born again'.

A person who receives the holy baptism is released from the clan of old Adam, who was deep in sins, and joins the tribe of Jesus Christ who is the second Adam, and his new generation of humans. At the time of baptism, as a symbol of receiving the Holy Spirit, anointment is done with the 'Holy Mooron'. The meaning is that a person who is baptized gets rid of his old sinful self, joins the church that is the body of Jesus Christ, and becomes the son or daughter of God the Father. A baptized person, being a child of God, is transformed and is obliged to walk in the way of the Holy Spirit.

Eastern churches stress that a believers' spirituality must absorb the inner meaning of holy baptism. For a believer who is born again through holy baptism and anointment of Holy Mooron, Holy Qurbana is the sacrament of participating in the mystery of Jesus Christ. In the Qurbana of eastern churches, importance is given to coming of John the Baptist who was predecessor to Jesus, birth of Jesus, His public ministry,

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crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension to heaven and His second coming. By participating in the Qurbana, a believer becomes a part of all the above events. The sacrament of the Holy Qurbana is above the limitations of place and time. The curtain between earth and heaven during the holy sacrament of Qurbana is open. Here, through forgetting oneself, the opportunity to enjoy heavenly bliss and eternity is achieved. At that moment, a believer feels the presence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and sings praises of the Holy Trinity along with the angels in heaven. It happens on earth but it is a heavenly feast. Since it is beyond human comprehension, our fathers defined it as a mystery. In the Holy Qurbana, the body of Christ which is the church, and the spiritual body of Christ which is his flesh and blood, become one. Since the church is the worldly body of Christ, it tries to grow spiritually towards Christ by partaking of His spiritual body. This is the special feature of eastern spirituality.

4- Eastern spirituality is based on worship.

Worship brings man closer to God. Even if a person is in service of man, if his relationship with God is not getting stronger, his spirituality is incomplete. Worship-based service to humanity is special to eastern spirituality. Society can exist only if the worldly and godly part of spirituality complement each other.

5- Eastern spirituality stresses the importance of learning theology

Eastern spirituality was not confined to rituals and traditions alone. It gave equal importance to learning theology. Regarding Syrian churches, the theological universities of Edessa and Nisibis bear good evidence to this fact. Eastern spirituality has a clear-cut theological base.

\* Conclusion

In Christian thoughts, the basis of spirituality is visualizing God. To achieve spirituality, participation in the incarnation of God is necessary. Experience of complete transformation of man is the basis of Old Testament spirituality, but in New Testament it has to be understood based on the relationship of God and Jesus, and above all in the participation of the mystery of incarnation. In the visions of church fathers, spirituality was the participation in this mystery of incarnation.

Concerning eastern churches, there existed a spirituality based on eastern understanding of theology. The essence of this is the sacramental spirituality. One must strive to see God through the holy sacraments. It is our responsibility to create a working style suitable to the present day situation based on God's love and giving equal importance to both worship and human service. Let us pray to God to modernize the world with our life in Jesus Christ strengthened through Qurbana and other sacraments.

Questions:

1. What are the main differences between eastern and western spirituality?
2. The central point of eastern spirituality is the Holy Trinity – Explain.
3. How does eastern spirituality stress the working of the Holy Spirit?
4. Explain how eastern spirituality is based on sacraments?.
5. How do the eastern churches establish the relationship between the Holy Qurbana and spirituality?
6. Give a short account of the main attributes of eastern spirituality.

