



HOLY
BIBLE

N R S V

NEW REVISED
STANDARD VERSION

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit, one true God.**

**Glory to Him, and may His grace and mercy
be upon us for ever. Amen.**



MJSSA UK

JUNIORS

Years 7 and 8

Textbook

Name:

Sunday School:

To the JSOC UK Teachers

Dear Teachers,

This Juniors textbook has been written for UK students attending Year 7 or 8 in UK Schools. You are requested to ensure that the objective and message of each chapter is taught through the lesson and its activities. The message can be taught only by prayer and preparation. May each child realise and experience Jesus through you and the lessons. Many children in UK are not able to read or write Malayalam. For the benefit of these children, this book includes English Translation of all Prayers and Holy Qurbana Songs.

I would like to express my earnest gratitude to His Grace Issac Mor Osthathos, Patriarchal Vicar of UK for inspiring and guiding the preparation of the adapted text books for MJSSA UK. I would also like to thank His Grace Dr. Matthews Mor Anthimos, President of MJSSA for the guidance provided.

I am obliged to the MJSSA UK Curriculum Committee for producing these wonderful textbooks for the Junior students. The dedication of the Curriculum Committee is gratefully remembered here. I would like to thank all members for their valuable time and support.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Mr. George John | St. Mary's JSO Church, Manchester |
| • Mrs. Deena Saji Chacko | St. Thomas JSO Church, London |
| • Mr. Vigy Kuriakose | St. George JSO Church, Leeds |
| • Mrs. Babitha Joseph | St. Gregorios JSO Church, Watford, North London |
| • Mrs. Rinda Paulose | Mar Baselious JSO Church, Derby |
| • Mrs. Myna Eldhose | St. Mary's Congregation, Edinburgh |
| • Mrs. Nimisha Basil | St. Thomas JSO Church, London |
| • Mrs. Swapna Jittu | St. Peter and St. Paul's JSO Church, Oxford |

Sunday Schools in UK vary in the number of teachers and students, and may be divided into:

- **Small Sunday Schools:** The number of teachers is less than 10, or have only very few children in the year, making it difficult to hold separate classes for each year.
- **Large Sunday Schools:** The number of teachers is 10 or more, and there are sufficient students in each year, allowing for separate classes to be held for each year.

The Parish Vicar and Sunday School Teachers should jointly decide size and teaching pattern to be followed in their Sunday Schools, as these textbooks are designed to suit the needs of both the Small and Large Sunday Schools.

- Small Sunday Schools should have combined classes for Years 7 and 8 students. They would teach Year 7 syllabus in one year and Year 8 syllabus in the next year. The Annual Exams would be held for the syllabus taught. Students would move from the Juniors Group to the Seniors Group after completing the syllabus for Years 7 and 8, over a two year period.
- Large Sunday Schools should have separate classes for Years 7 and 8. Year 7 students would have Annual Exams on Year 7 syllabus. Year 8 students would have Annual Exams on Year 8 syllabus. The students would move to the next Year after the Annual Exams.

Yours in Christ

Fr. Philip Thomas

Director, MJSSA UK

To the Parents

Dear Parents,

“Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs” (St. Matthew 19:14).

The Sunday School textbooks aim to teach the message of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Prophets and Holy Bible. These textbooks also aim to teach the students about our faith, history of our Church, prayers and liturgy. These textbooks intend to provide a structured learning in the Sunday School classes.

The Curriculum Committee accepted the request from students, teachers, and parents, to revise the textbooks to suit the needs of students in UK. We understood the challenges faced by our Sunday School children in UK, some of whom are not highly conversant in Malayalam and need additional help and guidance to understand our liturgy.

We have provided the English translations of all Prayers and Holy Qurbana Songs to help the children in UK. We have added the Christological significance to the Old Testament chapters to help children understand their relevance. These textbooks aim to make the learning of the Holy Bible interesting to UK students by introducing research projects, classroom discussions topics, and other student centric activities, which are more prevalent in UK schools.

Children might need the help from their parents for some of the activities (project work) that are given in this book. Your time and dedication are necessary to help the children learn the lessons which are taught by Sunday School teachers. This would allow us to pass on the knowledge about our faith and liturgy to the next generation in our churches.

We would like to thank His Grace Issac Mor Osthathos, Patriarchal Vicar of UK and Rev. Fr. Philip Thomas, Director MJSSA UK for the support and spiritual guidance provided during the process of revising the Juniors textbooks. We would also like to thank His Grace Dr. Matthews Mor Anthimos, President of MJSSA and our former Patriarchal Vicar for the support and guidance provided to the Curriculum Committee.

We hope that these textbooks would help each student to realise and experience Christ, so that they would become the light of Christ and enlighten the society around them, and people may look at them and praise Our Father in Heaven.

Yours in Christ

MJSSA UK Curriculum Committee

Contents

Contents.....	7
Year 7	9
Chapter 1. Prayer	10
Psalm 91	10
Psalm 121	11
Chapter 2. Moses – Man of Prayer	12
Chapter 3. Ruth – Model of Submission.....	15
Chapter 4. Esther – Strength of Fasting.....	18
Chapter 5. Job – The Tested Faith.....	22
Chapter 6. Repenting Sinner	26
Chapter 7. Rich Youth and Everlasting Life.....	29
Chapter 8. The Apostles	31
Selection and Appointment of the Apostles.....	31
St. Peter – The Head of the Apostles.....	32
The importance of St. Peter.....	33
The Vision to St. Peter	34
Chapter 9. Maranaya Feast	38
Chapter 10. Mor Aprem	44
Chapter 11. Mor Simeon Stylites (Desthuno).....	46
Chapter 12. Holy Qurbana Song	48
Innal Nin Kabringal Doodanmar	48
Than mrithiyal azhakake nasi.	49
Responsory (Enyono) - Manavar Vanor Mun Mun Nin	49
Responsory (Enyono) - Yoodanmar Kurishil Thuukki.....	50
Year 8	51
Chapter 13. Prayer.....	52
Psalm 63.....	52
Enyono.....	53
Psalm 113	53
Eqbo.....	54
Qolo	54
For the Intercession of Mother of God.....	55
For the Intercession of Saints	55
For the Intercession of the Patron Saint	55

For Repentance	55
For the Departed	56
Bo'ootho of Mor Ya'qub	56
Chapter 14. Prophets	58
Chapter 15. Isaiah.....	61
Chapter 16. Jeremiah.....	65
Chapter 17. Ezekiel.....	67
Chapter 18. Daniel	68
Chapter 19. Minor Prophets	70
Amos.....	70
Jonah	71
Hosea.....	72
Micah.....	72
Nahum.....	73
Habakkuk.....	74
Zephaniah.....	74
Conclusion	75
Chapter 20. Gospels	76
The Gospel according to St. Matthew	77
The Gospel according to St. Mark.....	78
The Gospel according to St. Luke.....	79
The Gospel according to St. John.....	80
Chapter 21. Sermon on the Mount	83
Chapter 22. Passion of the Lord.....	86
Chapter 23. Trial of Jesus	89
Chapter 24. Crucifixion, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus	94
Chapter 25. Worship – A Study	101
Chapter 26. Mulanthuruthy Synod.....	102
Chapter 27. Mor Dionysius V	105
Chapter 28. Holy Qurbana Songs	106
Agyathmeryamareererum Dhoothanmarum	106
QULO (LOK MORIYO).....	107
MOR YAKOBINTE BHOVOOSO	108
Chapter 29. Reference.....	109

Year 7

Chapter 1. Prayer

Psalm 91

Manglish	English
¹ Barekmor, Athynnathante maravil irikkunnavanum daivathinte nizhalil mahathvappedunnavanumaya manushya!	¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
² Barekmore, Nee karthavinodu ente sharanavum ente sanketha sthalavum njan ashrayichirikkunna daivavum neeyakunnu enuu paraka.	² I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
³ Enthennal avan virudhathinte keniyil ninnum vyardha samsarathil ninnum ninne Rekshikkum.	³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;
⁴ Avan thante thoovalukal kondu ninne rakshikkum. Avante chirakukalude keezhil nee marackappedum. Avante sathyam ninte chutilum ayudhamayirikkum.	⁴ He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
⁵ Nee rathriyile bhayathil, ninnum pakal parackunna asthrathil	⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ ninnum iruttil sancharikkunna vachnathil, ninnum uchayil oothunna kattil ninnum bhayappedukayilla	⁶ Nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
⁷ Ninte oru bhgathu ninnum ayirangalum, ninte valathubhagathu ninnu pathinayirangalum veezhum, Avar ninkalekku adukkukayilla.	⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
⁸ Ennalo nee ninte kannukal kondu thane kanum. Dhushttanmarkkulla prathipakarathe nee kanum.	⁸ You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.
⁹ Enthennal uyarangalilvasasthalamayirikku ente sharanamaya karthavu neeyakunnu.	⁹ Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place, the Most High, who is my refuge
¹⁰ Dosham ninnedadukkukayilla. Shiksha ninte koodarathinu sameepikkukayilla.	¹⁰ no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.
¹¹ Enthennal ninte sakala vazhikalilum ninne kakkendunnathinayittu avan thante malaghamarodu ninnekkurichu kalpikkum.	¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

- ¹² Ninte kalil ninakku
idarchayundakathirippanayittu avar
thangalude bhujathil ninne vahikkum.
- ¹³ Gorso sarpatheyum hermono sarpatheyum
nee chavittum.
Simhatheyum perumbambineyum nee met
hikkum.
- ¹⁴ Avar enne anveshichathukondu njan avane
reskshichu balappeduthum.Avar ente
namam arinjathukondu enne vilikkum.
- ¹⁵ Njan avanodu utharam parayum.Njerukkathil
njan avanodu koodeyirikkum.Avane njan
balappeduthkayum bahumaikkukayum
cheyyum.
- ¹⁶ Deerghayussukondu njan avane
thrippeduthum. Ente raksha avane njan
kanikkukayum cheyyum.
- ¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot
against a stone.
- ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will
trample underfoot.
- ¹⁴ Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
- ¹⁵ When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
- ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Psalm 121

Manglish	English
¹ Njan parvathangalilekku ente kannukale uyarthum. Ente sahayakkaran evide ninnu varum.	¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from?
² Ente sahayam akashatheyum bhumiyeeyum srishtticha karthavinte sannidhiyil ninnakunnu.	² My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.
³ Avan ninte kal ilakuvan sammathikkukayilla. Ninte kavalkkaran urakkam Thoongunnukayummilla	³ He will not let your foot slip he who watches over you will not slumber;
⁴ Enthannal Israyelinte kavalkkaran urakkam Thoongunnumilla urangunnumilla.	⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ Ninte kavalkkaran karthavakunnu.Karthavu thante valathukaikondu ninakku nizhalidum.	⁵ The Lord watches over you the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
⁶ Pakal sooryanenkilum rathri chandranenkilum ninne upavandrikkukayilla.	⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.
⁷ Karthavu sakala doshangalil ninnum ninne kathukollum. Karthavu ninte Athmavine kethukollum.	⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm he will watch over your life;
⁸ Avan ninte gamanatheyum ninte agamanatheyum ithu muthal ennekkum kathukollum. Daivame sthuthi ninakku yogyamakunnu. Barekmore.	⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Chapter 2. Moses – Man of Prayer

Objective: To learn that everything is possible for those who depend fully on God.

Bible References: Exodus chapters 4 - 12

You have learnt about –

- The birth of Moses.
- His growth in Pharaoh's palace.
- God calling Moses to Mount Sinai and setting him apart.

In this lesson, you will learn how Moses liberated the Israelites, after receiving directions from God.

Moses is made Courageous

When Moses was called by God to Mount Sinai for getting the Israelites released, he tried to excuse himself from this task by voicing many pretexts. However, God dismissed all the objections raised by Moses. Since Moses was not an eloquent speaker, God gave him, Aaron his brother as a helper, since Aaron was an eloquent speaker.

God's command was *"You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him."* (Exodus 4:15,16)

God assured Moses that his word would be acceptable to Aaron and Israelites, as the words of God. God commanded *"When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power."* (Exodus 4:21)

Moses in the Palace

After getting directions from God, Moses and Aaron went to the palace, with firmness and courage, and informed the Pharaoh of God's command. God's command was *"Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, 'Let my son go that he may worship me.' But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son."* (Exodus 4:22,23)



Arrogance of the Pharaoh

However, the Pharaoh was arrogant and refused to obey the command of God. He spoke with ridicule and said, *“Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go.”* (Exodus 5:2)

Not only did the Pharaoh refuse to obey God’s command, he also started persecuting the people of God more rigorously. He increased the rigour of their labour. The taskmasters who used to supervise the Israelites started troubling them severely. The Israelites were alarmed by the increased hardness of their labour. They assembled against Moses and Aaron. They said to Moses, *“The Lord look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odour with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us”* (Exodus 5:21)

Moses in the presence of God

When Moses saw that the hardships of the children of Israel had increased because of their word, he in the company of Aaron went to pray in the presence of God. They prayed *“O Lord, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people.”* (Exodus 5:22,23)

To this God told Moses “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.” (Exodus 6:1)

God cautioned Moses to wait patiently, until the deliverance of the people, since Pharaoh will not let free the Israelites then and there when asked. He sent them only after experiencing severe punishment from God.

The Ten Disasters (Plagues)

The Lord was aware that Pharaoh would release the Israelites only after seeing the powerful hand of God. Therefore, he persecuted the Egyptians with ten disasters (plagues). The disasters are given below –

1. Water turned into blood
2. Coming up of frogs
3. Increase of lice
4. Swarms of flies
5. Severe murrain (Animal disease)
6. Sores to men and animals
7. Shower of hail stone
8. Increase of locust
9. Pitch darkness for three days
10. Death of the firstborns

Read Exodus Chapters 7-13 and learn more about the ten disasters (plagues).

Israelites released

After the ninth plague, *The Lord said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterwards, he will let you go free. When he lets you free, he will drive you away completely.”* (Exodus 11:1)

The Lord gave instructions to Moses for preparing for the Passover. The Israelites followed these instructions and put the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts and the lintel of their houses, because God had told Moses that, *“The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses*

where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:13)

After the tenth disaster, the death of the first born in every house, the Pharaoh released the children of Israel. The observance of Passover became a practice for the Israelites in memory of their release from slavery.

Read Exodus 12:1-28 and understand how Passover is observed.

Prayerful life of Moses

We have seen that Moses had gone to the Pharaoh requesting for the release of the Israelites. However, the Pharaoh continued to persecute the Israelites. Even though, Moses and Aaron had approached the Pharaoh in obedience to God’s command, they were ridiculed. As the hardships for the people were increased, the anger of the people towards Moses and Aaron also increased. Moses did not lose hope nor doubt the promise of God even though he was ridiculed in the presence of Pharaoh. In fact, we can see that he was coming closer and closer to God. Moses went to the presence of God, wept and submitted his grievance, and prayed for the quick release of the people.

Moses had to face resistance not only from the enemies, but also from own people while leading them out of Egypt. On all such occasions, Moses prayed, kneeling before God for the solution to the problems. When resistance from people became very strong, Moses cried before God, without saying anything against the people. Let us look at one such instance. The Israelites, who set out from the wilderness of Sin pitched tent in Rephidim. As there was no water for them to drink, they complained Moses and said, *“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”* So, *Moses cried to the Lord saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”* (Exodus 17: 3-5) God answered to the cry of Moses, by giving them water. On many similar occasions, Moses had cried and interceded before God on behalf of the people.

The prayerful life of Moses and the sense of complete dependence on God during periods of sufferings is always a role model for us. *Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.* (Deuteronomy 34:10)

PROJECT WORK:

1. Research the ten plagues (disasters) mentioned in Exodus Chapters 7-13. Each student to create a PowerPoint presentation about one of the disasters and present it to the rest of the class.
 - a. Describe each plague and make your presentation interesting by adding pictures of the plague.
 - b. Find out if the Pharaoh was warned about the oncoming plague, and how it was communicated to the Pharaoh.
 - c. What was the Pharaoh’s reaction?
 - d. What was the impact of the plague on the people of Egypt?

EXERCISE

1. Whom did God appoint as the liberator of Israel?
2. How did God describe the people of Israel?
3. What did the Pharaoh say when Moses informed him of the Lord’s command?
4. Name the ten plagues?
5. Give an example for the prayerful life of Moses?

Chapter 3. Ruth – Model of Submission

Objective:	To understand the need for a Redeemer in our lives. To understand that God’s plan of redemption is universal. To understand God's providence and how He orchestrates events to bring redemption.
Bible References:	Ruth 1:1-18, Ruth 2:1-12, Ruth 4:13-22

Introduction

Ruth was a non-Jewish Moabite woman. The Lord God of Israel abundantly blessed Ruth, who was God fearing, good natured and faithful. She became the wife of Boas, the relative of her late husband and a rich man, because of her ardent faith and submission. Her faith led to her name being included in the list of ancestors of David and in the genealogy of Jesus. Ruth has taught us that God’s love could be gained by faith and honesty.

Naomi and family

Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion lived during the period when the judges were the rulers. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.

Naomi and family in the land of Moab

When there was a famine in Bethlehem, Elimelech and his family migrated to the neighbouring Moab and lived there. Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the son of Lot. After Elimelech died, Mahlon and Chilion married two Moabite women. The name of Mahlon’s wife was Ruth and that of Chilion’s Orpah.

Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem

After about ten years of their marriage both Mahlon and Chilion died. Naomi who had lost her husband and her children was depressed. When Naomi heard that Judah was free from famine and she decided to go back to her own people.

Ruth accepts the true God

After deciding to return to Bethlehem, Naomi called Orpah and Ruth and told them to return to their mother’s homes. Orpah went back to her home, but Ruth decided to be with Naomi. When Naomi insisted, Ruth said, *“Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you. Where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!”* (Ruth 1:16-17). Pleased with the firm decision of Ruth and her faith in God, Naomi allowed Ruth to go with her to Bethlehem and live with her.

The greatness of Ruth

Ruth came to Bethlehem and lived with Naomi. When they reached Bethlehem, it was the harvest time of barley and in continuation came the harvest season of wheat. She started to go for work, with the permission of her mother-in-law.



At the time of barley harvest she went out for gathering the corns that the workers had left behind in the field. The field she reached was owned by Boas, a kinsman of Elimelech and a rich man. Boas felt sympathy for her. Ruth enquired to Boas, the reason for showing so much sympathy to a foreigner like her. Boas replied, *“All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord”* (Ruth 2:11-12). Boas’ reply helps us understand the greatness of Ruth, for she had come closer to God after leaving her people.

God’s grace to Ruth

Boas was pleased with the good nature and firm faith of Ruth. He became her redeemer legally and married her. God blessed Ruth and she gave birth to a son. He was named Obed. Obed was the father of Issai, who was the father of David. Thus, Ruth holds a place in the genealogy of David.

Ruth, the worthy daughter-in-law

All those who had interacted with Ruth, hailed her faith and good nature. Boas, her husband was pleased with her. Naomi, her mother-in-law had deep affection and consideration for her. Ruth followed the words of her mother-in-law and served her. Naomi brought up Ruth’s son as her own son. Noting the care, affection, respect and love between Naomi and Ruth, the women in the neighbourhood said, *“He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him”* (Ruth 4:15). The neighbours testified that Ruth, the daughter-in-law, was worthier than seven sons. Ruth will always be a worthy role model for excellent relations between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law.

Christological significance of the Book of Ruth

What does this book have to do with us? While the Book of Ruth narrates the story of Ruth, and her journey of faith and loyalty, it also contains elements that Christian theologians have found to have Christological significance. Here are a few –

1. **Redeemer:** Boaz fulfils the role of a kinsman-redeemer by marrying Ruth and redeeming the family's land and inheritance. Boaz's role as a redeemer is a foreshadow of Christ, who is the ultimate Redeemer. Jesus redeems humanity through His sacrifice on the cross, providing spiritual salvation. We need a redeemer who does whatever it takes to help us and save us. God redeemed and saved Ruth through Boas the redeemer as she believed in God. Similarly, God will redeem and save those who believe in Him, through Christ.
2. **Inclusiveness of Gentiles:** Ruth is a non-Jewish, Moabite woman. She is included in the genealogy of King David and in the genealogy of Jesus. This shows God's inclusiveness and His plan to bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. This inclusiveness of non-Israelites in God's redemptive plan highlights that Jesus' mission extends to all people.
3. **Providence and Redemption:** The Book of Ruth emphasizes God's providence in the lives of people, and how He orchestrates events to bring redemption. This providential aspect is a reflection of God's overarching plan of redemption through Jesus Christ, where God's guidance and providence play a crucial role.
4. **Bethlehem Connection:** The book concludes with Ruth and Boaz becoming ancestors of King David. Bethlehem is a significant location in the book, as it is where Ruth and Boaz meet and marry. King David's birth in Bethlehem is also significant because it is from the line of David that Jesus is born, and Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus, the Messiah.

EXERCISE:

1. Who was Elimelech?
2. What are the names of Naomi's sons?
3. Whose wife was Ruth?
4. To which land did Ruth belong?
5. What was the reply of Ruth when she was asked to go back to her own home?
6. What was the reason for the greatness of Ruth?
7. Who was the redeemer of Ruth?
8. What was the name of Ruth's son?
9. What is the relation between Ruth's son and David?
10. Write a paragraph about Ruth, a worthy daughter-in-law?
11. What is the Christological significance of the Book of Ruth?

Chapter 4. Esther – Strength of Fasting

Objective: To learn that God will remove any adversity by prayer and fasting.

Bible References: Esther 2:21-23, Esther 3, Esther 4, Esther 5:1-8, Esther 6:6-11, Esther 7:3-10, Esther 9:20-22

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon captured the city of Jerusalem in 606 BC. He plundered the city and destroyed God's temple. He killed many Jewish people and took the remaining people to Babylon as slaves. (2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36)

The Israelites lived as captives in Babylon for about 70 years. Subsequently the Persian reign was established and Cyrus the Persian king proclaimed freedom for the Jews. Most of the Jews returned to Jerusalem when they got freedom; barring a few who stayed back in Babylon itself. (2 Chronicles 36, Ezra 1)

Esther becomes Queen

Esther was amongst the Jews who remained in Babylon. Her parents died in her childhood, and she was brought up by Mordecai, the son of her father's brother. (Esther 2:5-8) The Persian king Ahasuerus got infuriated with Queen Vashti and removed her from the position of Queen as a punishment. After removing Queen Vashti, the King liked Esther and she was made Queen in the place of Vashti. Mordecai was pleased that his foster daughter Esther had become the Queen. He directed her not to disclose her race.

Mordecai discovers a plot, and saves the life of the King

Mordecai accepted the duty of steward of the King's inner house. During this time Mordecai learned that the eunuchs, who were the door keepers of the King, had secretly planned to assassinate him. He told this to Queen Esther. This plot was investigated and found to be true and the eunuchs were executed. This was recorded in the book of the Chronicles in the presence of the King. Thus, Mordecai saved the King from assassination. (Esther 2:21-23)

Hostility of Haman

Haman, the son of Hammedatha of Agagya, was very clever. The King was impressed by his ability and appointed him as the Prime Minister. The King commanded that all his servants should bow and pay homage to Haman. The people were afraid of Haman and knelt before him. He became very proud. However, Mordecai did not kneel before Haman like the other people. Mordecai said that he would kneel down and worship only God. This angered Haman and he developed a hostility towards Mordecai. He prepared gallows for hanging him. (Esther 3:1-7)

Haman's hatred for Mordecai grew and became a hatred for all Jews. He planned to destroy all Jews, including Mordecai. He misled the King into believing that the entire Jewish community was against the King. He obtained an order from the King to annihilate the Jews and published it in all provinces. Mordecai was disappointed, when he became aware of this. When King's decree reached the provinces, there was great mourning amongst the Jews, with fasting, weeping and lamenting. (Esther 3:8-15, Esther 4:1-3)

Fasting of Queen Esther

Mordecai informed Queen Esther about the decree, and requested her to save them from this danger. Esther said that there was a law that nobody should go to the presence of the King without permission. If anyone appeared before the King without permission, then that person would be put to death. The only exception to the death penalty was when the King held out the golden sceptre for that person. (Esther 4:11)

Mordecai replied, *“Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows?”* (Esther 4:13-14)

When Queen Esther heard Mordecai’s reply, she decided to go to the presence of the king for saving the lives of her people. She was not afraid to forsake her life for that, and said *“I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish”*. (Esther 4:16)

She declared fasting for three days to obtain the blessing of God, for she was aware that the King would decide in favour of the Jewish people, only if there is God’s blessing. She told Mordecai that all the Jews of Susa should assemble, and fast and pray for her. The Jews, queen Esther and her maid servants fasted and prayed for three days.

Esther holds Banquet

On the third day Esther went to the royal presence without invitation. The King was pleased and held the golden sceptre towards her, thus saving her life. The King gave assurance that her desires would be fulfilled. Esther who got favour in the King’s court arranged a banquet for the King. Haman was also invited to the banquet. The King reassured her that her desires would be fulfilled and Esther invited the king to a second banquet. (Esther 5:1-8)



Haman’s hostility increases

The King decided to honour Mordecai for saving his life. The King asked Haman *“What shall be done unto the man, whom the King delights to honour?”* Hoping that the King was thinking of him, Haman told the procedure of honouring which included providing royal robes, a royal horse and proclaiming the delight of the King in the city square. (Esther 6:6-11) The King commanded Haman to do everything as told by him to honour Mordecai. This increased Haman’s hostility towards Mordecai.

Esther reveals Haman’s plot

During the second banquet the queen requested that her people be saved. The queen told the King that Haman had devised the plan to destroy her people. On hearing this Haman was shocked. The furious King left the banquet and moved to the palace garden. (Esther 7:3-7)

Haman hanged on the Gallows

Fearing harm would fall on him, Haman stayed back, to beg for his life from queen Esther. When the King returned to the banquet house, he saw Haman falling on the bed on which the queen was sitting. Furious at this the King said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence in my own house?" Immediately after the king said this, they covered and tied Haman's face. One of the servants said that the gallows made for hanging Mordecai is standing in the house of Haman. the King commanded to hang Haman on that itself and they did so. (Esther 7:7-10)

Jews are safe

The king ordered the execution of Haman, his sons and his allies. As prayed by Esther, the Jews all over the kingdom were saved. The king honoured Mordecai and made him the Prime Minister in place of Haman.

Feast of Purim

On the 13th and 14th days in the month of Adar (the 12th month), the Jews in Susa gained victory by taking revenge on their enemies and they took rest on the 15th day. In the remaining provinces Jews gained victory on the 13th day and rested on the 14th day of Adar.

The Purim feast is celebrated by the Jews on the 14th and 15th day in the month of Adar (Esther 9:21) which falls in the months of February – March. The Purim feast is celebrated to commemorate their escape from the hands of enemies, melancholy becoming rejoicing and the lamentations becoming feasts. Jews celebrate the salvation that Lord gave them, by conducting feasts; sending gifts to the dear ones and doing charity works.

Christological significance of the Book of Esther

What does this book have to do with us? While the Book of Esther provides a historical account of the events surrounding Esther and Mordecai in Persia, it also contains elements that Christian theologians have found to have Christological significance. Here are a few –

1. **Providence:** The Book of Esther tells us about God's hidden providence, in the events and decisions that lead to the deliverance of the Jewish people from a plot to annihilate them. God's hidden providence and divine intervention is also there in the salvation we receive through Jesus Christ.
2. **Saving People:** Esther's courageous actions in approaching the King to plead for the lives of her people highlights the importance of an intercessor. Jesus Christ is the ultimate intercessor who pleads for the salvation of humanity before God.
3. **Rescue from Destruction:** The Book of Esther is a story about the deliverance of the Jewish people from a threat of destruction and annihilation. Jesus Christ is the Savior who rescues and delivers humanity from the consequences of sin and offers eternal life.
4. **Hidden Identity and Revelation:** Esther initially conceals her Jewish identity, and her true heritage is revealed later. Similarly, Christ's divinity is initially hidden during His earthly ministry, and is revealed later to the world through His resurrection and ascension.
5. **Feasting and Celebration:** The Book of Esther features feasting and celebration at the annual Feast of Purim to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews. Similarly, the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is a joyful celebration of Christ's sacrifice and deliverance of humanity.

EXERCISE:

1. Who was the King of Babylon who captured and looted Jerusalem?
2. Who was the Persian King who proclaimed liberation to Israelites?
3. As whose queen, was Esther installed?
4. Who obtained orders from the King to destroy the Jews?
5. What did Queen Esther want the Jews to do before she went to the presence of the King without permission?
6. Why is the feast of Purim celebrated?
7. What is the Christological significance of the Book of Esther?

Chapter 5. Job – The Tested Faith

Objective: Learn that God protects those who have deep faith in Him from all distress

Bible References: Job 1-2, Job 5-6, Job 8-9, Job 11-13, Job 33, Job 37

Introduction:

Jews held a belief that suffering was a consequence of the numerous sins committed by people. However, Job was an upright, God-fearing man who avoided evil and violence who had to endure suffering and misfortune during his life.

The book of Job explores the reasons for suffering and misfortunes falling on righteous, God-fearing people. However, a perfect answer is not available.

This book teaches us that –

- Man may not always be able to understand the divine plans of God, at all times. However, there are definite reasons for all of God's divine plans.
- God blesses the person who accepts God's will and submits himself / herself wholeheartedly to God.

Job is tested

Job was a prosperous person, who lived a chaste life in the land of Uz, which is in the southern part of Palestine. He was not a Jew. God had blessed Job due to his firm faith, and due to God's blessings Satan was not able to harm Job. Satan is not able to find anything wrong in Job's conduct, as it is exemplary. However, Satan argues with God that Job's faith comes out of his prosperity and wealth and not out of love of God. God does not admit this. The truly faithful person believes firmly in God, both in times of prosperity and poverty alike. In order to confirm this, God permitted Satan to tempt Job. (Job 1:6-11)

Job owned many animals like oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, etc. The animals belonging to Job were stolen, and the attackers also killed his servants. His house collapsed in a mighty wind and his sons and daughters were killed. (Job 1:13-19)

Job's declaration of faith

Despite these calamities, Job remained faithful. *Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.* (Job 1:20-22). Thus, Satan could not make Job, deviate from the faith in God, despite the death of his children and the loss of his possessions.

Job is tested further

Satan attempted to keep Job away from God by causing serious illness to him. He inflicted Job with painful sore boils from sole of his feet to the top of his head. However, Job sat in the ashes and only scratched himself with a broken piece of pot. He did not say anything condemning God. (Job 2:7-8)

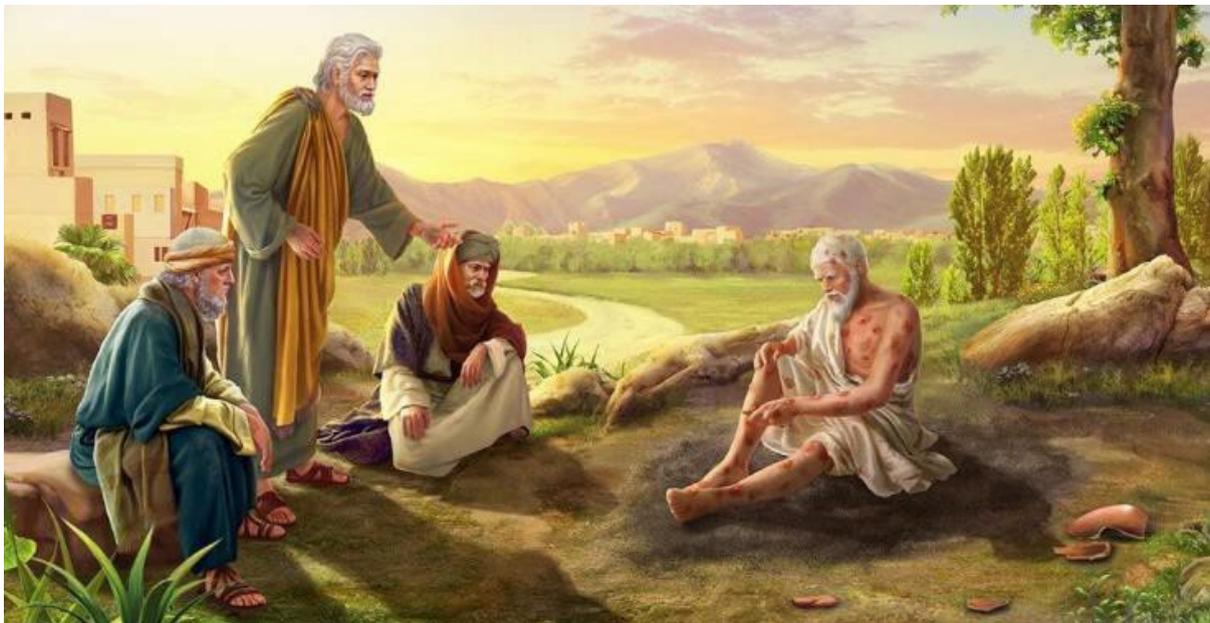
Job advises his wife

Job's wife could not bear the sufferings of her husband, who was a righteous man and a devotee of God. He had lost his wealth, his children and was sitting in ashes with foul smelling sores. Despite this Job was faithful to God. *His wife said to him "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God and die." But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:9-10).*

Even during these calamities, Job neither sins nor does he say anything against God. Job advised his wife, that we should praise the Lord, during good times as well as bad times. As Satan could do nothing more to drive a devotee away from God, he leaves Job and moves away from him.

Advice of friends and the Job's Justification

When Job's friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar heard about the disasters that struck Job, they came to console him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him and they began to weep aloud.



They advised that the cause of his sufferings is his sins and that therefore, he should seek God's blessings. The advice of his friends was not acceptable to Job.

Eliphaz said *"But if I were you, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him. (Job 5:8) Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. (Job 5:17)*

Job replies, *"Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong." (Job 6:24). "Is there any wickedness on my lips? Can my mouth not discern malice?" (Job 6:30)*

Bildad said *"If you will seek God earnestly, and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state." (Job 8:5-6) "Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers." (Job 8:20)*

Job replies *"Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God?" (Job 9:2) "He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more." (Job 9:32-34)*

Zophar said, *“If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and do not let wickedness reside in your tents. Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure, and will not fear.”* (Job 11:14-15)

Job replies *“Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you! But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things? I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and he answered— a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!”* (Job 12:2-4).

Job justifies his actions, and says *“I have indeed prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated. Who is there that will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die.”* (Job 13:18-19).

Friend Elihu arrives

The three friends had no answer, as Job considered himself righteous in his own eyes. Elihu became angry at Job as he justified himself rather than God. When Elihu saw that the three friends of Job had no answer, he brought a sense of sin in Job. Elihu said *“But in this you are not right. I will answer you: God is greater than any mortal. Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of my words?’”* (Job 33:12,13). Elihu, therefore advises Job to keep silent and consider the wondrous works of God. (Job 37:14).

God speaks to Job

God makes Job realise that there are several matters in this world which Job is not aware of, while that God knows everything. Upon hearing these words, Job is convinced of his ignorance and deficiencies and the sin of his self-justification.

Transformation of sufferings for the good

Job became aware of the sin of self-justification because of which he had to face the sufferings and hardships. He stood firm in his faith. Even when the hardships occurred, he stood firm in his faith without denying God. Therefore, God spoke to him and convinced him of his mistake. Job admitted his mistake and prayed for his friends. God removed his hardships and blessed him more than ever. His wealth was doubled, he was cured of his disease and got back his dead children. Thus, Job who was happy saw children and grandchildren for four generations and lived for 140 years.

Christological significance of the Book of Job

The Book of Job is about suffering, and human responses to adversity. The Book predates the life of Jesus Christ by many centuries. Christians have found similarities between Old Testament texts of Job and the ministry of Jesus Christ in their theological reflections. Certain passages in Job resonate with Christological ideas. Here are some -

1. **The Suffering Servant:** Job is seen as a foreshadow of the suffering servant found in the prophetic writings, particularly in Isaiah 53. In Christian theology, this suffering servant is associated with Jesus Christ, who suffered on behalf of humanity.
2. **Redemption and Restoration:** The book explores themes of redemption and restoration. Job's story includes a period of intense suffering, followed by a restoration of his fortunes. This can be seen as a parallel to the Christian narrative of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, leading to redemption and restoration for believers.
3. **Messianic Hope:** Job's longing for a mediator or someone to plead his case before God (Job 9:32-35) could be seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humanity.

4. **Theodicy and Suffering:** The central theological question in Job is the problem of evil and suffering. While the book doesn't provide a direct answer, it invites readers to grapple with these profound questions. In Christian theology, the existence of suffering and theodicy are important topics, and Christ's life, suffering, and death are seen as part of God's response to the problem of evil and suffering.
5. **Humility and Trust:** Job's response to his suffering includes a deep sense of humility and trust in God's sovereignty. Christians emphasize the importance of humility, trust, and surrender to God, qualities that are also seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Topic: Do most people praise God only when they are blessed and get what they need, or do they also praise God during a calamity, and say like Job - "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
 - a. Provide examples of people whom you have seen praising God during a calamity.

EXERCISE:

1. To which land did Job belong?
2. Who is the friend that rebuked Job?
3. What were the temptations to which Job was subjected?
4. What was the declaration of faith made by Job?
5. What was the advice given by Job to his wife?
6. What was the sin of Job?
7. What is the message that we get from the book of Job?

Chapter 6. Repenting Sinner

Objective: To understand God's unconditional love for sinners and that God accepts sinners if they repent and return to the Lord.

Bible References: St. Luke 15:1-32, St. Matthew 18:12-14

Pharisees and scribes considered tax collectors as sinners. The poor were also deemed sinners as they were unable to perform expensive religious rituals. However, Jesus received sinners with compassion and dined with them. The approach of Jesus towards sinners and tax collectors provoked pharisees and scribes. His unconditional love and empathy towards sinners, is portrayed in the parables of 'The lost sheep', 'The lost coin' and 'The prodigal son'.

Parable of The Lost Sheep (St. Luke 15:4-7)



This parable is about the shepherd who goes in search for one lost sheep, while leaving the remaining ninety-nine sheep in wilderness. The situation narrated in this parable is quite familiar to the Jews.

The Lord asked them - "Which of you men, if you had one hundred sheep, and lost one of them, wouldn't leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one that was lost, until he found it? When he has found it, he carries it on his shoulders, rejoicing. When he comes home, he calls together his friends, his family and his neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that even so there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance."

The good shepherd represents Jesus and the lost sheep represents the sinner. Jesus identifies himself with the image of God as a shepherd searching for stray sheep in Ezekiel 34:11-16. The rejoicing of the shepherd with his friends represents God rejoicing with the angels when a sinner repents and returns to the heaven. Jesus clarifies that the intention of His coming is to redeem the sinners.

Parable of The Lost Coin (St. Luke 15:8-10)

The parable of the lost coin is the story of an ordinary Jewish woman who loses one of her ten Susas (Drachma). Susa (Drachma) is a type of silver coin of that time. She searches the entire house and celebrates with friends when she finds it. Jesus compares this happiness with the happiness in heaven when a sinner is redeemed. Moreover, the parable shows God as a loving and forgiving person.

Parable of The Prodigal Son (St. Luke 15:11-32)

Through the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus illustrates the love of God for his people and the happiness in heaven when a sinner repents.

This parable is about a father who has two sons. The younger son asks for his share of inheritance. He disregards his father's advice and leads an unbridled life. He leaves his

father's house and goes after worldly desires. This represents people who drift away from God's presence and live against His commandments while pursuing worldly desires. The prodigal son squanders his inherited wealth and finally becomes destitute. In the midst a severe famine, he takes up the demeaning job of looking after pigs. This leads him to realise that even the pigs were eating better than him. In this defeated, depressed state, he reflected on his life and actions. He thinks of his father and feels guilty for his behaviour. He decided to ask forgiveness to his father and return home. This was a turning point in his life.

Adverse circumstances in our lives should become a reason to bring us closer to God. When the children of God forget Him and leave His presence, they face temptations and become slaves of Satan.



When the prodigal son returned home, his father received him with great pleasure and kindness, which was much more than he deserved. Similarly, God rejoices when a sinner repents and seeks His Kingdom. When the father saw his son from far, he ran to him and embraced him with mercy and love. He is given the best robe, a ring for his finger, and sandals for his feet. He got all the rights and freedom of a son whereas he expected the status of a servant only. In the same way, God waits for sinners to realise their mistakes and ask forgiveness. Lord receives the repentant with unconditional love and compassion.

The words chosen by the prodigal son to greet his father are noteworthy (St. Luke 15:18-19).

1. Even though he had distanced himself from his father, he still had the courage to call him as 'My Father'.
2. He confesses his sin, as he has become conscious of his sin.
3. He has a humble request to be considered as a servant, after losing his status as son.

As we have seen in the first two parables, here also the father experiences great happiness and shares his happiness with all. The reaction of the elder son to this incident is also

noteworthy. This son represents the Pharisees whose conviction is the destruction of the sinners and that there should be no contact with them. He was spiritually fallen even though he was physically with the father. He was unable to accept his brother who had repented and come back as his own brother. Instead, while speaking to his father he refers to him as “this son of yours.” The father consoles the elder son who does not wish to go in and join in the rejoicing and says “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life, he was lost and has been found” and invited him to participate in merry making.

The morals from these parables are:

1. God does not want anyone to perish.
2. God searches for sinners and is happy when they return.
3. God accepts any sinner, if he repents and comes back.

Verse for Memorising:

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8).

EXERCISE:

1. What are the circumstances in which Jesus narrates the three parables about the sinners who repent?
2. ‘There is joy in heaven over the sinner that repents’. Which parables were narrated by Jesus to explain this?
3. Who do the father, the elder son and the younger son represent in the parable of the prodigal son?
4. How can we understand from the parable of the prodigal son that God awaits the coming back of the sinners?
5. What are the matters that the prodigal son kept in his mind for telling his father?
6. How does the father console the elder son?

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Divide the class into two groups to discuss and list the “qualities of a God-fearing child”. One representative from each group to present the qualities identified by the group.

Chapter 7. Rich Youth and Everlasting Life

Objective:	Children to understand that one should be prepared to abandon anything that stands in the way of entering into everlasting life.
Bible Reference:	St. Matthew 19:16-26, St. Mark 10: 17-27, St. Luke 18: 18-27

One day a rich, young man approached Jesus and asked “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus replied that he should observe the commandments. “Which ones?”, asked the youth. Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honour your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” The young man said, “I have obeyed all these commandments, what else must I do?” Jesus told him “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” He went sadly away as he had great possessions.

Jesus told his disciples, “Truly I tell you; it will be hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.” Then the disciples said, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus replied, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”



What are the specialities of that rich young man? He approached Jesus with sincerity. He had been observing the commandments and was eager to know what he lacked. But at the same time, he loved his wealth too much. He considered wealth more precious than God. The rich man had to go back disappointed as he was not prepared to give up his wealth.

The Lord does not find fault with being rich, but what Jesus said was that we should not become slaves to wealth. Jesus discourages those who trust in wealth more than God. Not

only wealth, but nothing, like our knowledge, beauty, talents etc should stand in the way of our entrance to the Kingdom of God.

There are two interpretations to the usage “camel going through the eye of a needle.”

1. In Syriac, the word used for ‘camel’ is ‘gemlo’, which word means a thick rope. It is very difficult to pull a thick rope through the eye of a needle.
2. There was a narrow gateway in Jerusalem called ‘eye of needle’. This is a side gate to Jerusalem and is quite small. Camels are generally heavily loaded with goods and riders. If a camel has to pass through this door, the load on its back should be removed and the camel should kneel down. Therefore, the analogy is that similarly a rich man would have to let go of a lot of baggage like the desire for wealth and ‘the load of sin’, to go through the narrow path to the everlasting life.

Verse for Memorising:

He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf. (Proverbs 11:28)

EXERCISE:

1. How did the rich young man address Jesus?
2. Why did the rich young man come before Jesus?
3. What did Jesus want the rich young man to do?
4. Why did the rich man to become sad?
5. To what does Jesus compare “entering of the rich in the kingdom of heaven?”
6. What are the possible interpretations of the phrase “camel through the eye of needle?”

Chapter 8. The Apostles

Selection and Appointment of the Apostles

Objective:	Learn about the selection of the Apostles, and the powers and instructions given to them by Jesus.
Bible References:	St. Matthew 10:1-42, St. Mark 3:14-19, St. Luke 6:12-16

In the night before the selection of the Apostles, Jesus went up the mountain and prayed to his Father until dawn. In the morning, he called his disciples and from amongst his disciples, he selected twelve people for preaching his Gospel and called them the Apostles (Sleeha). The word Sleeha means "The one deputed".

The authorisations given to the Apostles

After the selection, Jesus gave them directions and authorised them to –

1. Drive out evil spirits.
2. Heal the sick.
3. Bring back the dead to life.

The selection of Apostles, their names and the directions given to them are recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels (St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke). Even though there are some variations in the serial order, the name of St. Peter is always given as first one. The name of the Apostle Thaddeus is also given as Jude and Labi in different Gospels. St. Mark has testified that the Apostles were deputed in gospel work in batches of two each (St. Mark 6:7).

The directions given to the Apostles

1. Do not go in the way of gentiles, do not enter the city of Samaritans, rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Initially, the activities were limited only to the people of Israel. However, after the resurrection of Jesus, he exhorted them to go to all the races.
2. Preach that the Kingdom of God is at hand.
3. Work without remuneration – "*freely you have received, freely give.*" (St. Matthew 10:8)
4. Only very simple and minimum preparation will be enough.
5. *Whatever city or town you enter, enquire who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.* (St. Matthew 10:11) *Whosoever shall not receive you, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.* (St. Matthew 10:14). After a journey in the land of the Gentiles, a Jew used to shake off dust stuck on his feet, before entering his land, so as to mark that they had no relation with the Gentiles.
6. Should have wisdom and innocence for living in the midst of hard-hearted Jews.
7. The Holy Spirit will provide strength for facing any kind of trouble. Jesus tells here three times the consoling words – "*Fear not*" (St. Matthew 10:26, 28, 31)

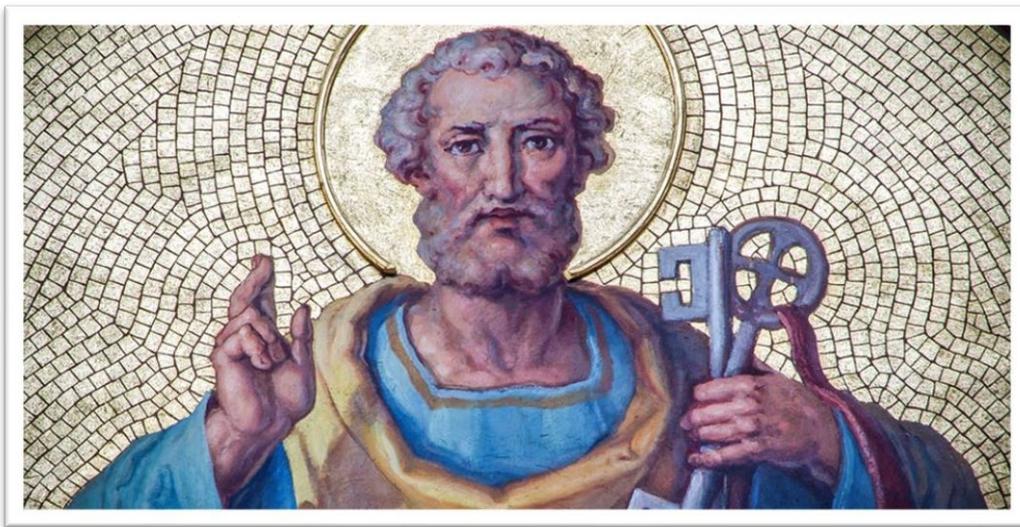
St. Peter – The Head of the Apostles

Objective: Learn about the special authorizations St. Peter had and how they were received.

Bible References: St. Matthew 16:13-20, St. Mark 8:27-30, St. Luke 9:18-21

One day, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples; “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (St. Matthew 16:13) Caesarea Philippi is a city in the southern valley of Mt. Hermon, currently known as Banyas. The disciples reply that the opinions of the people vary from John the Baptist, to Jeremiah, Elijah or one of the other Prophets.

Jesus asked the disciples “But who do you say that I am?” Then Simon Kepha (Peter) said “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” To this, Jesus said in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (St. Matthew 16:15-19)



1. You are Kepha, and upon this rock I will build my Church.
 - In Syriac, the word Kepha means ‘Rock’. Its Greek equivalent is Peter.
 - “My Church” signifies that the Church belongs to the Lord.
 - It is on this rock of firm faith as testified by Simon, that the Lord has built His Church.
 - No force of this world, nor persecutions can defeat or destroy this Church. Each one of us should be proud of being a member of this Church.
2. The keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are entrusted to Peter. The keys signify the authority that the Lord has given to Peter. The authorization to bind and loosen means the authority to forgive (exonerate) sin. Not only is this forgiveness earthly, but “loosened in Heaven” signifies that the forgiveness of sins is eternal.

Later, after his resurrection, Jesus also gives Peter the authority to govern the Church. In order to remember the importance of this, the Holy Fathers have arranged reading of this portion (St. Mark 8:27-33) on Kodoos Etho Sunday for the Gospel reading.

The importance of St. Peter

Objective: Learn about the special authorizations that St. Peter had and how they were received

Bible References: St. John 21:15-19

From the very beginning, Peter had received the first position among the disciples selected by the Lord. St. Peter was –

1. One of the three disciples who was present when the daughter of Jairus was raised (St. Mark 5:35-43, St. Matthew 9:18-26, St. Luke 8:40-56).
2. One of the three disciples who accompanied Jesus at the time of Transfiguration (St. Matthew 17:1-13) and at the time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (St. Matthew 26:36-46).
3. One of the two disciples who were sent for preparing the Passover (St. Luke 22:8).
4. Authorised by the Lord to pay tax on behalf of Him (St. Matthew 17:24-27).
5. Entrusted with the responsibility of strengthening the brethren disciples after His departure. (St. Luke 22:32)

In the Gospel of St. John 21:15-19, we see that after the fishing in the Sea of Tiberias and the subsequent breakfast, Jesus asks Simon Peter three times if Peter loves Him. Each time he is asked, Peter confirms his love for the Lord. For each confirmation, authorities are vested on Peter. Jesus commands Peter to take care and feed his sheep on His behalf. This represents the feeding of the Church or governing the Church. Jesus had authorised all the Apostles to preach and teach. However, Jesus wants Peter to lead the sheep on His behalf, just as He led the sheep as the true shepherd.

1. Just as God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, when he selected him as the father of a clan, the Lord gave Simon, the name Peter (Cephas) which means “rock”. (St. John 1:42)
2. Jesus said to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” These keys symbolise the authority given only to St. Peter. (St. Matthew 16:15-19)
3. After His resurrection, the Lord gave authority to Peter over the whole Church, in the presence of the other disciples.
4. Wherever the names of apostles are mentioned in the Gospels, the name of St. Peter is always mentioned first.
5. Selection of an Apostle as the replacement of Judas was done under the leadership of St. Peter (Acts 1:12-26).
6. St. Peter had preached to the Jews on the day of the Pentecost and had added 3,000 Jews to the Church (Acts 2:14-41).
7. Gentiles were admitted to the Church, due to the vision of St. Peter (Acts 10).

The Vision to St. Peter

Objective: Learn about the way that God arranged for taking Gentiles in to the Church.

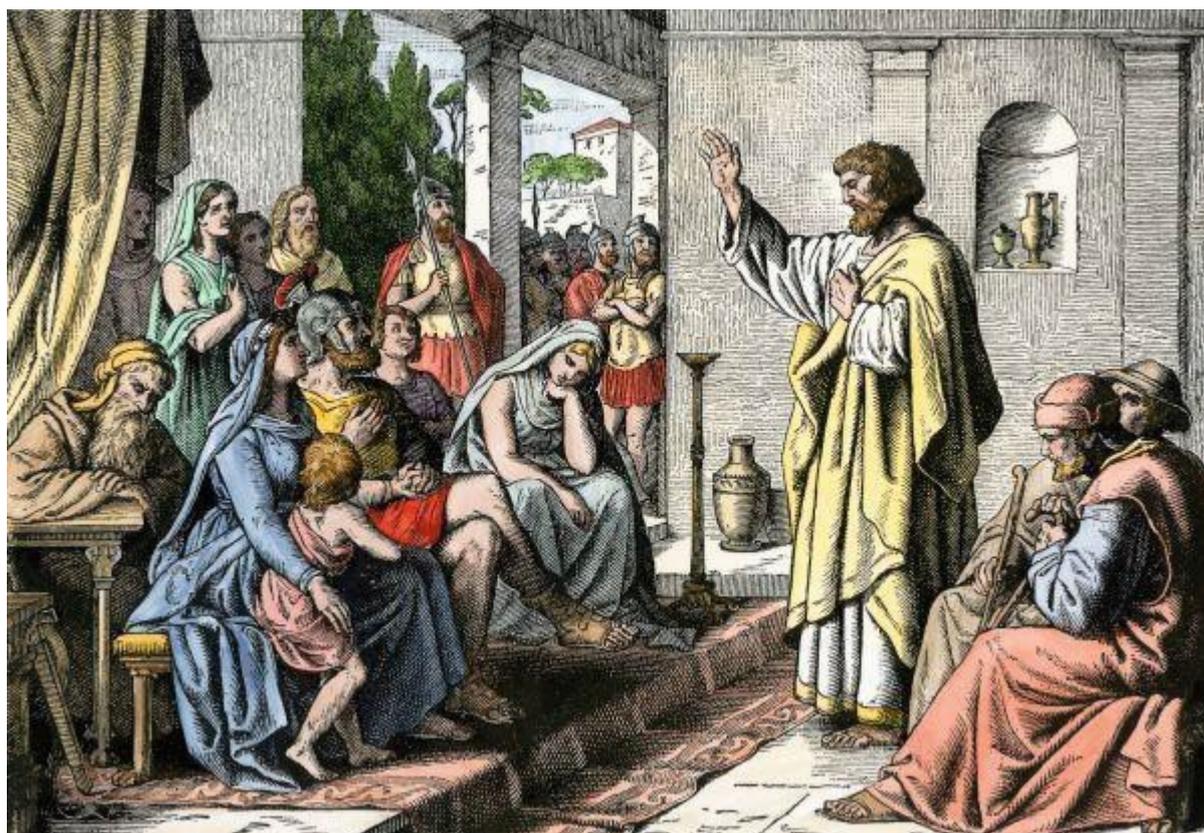
Bible References: Acts 10

After the repentance of Saul, St. Peter's activities extended to the cities surrounding Jerusalem. He added large number of people from Ludda, Joppa, Caesarea, etc. to the Church.

In Joppa, he lived in the house of Simon the tanner for several days. During this period, St. Peter's greatest achievement was the conversion of Cornelius and his allies, and adding them to the Church.

At that time, Caesarea was a Jewish city and Cornelius was a Centurion (head of 100 soldiers) in the Italian Cohort of the Roman army. Cornelius was a God fearing and devoted man with the habit of praying and giving alms.

Cornelius came to know about St. Peter through a vision, when an angel appeared to him at the time of the 9th hour (3:00 pm) prayer. The angel informed him, *"Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now, send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter."* (Acts 10:4-5) Accordingly, Cornelius sent messengers to Joppa.



The next day St. Peter had a vision, while he was in Joppa. St. Peter went upstairs for the 6th hour (12:00 noon) prayer. However, he felt hungry and wanted to eat something. Soon, he fell into a trance and had a vision. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. *Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter, kill and*

eat.” To this Simon said, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.” He heard a voice “What God has made clean; you must not call profane.” (Acts 10:13-16) This was heard thrice, and then the sheet was taken up into heaven.

While Peter wondered what the vision meant, the men who were sent by Cornelius reached there. The Holy Spirit informed Peter to go with the messengers without doubting them. The messengers told him about Cornelius and about the vision he had. On that day they were lodged in Joppa and on the next day Peter and some of the believers went with the messengers.

It was noteworthy, that before the meeting of Peter and Cornelius God spoke to them separately and prepared the ground for their meeting. Cornelius had already prepared with his relatives and friends to receive Peter to his house. He might have desired that all should participate in this rarest of the rare occasions. Welcoming and worshipping him, Cornelius fell at the feet of Peter when he came in. Peter, took him up saying, “Stand up; I am only a mortal.” Cornelius explained the holy message he had received and told Peter “So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.”

Peter then preached the message of God to them. He told them in detail about the public ministry of Jesus Christ and that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit came upon on all those who were listening. Those who came with Peter heard each one of them praising God in their tongues. *Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”* (Acts 10:47) All of them were therefore baptized.

Normally the Holy Spirit comes after being baptized. Here the pouring down of the Holy Spirit before being baptized symbolizes God’s willingness to accept Gentiles to the Church. The first Gentiles (non-Jews) who came to the Church were Cornelius and his relatives and friends.

PROJECT WORK:

1. Research about each Apostles and present them to the class using a PowerPoint presentation. Refer the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke.
 - a. Make your presentation interesting by adding pictures of the Apostles.
 - b. Explore why Jesus would have appointed the Apostles.
 - c. What were the different occupations of the Apostles before being called by Jesus?
 - d. Find out the names of Apostles who accompanied Jesus at the time of Transfiguration (St. Matthew 17:1-13) and at the time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (St. Matthew 26:36-46).
 - e. Name the Apostles who were brothers?
 - f. Did Jesus give any names to some Apostles?
 - g. Each student can present 2 Apostles.
2. Research about St. Peter.
 - a. Who was St. Peter?
 - b. How did St. Peter become head of Apostles?
 - c. What is St. Peter noted for in the Gospels? Refer St. John 1:42, St. Matthew 14:28-33, St. Luke 22:54-62, St. Mark 5:35-43, St. Matthew 17:1-13, St. Matthew 26:36-46
 - d. What is St. Peter noted for in the Acts? Refer Acts 2:14-41, Acts 10:9-48,
 - e. Which books in the Bible were written by St. Peter?

3. What did Jesus do before he selected the Apostles?
4. What authorizations were given by Jesus to the Apostles?
5. What directions were given by Jesus to the Apostles?
6. What opinions did the people have about the identity of Jesus?
7. Why did the Lord to say, "Blessed are you, Simon?"
8. What are the promises that Jesus gave Simon?
9. Name the occasions, when Jesus gave prominence to Peter during His public ministry?
10. What powers were conferred by Jesus on Peter?
11. What are the powers that only Peter has?
12. Who was Cornelius?
13. How did Cornelius come to know about Peter?
14. What did the angel ask Cornelius?
15. What was the vision that Peter had, before he went to the house of Cornelius?
16. How did Cornelius receive Peter?
17. What was the message in the speech that Peter made in the house of Cornelius?

Chapter 9. Maranaya Feast

Objective: To learn about the Maranaya Feasts that are celebrated in our Church.

Introduction:

Maranaya means

The Holy Church divides the year of worship into two –

1. The days from Easter to the feast of Sreeba (Cross) are called the period of Kyomtha.
2. The days from the feast of Sreeba to Easter are called the period of Sreeba.

Maranaya feasts should be observed with piety and devotion (just like Sundays). They are also called as the feasts related to the Lord (Moran). Maranaya feasts are fixed by the Holy Church for observance in recollection of prominent events relating to the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Types of Maranaya Feasts:

Maranaya feasts are of three kinds –

1. Those which are observed just like Sunday is observed.
2. Those to be observed like Maranaya.
3. Those to be considered along with Maranaya.

Those, which are to be treated just, like Sundays

Sunday is the Lord's Day. Worldly activities should not be carried out on that day. Christians are expected to attend the Holy Qurbana on Sunday. Children should attend Sunday School classes also. Christians should also engage in charity activities and gospel sermons. Christians consider Sundays as the Sabbath day (while Jews, consider Saturday as the Sabbath day).

The following are the Maranaya feasts to be observed just like Sundays. They based on events relating to the Lord.

S. No.	Feast	Alternate Names	Date	Bible References
1	Feast of Annunciation	Sooboro, Vachanippu	25 th Mar	Genesis 3:15, Micah 5:2, St. Luke 1:38
2	Christmas	Eldho	25 th Dec	St. Luke 2:8-12
3	Circumcision	Chelakarmam	1 st Jan	Leviticus 12
4	Entry into the temple of the Lord	Mayaltho	2 nd Feb	Exodus 13:2, Exodus 13:12, St. Luke 2.21
5	Baptism	Denaha	6 th Jan	St. Matthew 3:15
6	The feast of Tabernacle (or) The feast of Transfiguration		6 th Aug	St. Matthew 17:1-8

Feast of Annunciation – Sooboro – Vachanippu – 25th March

God desired for the redemption of the human race, which had fallen into sin after the disobedience of God's commands. God planned for the redemption of the human race, by taking an incarnation and coming into the world. God commanded that the offspring of a woman should crush the head of devil and make redemption of the human race possible. (Genesis 3:15)



God reiterated His promise through the Prophet Isaiah who prophesied that a 'Virgin' shall conceive, bear a son and his name shall be 'Immanuel' (Isaiah 7:14). God, through the Prophet Micah, gave the ruling that from Bethlehem, He shall arise (Micah 5:2).

The redemption promised by God since the days of the downfall of humans, appeared subsequently through Virgin Mary. Mary's faith, purity and humility allowed for the Son of God to be begotten in her.

The announcement of salvation – that the Word will take an incarnation and will be among us for the redemption of human race was made by God, through Angel Gabriel. (St. Luke 1:38)

Since all salvation plans begin from this announcement, the Holy Church has decided that the Holy Qurbana would always be conducted on the Feast of Annunciation. Even if Feast of Annunciation falls on Good Friday, the prayers of Good Friday would be conducted only after the Holy Qurbana.

Christmas – Eldho – 25th December

Christmas recalls the holy birth of our Lord. It is also called the feast of Eldho. The Holy Church observes this feast on 25th December.

Emperor Augustus Caesar had ordered a census throughout the Roman Empire. Everyone had to go to their own home town to be enumerated. Joseph went to Bethlehem along with Mary, who was pregnant. In Bethlehem, they searched for a place to stay as it was time for Mary to deliver her baby. They knocked on many doors but no one gave them shelter. However, God took care of them and Mary brought forth her first born son and laid Him in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes.

An angel of the Lord appeared to a group of shepherds. The glory of the Lord shone around them. The angel said "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you; you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." A multitude of heavenly host appeared praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will towards men." The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found infant Jesus with Mary the mother and Joseph and worshipped. (St. Luke 2: 8-12)



A star appeared in the East at the time of birth of Jesus. Wise men from the east, studied the star and learnt that a child is born to be the King of the Jews. They reached Bethlehem and presented baby Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This Holy Birth is observed as Christmas. We perform the service of flame of fire on Christmas night, in memory of glory of God seen around the shepherds while the angel was telling about the good tidings. We shine stars symbolizing the star seen by the wise men from the East. Christmas is celebrated after fasting for twenty-five days called “Eldho fasting”.

We should worship, pray and perform charitable deeds on Christmas. Charitable deeds like feeding the hungry, helping the poor, supporting the needy etc. are pleasing to God.

Circumcision – Chelakarmam – 1st January

God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham (Genesis 11:9-14). Circumcision is cutting and removing of the skin from the tip of the sexual organ of boys belonging to the Jewish religion. This is a covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel, and was observed by the Israelites. Leviticus 12:3 states that the circumcision of the male child shall be held on the 8th day after birth.

On the 8th day after He was born (1st January), our Lord was circumcised in accordance to the covenant and named Jesus (St. Luke 2:21). It is in reminiscence of the circumcision and naming of Jesus that the church observes the feast of Chelakarmam or Circumcision on 1st January.

St. Paul mentions in Galatians 5:6 that “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. All that matters is faith, expressed through love.”

In the Jerusalem Synod held by the Apostles in AD 51, it was unanimously decided that the gentiles need not be circumcised to become Christians.

Entry into the temple of the Lord – Mayaltho – 2nd February

According to the Lord's word in Exodus 13:2 and Exodus 13:12 the first-born male is holy for Lord, and every first-born male of Israelites should be an offering to the Lord. The first-born son of human should be redeemed, by offering as sacrifice, a lamb or a pigeon.

According to Leviticus 12, the purification period for the mother is 40 days if the child is a male, and is 80 days if the child is female. It is after this period they go to the temple with the child for the offerings. After the purification period, a one-year-old lamb should be brought to the temple before the priest for burnt offering and either the young one of a dove or pigeon should be brought for the sin offering. If they cannot afford to offer a lamb, they need to offer two young doves or pigeons, one as burnt offering and the other as sin offering.

The parents brought infant Jesus to the temple of God for presenting him as offering and redemption. As they could not afford to give a lamb, they brought pigeons as offering.



Then a venerable grand old man called Simon took infant Jesus in his arms and praised the Lord. He had word from the Holy Ghost that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Simon said, "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.*" (St. Luke 2:29-32)

There was an old prophetess, Anna, who never left the temple and worshiped there night and day, fasting and praying. At that moment she also came near, saw the infant and praised the Lord. (St. Luke 2:36-38)

We observe the holy feast of 'entry into the temple of God' in reminiscence of bringing infant Jesus into the temple of God. We should attend the Holy Qurbana and involve ourselves in divine deeds. We must be able to identify Jesus Christ and glorify him and convey his gospel.

Baptism – Denaha – 6th January

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, when he was 30 years old. After his baptism, Jesus started his public ministry and appointed his disciples. He chose his disciples and made them stay with him and taught them.

The Jewish custom requires a person to be 30 years old to be approved as teacher. Only those who have completed 30 years have the right to have disciples and can be a rabbi (teacher). Despite being God, Jesus observed the laws in full without any violation, as he was born as a Jew and as a complete man. Therefore, he waited to be baptized till he was 30 and this was also a sign of the start of his public ministry.



The baptism of Jesus was not the baptism for atonement of sins that was being given by John the Baptist, because Jesus had no sin by birth or by action. Nor was it the baptism now being given by the Christian Churches in the name of Holy Trinity. The disciples of Jesus had started baptizing in the name of trinity only after the Pentecost.

This poses an interesting question on “What was the baptism of Jesus?”

John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (St. Matthew 3:14-17)

Jesus was baptised for the fulfilment of divine righteousness. What is divine righteousness? This can be summarized as “Together with Moses and Aaron the first priesthood was received, Moses gave it to Scaria, Scaria gave it to John, John gave it to Lord also.”

The divine righteousness is clear from this song we sing during the Holy Qurbana. It is clear that gift received by Aaron together with Moses is priesthood and that gift was given by John to the Lord. Jesus was born in a Jewish family. That family has no priesthood. The family of priests is the Levite family. But Jesus was not born in that family and therefore Jesus had no traditional priesthood of Levites.

When it is stated that Jesus has no priesthood, a doubt may arise whether any particular priesthood is needed for Jesus, the Son of God. But Jesus is not only the Son of God but is the son of man as well. When He lives as man, He is subjected to human laws and is also bound to fulfil the laws of Moses.

Jesus offered his own body in sacrifice for the salvation of human race. According to the law only one who possesses the status of priesthood has the authority to perform sacrifice. This authority should be conferred on Jesus. John the Baptist, who was deputed by God, confers this authority on Jesus. By virtue of being the son of Zechariah the high priest, priesthood was conferred on John the Baptist by birth.

Heaven was opened at the time of baptism of Jesus. The Holy Ghost descended and alighted on him like a dove. A voice saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” was also heard. The disclosure of the father, the son and the holy spirit occurred at the moment of baptism of Jesus. Therefore, this feast is also known as Denaha (Dawn).

The feast of Tabernacle – The feast of Transfiguration – 6th August

During the time of His public ministry, Jesus, one day went up the mountain to pray with Peter, James and John. While he was praying, the expression on his face changed. His clothes were dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appeared there and spoke to him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

The feast of transfiguration or feast of tabernacles, reminisces this event. This feast came to be known as the feast of tabernacle from what Peter said, "We shall make three tabernacles." This is a day to be observed just as Sunday. On that day, all must attend the holy Qurbana. We should meditate on the glory of the Saviour and pay heed to his holy words.

PROJECT WORK:

1. Research the Maranaya Feast and create a PowerPoint presentation or Flash cards about each feast present this in your Sunday School. Allow each student to be part of the group presentation. Please look at bible reference mentioned above also use other references.
2. Discuss as a Sunday school student what do you do on Christmas? Can you explain what else we could do to the community during the Christmas time? E.g. Charity, peaching God's word or carol signing.

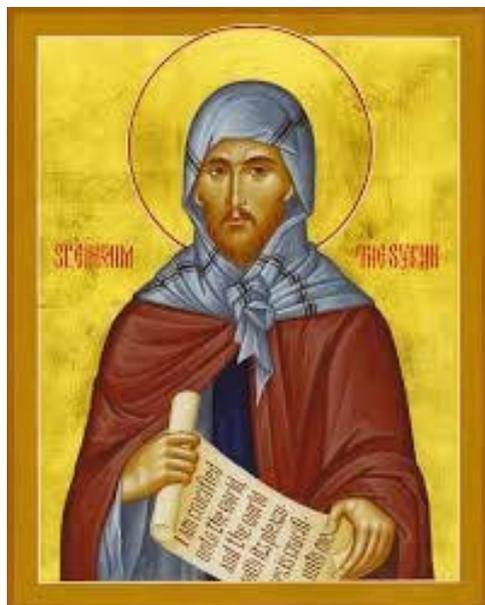
EXERCISE:

1. From which day till which day are Kyomtha and Sreeba periods?
2. What are Maranaya (Holy) feasts?
3. What are those feasts, which are observed like Sundays?
4. How did the angel inform the tiding of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds?
5. How did the wise men know that a child is born as the king of Jews?
6. Write the verse St Luke 1:38?
7. What does the observance of service of flame in our churches signify?
8. Holy Qurbana is offered if the feast of announcement (Sooboro) falls on Good Friday. Why?
9. Name the Roman emperor who ordered that a census should be taken? (St. Luke 2.1)
10. What is Chelakarmam or circumcision?
11. Why did the parents take infant Jesus to the temple of God?
12. What did Simon say holding the infant Jesus in his arms?
13. In reminiscence of what does the holy church observe the feast of Mayaltho?
14. Why did Jesus wait till the age of 30 years for baptism?
15. What is the divine process revealed in the baptism of Jesus?
16. Was priesthood necessary for Jesus the Son of God. Explain?
17. Denaha: Give the meaning?
18. Who were the disciples who were present with Jesus at the time of transfiguration?
19. Who were the people who appeared and talked to Jesus on the mountain of Transfiguration?
20. Why is the feast of Transfiguration is also called the feast of Tabernacle?

Chapter 10. Mor Aprem

Objective:

To learn about Mor Aprem



Mor Aprem (also known as St. Ephrem, St. Ephraim, St. Ephrem of Edessa and St. Ephrem the Syrian) is a fourth-century prominent Christian theologian, hymnographer and writer, who is venerated as a Saint by all traditional Churches. He is remembered in the 5th Thubden (Diptych) during the Holy Qurbana. He is referred to as “The Harp of the Holy Spirit”. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed him as ‘Doctor of the Church’ in 1920.

He was born, in 306 A.D., in a Christian family, in the city of Nizeebeen (modern Nusaybin in Turkey). He was a worthy monk, who led a celibate, spiritual life and observed asceticism. He had a sound theological knowledge and was the Chief Master of the School of Theology for 38 years, while remaining a Deacon. His main duties were prayer, meditation and writing books.

He interpreted all books in the Holy Bible from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelations and tried to keep up the true faith through literary compositions. He had many writings to his credit detailing the spiritual responsibilities and gospel interpretations. Mor Aprem wrote a large part of the periodic prayers of the church. He taught that the chastity of the Mother of God should be remembered with devotion and respect. He composed many sonnets against heretics, and wrote many songs for use in worship. He composed books on Separable Divinity - Manliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Holy Church, Apostles and Martyrs’ resurrection and the specialities of the Church. The compositions of Mor Aprem were in Syriac (Aramaic), and his compositions total to about 3 million lines.

Lamy, a noted biographer states “From the time he began to lead a monastic life till his death, he ate nothing but barley bread and dried herbs and sometimes green herbs. He drank nothing but water. He was of small stature; his face always grave that he never laughed.” Presuming that he would not be alive till next morning, he would be praying from dusk till dawn. It is said that when there was a discussion on making him a Metropolitan he disappeared.

The Holy Father desired that “an unholy person like me is not eligible to lie in holy places, I am not to be buried inside the church. I am not worthy of that glory” and was buried elsewhere after his demise in 373 AD. The feast of the saint is on the first Saturday of the lent.

Although his work was produced many centuries ago, it remains relevant and important to the modern world. Many of his hymns in Syriac are still sung in churches and inspire and enrich the worship of millions of Christians. His hymns express deep theological truths in a way that is memorable to ordinary people. They are written in a style that is simple and beautiful, yet profound and moving.

Mor Aprem was one of the earliest theologians to write about the nature of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, and his writings continue to be studied by theologians and scholars today. He wrote extensively in defence of the Christian faith, and his writings demonstrate an ability to engage with opponents in a respectful and intelligent manner.

Mor Aprem lived at a time when Christianity was relatively unified. His writings on the unity of the Church and the importance of love and humility provide a model for modern ecumenical movement aimed at Christian unity.

Mor Aprem also lived in a time of upheaval and uncertainty, and his writings demonstrate a deep faith in God's providence and a commitment to serving others. His emphasis on love, humility, and compassion is needed even in today's world.

EXERCISE:

1. Where is the name of Mor Aprem mentioned in the Holy Qurbana?
2. How is Mor Aprem remembered or referred to?
3. How did Roman Catholic Church honour Mor Aprem?
4. Describe the contributions made by Mor Aprem to the Church?
5. Write the qualities of nature of Mor Aprem?
6. What was the wish of Mor Aprem about his burial?
7. When does the church celebrate the feast of Mor Aprem?
8. What is the relevance of Mor Aprem's writings in the modern world?

Chapter 11. Mor Simeon Stylites (Desthuno)

Objective: To learn about Mor Simeon Stylites (Desthuno)

Mor Simeon Stylites lived in the 5th century AD and is known as the first Desthuno. He got his name since he prayed sitting on a pillar or "stylite" for almost 40 years. The persons who followed this way of asceticism are known as Esthanoye (ascetics on pillar).

This Holy Father was born in the village of Siz in Antioch. In his boyhood Simeon was a shepherd. He had a vision while grazing his sheep. He saw in that vision that he was led to a huge mountain, building an altar and to the place where the body of Timothy, the disciple of St Paul the apostle was kept and thereafter, entering the house of God. Therefore, Simon started life in the monastery after distributing all his earnings to the devotees of God, the poor and the destitute. He was always immersed in prayer, fasting and ascetic performances.

He arranged to build a pillar (Desthuno) for him. He spent 40 years on it with prayer and ascetic performances. The pillar, which was 3 metres high in the beginning, was made into 20 metres later. During the period of lent, he took no food for 40 days. Angels of God, Moses and Elijah had appeared to Simeon. Several sick people got cured with the prayer of intercession of Mor Simeon. Gentiles, kings and sea travellers were blessed by the prayers of Simeon. Famine, drought and destructions were removed by the prayers of the saint. The saint prayed for a long period; as follows: "O! Lord God, the powerful, let not the hands of men who are subduable come to the use of your servant and that it may not happen that I may see people on earth after getting down from this place. But kindly permit me to finish my life on this stone to which I entered in obedience to your holy command, kindly conduct the spirit of your worshipper from here according to your Lordship's liking."

As he had been standing for long time, sores erupted on his leg. The saint suffered very much for about nine months. Even though Emperor Theodosius sent letter and deputed three metropolitans requesting him to get down from the pillar, the saint remained there fasting and praying without yielding. He got cure to the sores. Simon Desthuno died in AD 459 and was buried in the big church in Antioch. The church arranged to build a fort around the pillar on which the saint stood in penance. Within this fort near Aleppo, there are four churches. The holy church celebrates the feast of this saint on July 17th.

Mor Simeon Stylites' life reminds us of the importance of self-discipline and self-control. Simeon's dedication to spiritual discipline is a reminder that true happiness, fulfilment and spiritual awareness can come from within, rather than from external sources particularly in today's world where materialism is often prioritized.

Simeon's steadfast determination to achieve spiritual enlightenment and willingness to endure discomfort in pursuit of his spiritual goals teaches us about the importance of perseverance and commitment. Instead of giving up on our goals at the first sign of difficulty, we can learn from Simeon's example that rewards can come from persevering through adversity.

Simeon was committed to serving others. He offered spiritual guidance and inspired others to lead lives of devotion and service. In a world that often prioritizes self-interest, Simeon's example reminds us of the importance of working together for the greater good.

Simeon remained steadfast in his faith and his commitment to God. His example is a powerful reminder that faith and spirituality can provide a source of strength and comfort in difficult times.

EXERCISE:

1. Why is Mor Simeon called St. Simeon Desthuno?
2. Who are known as Esthanoye?
3. Where was Simeon Desthuno born?
4. What was the vision of Simon in his boyhood?
5. What was the prayer of Simeon during his last days?
6. When did Simeon Desthuno pass away?
7. When does the church celebrate the feast of the saint?
8. What lessons can we learn from Mor Simeon's life?

Chapter 12. Holy Qurbana Song

Innal Nin Kabringal Doodanmar

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Innal Nin Kabringal Doodanmar Poondum Vellangi Shishyakal dhupasugandakku- Ttukalodum po-yi Ariyichavare Malagha Than sthu-thyamudhanam</p>	<p>¹ On this day – angels clothed in – dazzling white Came down to Your tomb They announced to – those women disciples, who came There with sweet spi-ces, Of Your glorious resurrection.</p>
<p>² Thiruvulamay- mruthipoondakkabareeninguyirettu manushare Veezhchayilninnetti swargakku- Ttathodukoode Mothippan Namme meli- Ppicho-nay sthothram</p>	<p>² On this day – let’s sing praise to – Him Who by Own will tasted death And rose from the – tomb and raised the Mankind from fall And gladdened by uniting Us with heavenly hosts</p>
<p>³ Njayar Dine Doodanmar vellayani njethi Kabararike Avariloral Neekkiya Kallinme Leriyirunnu- Aghilesan Jeevichennariyicha- Narikale</p>	<p>³ On Sunday – angels clothed in – dazzling white Came down to the tomb. One of them rolled – the stone away, And sat on it And told the women That the Lord of all has risen.</p>
<p>Barekmor Priest: Shubho ... People: Menolam ...</p>	<p>Barekmor Priest: Shubho ... People: Menolam ...</p>
<p>⁴ Nadha! ni-nnudhanam Doodarki- Nnekunnanandam Ithunarikal Chonnarivayathinal Semaon Keeppa Santhoshikku-nnanandi- Kkunna-Yohannan Kuriyelaison</p>	<p>⁴ On this day – angels rejoice, O Lord, in Your Re-su-rrection. Simon Peter – and John rejoice Since the women- Announced to them Of Your glorious resurrection. Kuriyelaison</p>

Than mrithiyal azhakake nasi..

Manglish	English
<p>1 Thanmrithiyalazhakenasippikkum Maranathekkonnittakalkarsa Than Keezhil Ninnadiyaeeveenda Nina- Kkuchithadhvaniyil sthuthipadu- Nnadiyarellarum</p> <p>Barekmor Priest: shubho... People: Men 'olam ...</p>	<p>1 You, by Your death, killed the death That corrupts all the beauty And You redeemed our race from The oppression of Satan; In voices that befit God We, the children, sing praises.</p> <p>Barekmor Priest: shubho... People: Men 'olam ...</p>
<p>2 Athula Vishudha Sabhe Prardhippan Nin Makkaleyum Kootti Slebaya! Rakshicha Sutha- Nnayi Sthothram Padeeduka Uchithadhvaniyil Sthuthi Padu- Nnadiyarellarum.</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p>2 O Church, holy and chosen, Gather your children and pray Sing glory and praise to the Son Who redeemed you by His Cross; In voices that befit God We, the children, sing praises.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Responsory (Enyono) - Manavar Vanor Mun Mun Nin

Manglish	English
<p>1 Manavar Vanor Mun Mun Nin Mahimaye Vandicheedunnu Karunanidhiyam Njungalude Karthave! Sthuthyan Neeeye</p>	<p>1 Before Your Majesty, Lord; Angels and mortals worship Abundantly Merciful! To You befits glory, God</p>
<p>2 Njayar Dinaminnyarathil Dhwarangal Thurakkappettu Poozhiiyil Mrutharay Meviyavar- Kkul Sharanamurappundayi</p>	<p>2 On this great day of Sunday Doors of the heights were opened There was hope and solace for Those fallen asleep in dust</p>
<p>3 Moraneesho ! Ninnudhanal Srushtikal Modichellam Mrithar Neeyavarekkabarul Poyi Kandathinal Sthuthicheyyunnu</p> <p>Priest: Shubho— People: Menolam—</p>	<p>3 Lord Jesus! Your Resurrection Brought joy to all creation The dead praise You for You have Visited them in their grave</p> <p>Priest: Shubho— People: Menolam—</p>
<p>4 Ekasuthan Thanuyir Poondipparishudhamatham Divasathil Mashiha Jeevichidukayal Manvinnulakukal Modichu</p>	<p>4 The Only Begotten rose From tomb on this Holy day Christ came to life from the dead The earth and heaven rejoiced</p>

Responsory (Enyono) - Yoodanmar Kurishil Thuukki

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Yoodanmar Kurishil Thuukki thane Kabarathil Vachittum Udhanathalulavakum Lajjavashankayavarkkunday Halleluah ve Halleluah</p>	<p>¹ They condemned and crucified And placed him in a tomb, yet They were afraid that He will Rise and will put them to shame Halleluiah ve Halleluiah</p>
<p>² Seemavahi parakramiye- Kabarool drohikal pootteettu Idival poley purathayi than Mudrakkilathoru kedum Halleluah ve Halleluah</p>	<p>² The a-cursed locked in the tomb The Mighty Who holds borders Yet He out like lightning, Without damaging its seal. Halleluiah ve Halleluiah</p>
<p>³ Naadha vilava velakkarodu chothippanayi vanu avakasham avarthanavaney thoppinu puramey avar thookki Halleluah ve Halleluah</p> <p>Barekmor Priest: Shubho ... People: Menolam ...</p>	<p>³ Lord came to the creation To see fruits from labourers Outside the vineyard they hanged Him To take His inheritance Halleluiah ve Halleluiah</p> <p>Barekmor Priest: Shubho ... People: Menolam ...</p>
<p>⁴ Kaanathathiney thedithan Lokum naadhan pookkarey Kabaril thanney adachavarey Lajjippichudhanathal Halleluah ve Halleluah</p> <p>Kuriyelaison</p>	<p>⁴ Lord came to the creation In search of those who were lost They locked Him in the tomb, yet He rose and put them to shame Halleluiah ve Halleluiah</p> <p>Kuriyelaison</p>

Year 8

Chapter 13. Prayer

Psalm 63

Psalm 63 is a Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. It's about comfort and assurance in God's presence.

Manglish	English
¹ Ente Dheivame! Nee Ente Dheivamakunnu; Najn Ninakkai Kathirikkum. Dahichum Varandum Vellathinai Agrahikunna Bhoomipole, Ente Almavum Ninne Kurichu Dahichirikyunnu. Ente Jedavum Ninakkai Kaathirikunnu.	¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
² Ninte Balavum Ninte Bahumanavum Kanman Iprakaram Sathyamayittu Najan Ninne Nokki	² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.
³ Enthennal Ninte Karuna Jeevanekaal Nallathakunnu; Ente Adaranga Ninne Sthuthikkum	³ Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.
⁴ Njan Jeevanode Irikkumbol Iprakaram Njan Ninnevaazthukayum, Ninte Namathil Ente Kaikal Uyarthukayum Cheyum.	⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
⁵ Ente Athmavu Kozhuppum Medasum Kondennapole Pushttiyakum. Ente Ayi Sthuthiyulla Adharanga Kondu Ninne Mahathwappeduthukayum Cheyum.	⁵ My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
⁶ Ente Kidakkayinmel Njan Ninne Orthu; Rathri Kelangalil Njan Ninne Dhyanikkukayum Cheythu.	⁶ when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
⁷ Enthannal Nee Enikku Sahayakaranayitheerunnu. Vinte Chirakukalude Nizhalil Njan Marackappeduml.	⁷ for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
⁸ Ente Athmavu Ninne Pinthudarnnu. Ninte Valathukai Enne Thangukayum Cheythu.	⁸ My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.
⁹ Ente Athmavine Nasippipan Annveshikkunnavar Bhoomiyude Aazhangalilekku Pravesikkum.	⁹ But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth;
¹⁰ Avar Valinu Elppikkappedukayum Kurunarikkalkku Bhashnamayi Theerukayum Cheyyum;	¹⁰ they shall be given over to the power of the sword, they shall be prey for jackals.

¹¹ Rajavu Dhaivathil Santhozhikkum.
Avanekkondu Aanayidunna Evanum
Pukazhchayundakum. Enthannal Asathyam
Parayunnavarude Vayi Adakkappedum.

Dhaivame ! Sthuthi Ninakku
Yoghyamakunnu. Barekhome.

¹¹ But the king shall rejoice in God; all who
swear by him shall exult, for the mouths
of liars will be stopped.

To you belongs praise, O God.
Barekhome.

Enyono

Manglish	English
¹ Swargasthanaya Rajavee ! Njan Vinte Adukkal Vannu Ninte Simhasanathinte Mumbake Vandhichu.	¹ O heavenly King, in the morning I come in Your presence and bow before Your throne.
² Ninakku Virodhamai Njan Cheytha Sakala Papangalum Ennodu Kshamikkaname.	² Pardon all the sins that I committed against you.
³ Uthamanum Dhayaluvumayullavane ! Njan Ninnodapekshikkukayum Ninte Karunakkai Agrahikkukayum Cheyyunnu.	³ Gracious and compassionate Lord, I plead and long for your mercy.
⁴ Ninakku Virodhamai Njan Cheytha Sakala Papangalum Ennodu Kshamikkaname.	⁴ Pardon all the sins that I committed against you.
⁵ Prakasavum, Prakasaputhranum, Prakasathil Vasichu Kondirikkunna Vanumayullavane ! Anthakarathal Akramikkappedatha Aa Prakasathinu Enne Nee Yoghyanakkaname. Barekhome.	⁵ The one who is light and lives in light, make me worthy of Your light that does not succumb to darkness. Barekhome.
⁶ Swargathilum Bhoomiyilum Mahathwamullavanum Swargheeyarum Bhavumeekarum Thante Namathe Mahathwa Ppeduthunnavanumaya Karthave! Ninakku Sthuthy.	⁶ I praise the Lord whose name is being glorified in the heaven above by the heavenly beings and by the people on the earth.
⁷ Ammen.	⁷ Amen.

Psalm 113

Manglish	English
¹ Prakasathinte Srashtavinu Sthuthi. Karthavinte Bruthyanmare ! Sthuthi Paduveen. Ningal Karthavinte Namathe Sthuthippin.	¹ Praise the Lord, the creator of light. Praise Him, you servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord.
² Karthavinte Namam Adimuthal Athinte Asthamanam Vareyum Karthavinte Namam Valiyathakunnu.	² May the name of the Lord be blessed from the beginning and for ever.

³ Suryante udhayam muthal athite
asthamaanam vareyum Karthaavinte naamam
valiyathaakunnu.

⁴ Karthavu Sakala Jathikalkum Melai
Unnathanum Avante Bahumanam
Akasathinu Meethayakunnu.

⁵ Uyarathil Vasikkukayum Azhath
Nokkukayum Cheyyunna Nammude
Dahivamaya Karthavinodu Thullyanai
Akasathilum Boomiyilum Arullu.

⁶ Avan Eliyavane Janathinte
Prabhukkanmarodu Koode Iruthendathinu
Kooppayil ninum uyarhunnu. Avan
machiyaayavale makkalude santhoshamulla
mathavaayi
Hhavanathil vasikkumaraakkukayum
cheyyunnu.

⁷ Daivame sthuthi ninakku yogyamaakunnu.
Barekmore.

³ From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the Lord is to be praised.

⁴ The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

⁵ Who is like the Lord our God ? He dwells
in the heights above and yet He looks
upon the depths.

⁶ He raises up the poor from the dust and
make them sit with princes. He makes
the barren women to be a joyful mother
of children and He grants her a home.

⁷ To you belongs praise, O God.
Barekhor.

Eqbo

Manglish	English
¹ Daivame njangale sahayikkaname. Njangal cheytha paapangalude thiramalakalum chuzhalikalum njangale chuttirikkunnu.	¹ God help us. The whirls and waves of sins that we committed are encircling us.
² Njangal paapa samudrathil mungippokathirippanayittu nee njangalkku samadhanathinte thuramughamayirikkaname. Njangal anuthapathinayittu kaathirikkunnu.	² You be the port of peace for us that we may not sink in the sea of sins. We are waiting to repent.
³ Pathrosinu ennapole njangalkku ninte kai neettithannu njangalodu karuna cheyyaname...	³ As You extended Your hand to Peter, extend Your hand to us and help us.
⁴ Sthoumenkalos	⁴ Sthoumenkalos...

Qolo

Manglish	English
¹ Sugandha vasanayayittu Pithavaya Daivathinu thannethanne kazhchayanachavanaya Missiha thamburane!	¹ O Christ, our Lord, You offered Yourself as a pleasing incense before God the Father.
² Nee moolam njangal Daivathinkal sugandha vasanayayitheerumarakaname.	² Because of You, we may be a pleasing incense before God.

³ Njungalude namaskarangalum
shushrushakalum nee nirasikkaruthe. Ava
ninakku sugandha vasana veeshunna
sugandhavargangalayitheeraname.

⁴ Barekmor

³ Though our prayers and offerings are
abominable and foul smelling, touch and
purify us with Your holy hand which
cleansed the lepers to make our prayers
and offerings sweet smelling fragrances.

⁴ Barekkmor.

For the Intercession of Mother of God

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Athyunnathante shakthi aavasikkukayum lokathinte rakshakane prasavikkukayum cheytha shudhimathiyaya kanyakaye! Lokathodu karunacheyyuvan ninte ekajathanodu nee apekshichu prardhikkaname. Ninte prardhanayalum apekshayalum avan lokathodu karuna cheyyumarakatte.</p>	<p>¹ God our Lord, by Your presence You jolted Mount Zion. While You were bearing the heights and the depths, You willed that Virgin Mary conceive You without marriage and bring You forth beyond description. May Your mother's name be glorified and help us by her prayers.</p>

For the Intercession of Saints

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Sahadenmare! Daivam thante karunayal njangalellavarodum krupacheyyuvanum avasana naalile shikshavidhiyil ninnu nangale rakshippanum jayathinte kireedangal ningal praapikkunna samayathu njungal ningale kanman idavaruvanumayittu njangalkkuvendi apekshikkenname...</p>	<p>¹ Martyrs! pray for us that He may have mercy on us by His grace and save us from the punishment of the last day. Pray for us that we may be made worthy to see you when you receive the victorious crowns.</p>

For the Intercession of the Patron Saint

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Mor() njerukkathilirikkunna ellavarum ninte sahayathe anveshikkunnu.</p>	<p>¹ St. (Name), those who are in distress seek your help.</p>
<p>² Ninte prardhana njangalkku kottayum abhayasthanavum aayirikkaname.</p>	<p>² May your prayer be a fortress and refuge for us.</p>
<p>³ Ninte prardhanayal njungalude yachanakal nalkappedukayum njungalude rogikal sughappedukayum pishachukkalal pareekshikkappedunnavar swathanthriyapedukayum cheyyumarakename.</p>	<p>³ By your prayers, may our petitions be granted, sick people be healed and those who are being tempted by Satan be liberated.</p>

For Repentance

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Karthave! Ninte nyayavidhi ugravum njungalude kadangal valareyumakunnu.</p>	<p>¹ O God, You do not deny Your mercy to the sinners who call upon You. By Your</p>

Neethi kopichirikkunnu. Odi olippan njangalkku kazhivilla. Njangalkkuvendi nyayasthalathekku ninne ayachathaya aa snehathal njangale nyayavidhiyilekku praveshippikkathayum njangalude kadangal orkkathayum irikkaname. Neethi niranja nyayadhipanayullove! Dayathonni njangalodu karuna cheyyaname.

compassion spare us from punishments and the rods of wrath. To praise You for Your mercy, grant us joyful months and prosperous years. By glorious sign of Your cross guard us from the evil. Lord, may we not be silent from praising you and withdrawn from glorifying You. Lord, do not judge us according to Your righteousness. We confess that we are sinners. If You judge us according to our sins; we cannot hope eternal life and cannot plead before You and shall inherit fiery-hell. Therefore, according to Your mercy pardon and forgive our sins. Lord, when You judge us, let our sins not conceal us. When the righteous garb in glory, may we not be naked at the judgment. We confess that we have fallen in sin, extend Your hand unto us that we may stand again. O compassionate One, who opens the door to all those who repent, have mercy on us as You forgave the thief on Cross at Your side.

For the Departed

Manglish	English
¹ Nidraprapichavaraya njangalude pithakkanmarkkum sahodaranmarkkum nalla aaswasavum nalla ormayum nee nalkaname.	¹ Lord, grant peace and good memory to our departed fathers and brothers.
² Karthave! Ninte aaradhakare vishudhanmarude sanghangalilum nirakalilum cherkkaname.	² Include them in the company of saints and in their ranks..
³ Nee ninte simhasanathinmel irikkayum nallavare dushtanmarilninnu verthirikkukayum cheyyunna samayathu nyayasanathinkal avarkku ninte karuna labhikkumarakaname.	³ When you sit at the throne for judgment and to separate the righteous from the evil, may they receive Your compassion.
⁴ Ninte mahathwam velippedunna naalil avar ninte valathu bhagalpur nilkkukayum cheyyumarakaname.	⁴ When You appear in Your grace, may they stand on Your right side.
⁵ Moryo rahem 'a lay noo 'adarayn	⁵ Moryo rahem 'a lay noo 'adarayn

Bo'ootho of Mor Ya'qub

Manglish	English
¹ Karthave ninne Sthuthikkunnathum unnathamaya ninte naamathinu paadunnathum, prabhathakaalathu ninte	¹ Lord, it is good to give thanks to You and to sing praise to Your exalted name, to

krupayum , raathrikaalangalil ninte
viswasthathayum ariyikkunnathum ethra
nallathakunnu..

proclaim Your goodness in the morning
and Your faithfulness in the night.

² Karthave prabhathathil ente shabdam nee
kelkkaname. Prabhathathil njan orungi
ninakku kaanappedumarakaname

² Lord, hear my voice in the morning. May
I be seen ready before You in the
morning.

³ Karthave! ninte janathodu karuna
cheyyaname.

³ Lord, have compassion on Your people.

⁴ Karthave! Njangan ellavarudeyum paapangan
pariharichu kshamikkaname.

⁴ Lord, pardon and forgive all our sins.

⁵ Parishudhanayullavane! Ninte valathukai
njangalude mel aavasippichu ninte
nithyamaya naamam nimitham njanganalude
rogavasthakku pariharam nalkaname.

⁵ Holy One, let Your right hand
overshadow us and Your name heal our
weaknesses.

Chapter 14. Prophets

Objective: To learn about the prophets, the classification of prophets, their mission and messages.

Introduction

A Prophet communicates divine revelations and the will of God, to the kings and the people. Prophets played an important role in the history of Israel, during the period of Old Testament. The word 'Prophet' originates from the Greek word 'Prophetes'. The word for prophet in Hebrew is 'Nabi'.

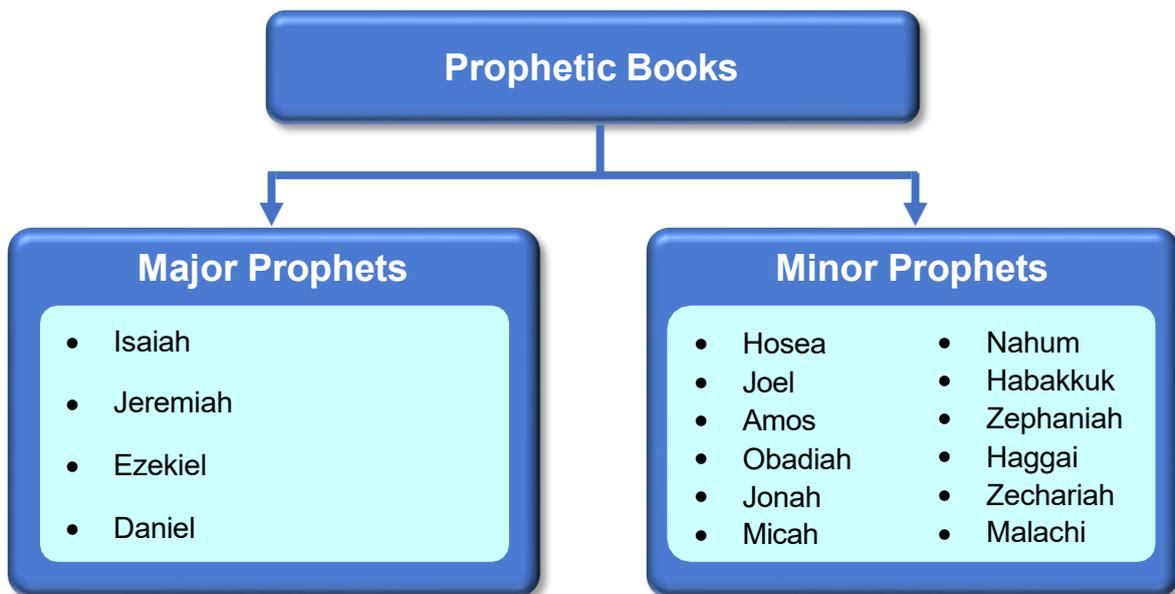


“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.” (Hebrew 1:1-2)

There were many who had earned the gift of prophesy. However, some of them were not known as prophets as their main role was not prophetic work. Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Deborah, Miriam, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, etc. are not known as prophets.

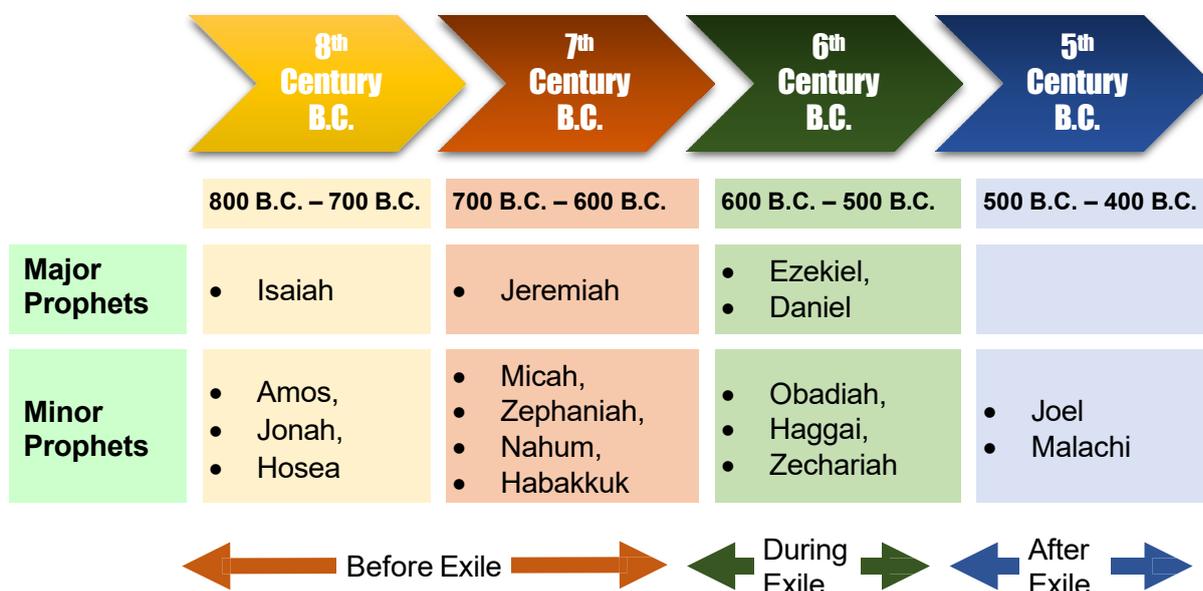
Prophetic Books

There are 16 prophetic books. These books are classified into major prophets (4 books) and minor prophets (12 books) based on the size of the books.



Period of Prophets

The period from the 8th Century B.C. to the 5th Century B.C. is considered to be the period of the prophets.



The 70 years between 605 B.C. and 535 B.C. is considered as the period of exile, during which several thousand Israelites were resettled in Babylon as captives. Hence the prophets are also grouped into three groups, based on year in which the prophets lived –

- Prophets before exile,
- Prophets during exile and
- Prophets after exile.

Prophetic Mission

The Prophetic Mission was to reveal the will of God to the people. Up to the time of Samuel the prophets were also called seers. The prophets predicted the future and foretold events to come. They also engaged in other activities. The important duties of prophets were –

1. Prophets were messengers of God who revealed God to the people.
2. They were true interpreters of Law.
3. They were preachers and teachers in relation with religious and social matters.
4. They were political advisers and conveyed the will of God to both the kings and the people.
5. They were social reformers who opposed evil practices among the people.

Prophetic Message

Their prophecies had many similarities as well as many differences. The prophets were influenced by political, religious, and social atmosphere of the period in which they lived. However, there are certain distinctive features in the message of prophets who were guided by the Holy Spirit.

1. Their messages were Christ centred (Luke 10:24).
2. It was interpreted by Christ (Luke 24:27-44).

3. It was a testimonial of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:21-24).
4. It included the message of grace and salvation (1 Peter 1:9-12).
5. It was filled with revelations that would endure till the end of the world (Matthew 5:17-18)

Prophetess

In addition to men, many women “Prophetess” were also involved in prophesy. They were –

- Miriam (Exodus 15:20-21)
- Debora (Judges 4:4-5)
- Huldha (2 Kings 22:14)
- Anna (Luke 2:36)

In short, prophets were representatives of God, who gave guidance in matters of politics, traditions and faith, to both the king and his subjects. Quite often, the moral zeal of prophets made kings virulent and many prophets were martyred.

The Vision about Christ in Prophecies

Many prophecies point to Jesus Christ either directly or indirectly. Even though these prophecies were apparently centered around Israel and God, they also gave a message of hope about a new earth and new heaven ruled by God the King. They also gave an indication of a King of Kings, who would take the power, after destroying the enemies of Israel. That King of Kings is Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ, his activities, his Crucifixion, his Death, his Resurrection, his Second Advent and Judgement are mentioned in these prophecies.

EXERCISE

1. What was the role of prophets in the lives of the Israelites?
2. What were the duties of the prophets?
3. Which period is known as the era of prophets?
4. Who were the major prophets, and during which period did they live?
5. Who were the minor prophets, and during which period did they live?
6. Who were the prophetesses of Israel?
7. Into how many groups can the minor prophets be classified based on time?
8. Which century is considered the time of exile?
9. Who were the minor prophets that lived before the exile?

Chapter 15. Isaiah

Objective: To learn about the prophet Isaiah and his prophecies.

Bible References: Isaiah

Introduction

Isaiah, son of Amoz, prophesied during the reigns of Ussiah, Jonathan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who were the Kings of Judah.

Jews believe that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, for his unwavering commitment to prophesying the word of God and his refusal to stop delivering these messages, despite opposition. Isaiah's prophetic ministry lasted for about 40 years.



Isaiah is notable for prophesying extensively about the coming of Jesus Christ. He portrays the Messiah as a Suffering Servant, emphasizing the sacrificial nature of His mission. In his prophecies, Isaiah predicts the miraculous birth of Jesus from a Virgin, (Isaiah 7:14). In chapters 52 and 53, Isaiah provides powerful insights into the sufferings and crucifixion of the Messiah, foretelling the profound sacrifice that Jesus would make for the redemption of humanity.

The book of Isaiah is considered a miniature Bible by many theologians, as –

- The first 39 chapters prophesy the punishment for idolatry and injustice, not only for Judah – God's own people, but also for the whole world, as all have sinned. God's judgment is certain, as idolatry, immorality, and injustice cannot persist forever.
- Messages of salvation emerge in the last 27 chapters. Isaiah instills hope by prophesying that the Lord will come to save all mankind, removing their sins through the cross. He concludes his prophecies with the promise of a new earth and a new heaven (66:22), a hope also echoed in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament (Rev. 21:1).

Some theologians believe that the prophecies of Isaiah were written in two periods –

- Chapters 1-39 were composed before the Babylon exile, and
- Chapters 40-66 were written during the exile.

However, other theologians suggest to study the book as a whole as it was written by one author and there are more similarities than differences between the two sections.

Vison about Christ

The book of Isaiah contains the most prophecies about Christ. Isaiah has prophesied about the two phases of the redemption plan of Jesus Christ –

1. **First Phase:** The events that took place from the birth of Christ to His Ascension.
2. **Second Phase:** The second Advent of Christ and the related events.

Prophecies about first phase of the redemption plan of Jesus Christ have been fulfilled –

Old Testament	Prophecy	New Testament	Fulfilment
Isaiah 7:14	<p>Offspring of a Virgin</p> <p><i>Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.</i></p>	Matthew 1:22-25	<p><i>All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’, which means, ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.</i></p>
Isaiah 9:2	<p>The Great Light</p> <p><i>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.</i></p>	Matthew 4:12-16	<p><i>He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’</i></p>
Isaiah 42:1	<p>John the Baptist prepares the way</p> <p><i>A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.</i></p>	Matthew 3:1-3	<p><i>In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”’</i></p>
Isaiah 42:1	<p>The Chosen Servant</p> <p><i>Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.</i></p>	Matthew 12:15-18	<p><i>Many crowds followed him, and he cured all of them, and he ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.</i></p>
Isaiah 53:9	<p>Buried with the rich</p> <p><i>... and his tomb with the rich</i></p>	Matthew 27:57-60	<p><i>When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So, Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth</i></p>

Old Testament	Prophecy	New Testament	Fulfilment
			<i>and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.</i>
Isaiah 53:12	with transgressors <i>... because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; ...</i>	Mark 15:27	<i>And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left</i>
Isaiah 53:12	Intercession <i>... yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressor</i>	Luke 23:34	<i>Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'</i>

We see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies in the New Testament Gospels. St. Matthew proclaims that the prophecy of "Virgin Offspring" was fulfilled through the birth of Jesus by St. Mary. He also explains how the ministry of Jesus Christ was like a "Great Light" shining for all. St. Matthew also proclaims that the prophecy of the "Chosen Servant" came true by the actions of Jesus Christ. St. Mark illustrates how Jesus was crucified between two criminals, fulfilling the prophecy of being "numbered with the transgressors".

Conclusion

The prophecies of Isaiah are very different from the other Old Testament books. Most Old Testament books highlight that God would severely punish and destroy the sinner. However, Isaiah clarifies that God saves man without remembering his past sins if man repents and returns to God. Judgement and Hope reflect one after the other in the book of Isaiah.

QUESTIONS

1. During which period did Isaiah live?
2. Who were the kings of Israel during the time Isaiah lived?
3. Why is the Book of Isaiah described as a miniature of the Bible?
4. Name some prophecies of Isaiah about Jesus Christ and explain how we see their fulfilment in the New Testament.
5. How do the prophecies of Isaiah differ from the prophecies of the other prophets?

PROJECT WORK

1. Create a presentation or flash cards about Isaiah's vision and prophecies of Jesus Christ, and present it to the rest of the students in your Sunday School.
 - a. Allocate the explanation of the different prophecies to different members in your Sunday School class so that each student has an opportunity to present.
 - b. In addition to the prophecies mentioned above in the text book research the Bible about other prophecies of Isaiah, some of which are given below for reference –

Prophecy	Old Testament	New Testament – Fulfilment
Isaiah saw the glory of God	Isaiah 6:1-5	John 12:41
Hardening of the hearts of Israel	Isaiah 6:10	John 12:40
Virgin birth of the Messiah	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23-25
Light brought to Zebulun and Naphtali	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:12-16
A Son to be born	Isaiah 9:6	Matthew 1:23
Messiah is from Jesse / David's lineage	Isaiah 11:1	Luke 1:31-33

Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him	Isaiah 11:2	Matthew 3:16, Matthew 12:18, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22
The Corner Stone, rejected	Isaiah 28:16	Matthew 21:42-44
The deaf to hear, the blind to see	Isaiah 29:18	Matthew 11:5
Prepare the way for Messiah	Isaiah 40:3-5	Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, John 1:23
The Messiah's calling and Ministry	Isaiah 42:1-4	Matthew 12:18-21
The delight of the Father for the Son	Isaiah 42:1	Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Mark 1:11, Mk 9:7, Luke 3:22, Lk 9:35
I have put my Spirit upon Him	Isaiah 42:1	Matthew 12:18
Not cry out, or hurt the weak	Isaiah 42:3	Matthew 12:19, Matthew 26:57-68, Matthew 27:11-14, Luke 23:9-11, 1 Peter 2:23.
Beaten, spat upon	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67-68, Matthew 27:26-31, Mark 14:65, Mark 15:16-20, Luke 22:63-65, John 18:22
Set His face light flint	Isaiah 50:7	Luke 9:51
Message about Messiah not believed	Isaiah 53:1	John 1:11, John 12:37-38
Messiah despised, forsaken, sorrowful, and experienced grief	Isaiah 53:3	Matthew 23:37, Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 13:34
Carried our griefs and sorrows	Isaiah 53:4	Matthew 8:16-17
Put to death for the world's sins	Isaiah 53:4-6	Declared: Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, Luke 18:31-34, Explained: John 1:29
By His stripes, we are healed (salvation from sin, not physical healing)	Isaiah 53:5	1 Peter 2:24.
World's iniquities upon the Messiah	Isaiah 53:6	2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 1 John 2:2
Messiah, oppressed and afflicted	Isaiah 53:7-8	Acts 8:32-33
Messiah silent before accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:63, 27:12, Mark 14:61, Mark 15:5, Luke 23:9, John 19:9, 1 Peter 2:23
Cut off from life (put to death)	Isaiah 53:8	Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46, John 19:18
Messiah died for the sins of His people.	Isaiah 53:8	Acts 2:22-23, Acts 5:30-31
Buried in a rich man's grave	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55, John 19:38-42
No deceit in Messiah	Isaiah 53:9	1 Peter 2:22
Father's will to put His Son to death	Isaiah 53:10	Matthew 26:39, Luke 22:42; John 12:27, Acts 2:23
Messiah's death a guilt offering	Isaiah 53:10	John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7
Messiah will see His seed (believers)	Isaiah 53:10	Matthew 28:8-10, 16-20, Mark 16:9-18, Luke 24:13-49, John 20:11-21:23, Acts 1:1-8
Messiah will prolong His days	Isaiah 53:10	Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9; Acts 5:31, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
Satisfaction of the Messiah	Isaiah 53:11	Hebrews 1:1-4
The Servant (Messiah) to justify the many by bearing their sins.	Isaiah 53:11 Isaiah 53:12	Romans 3:21-26, Romans 5:17-21, 2 Corinthians 5:21
Messiah's glorious future	Isaiah 53:12	Hebrews 1:1-4
Messiah's willing death	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, John 10:11-18
Messiah among the transgressors	Isaiah 53:12	Luke 22:37, Luke 23:32-43
Messiah interceded for sinners	Isaiah 53:12	Luke 23:34
Messiah to be resurrected	Isaiah 55:3	Acts 13:34

Chapter 16. Jeremiah

Objective: To learn about the prophet Jeremiah and his prophecies.

Bible References: Jeremiah

Introduction

Jeremiah prophesied during the period of King Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. He was the son of Hilkiah, the priest of Anathoth Jerusalem. His prophetic calling was extraordinary, as the Lord appointed him to be a prophet for nations even before he formed in the womb, consecrating him before he was born (1:5). Because of his deep empathy and sorrowful messages, he is commonly referred to as the 'weeping prophet'.

The Mission of Jeremiah

Jeremiah had been entrusted with a glorious mission, as the Lord declared, "See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). Although his mission was noble, Jeremiah encountered severe hardships. He endured ridicule and contempt, even from his own people in his native place, while faithfully serving the divine purpose.

They apprehended him and put him in prison. The king and his relatives plotted to take his life. However, despite the threats and challenges, Jeremiah remained resolute in his prophetic ministry. They even threw him into a cistern filled with mud. Eventually, he was forcibly deported to Egypt. After 40 years of faithfully prophesying, he met a tragic end, being stoned to death.



Major Thoughts

The important message conveyed by Jeremiah is to place trust in God. He fearlessly delivered strong warnings to the leaders and people who disregarded moral laws, foretelling the impending punishment. Jeremiah emphasized that the Lord would indeed punish the sinners, but He also patiently awaited their repentance.

Vision about Christ

There is a clear and powerful illustration of the Messiah in Jeremiah chapter 23:1-8. Jeremiah provides hope to the people, assuring them that a Saviour will come, described as a good shepherd and a righteous branch of David. This prophesied Messiah will reign as a wise and just king, executing justice and righteousness in the land. Under His rule, Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This passage serves as a source of comfort and anticipation for the coming of the promised Messiah who will bring salvation and security to the people.

The book of Lamentations

The book of Lamentations is considered as a part of the book of Jeremiah, though there is an argument that it is not written by Jeremiah. The major theme of the book is centred around the misery and lamentation of Jerusalem. The book of Lamentations is written as an eyewitness account of the dire situation in Jerusalem when the city and Temple were devastated, its leaders were taken captive as slaves, and the offerings and sacrifices were brought to a halt.

The author vividly portrays his anguish and sorrow over the destruction of the city and the temple. He openly acknowledges that their sins were the cause of their downfall. Despite this, the author humbly relies on God's mercy and holds onto hope that Israel, the bride of the Lord, will be accepted again. In the book of Lamentations, there is an acceptance that the prophecies of punishment were divinely inspired by God. While the Lamentations express deep anguish and sorrow at the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel, they also proclaim the mercy of Lord and faith in His promises.

Despite Jeremiah's earnest warnings and prophecies about the impending destruction of Israel, the people stubbornly refused to accept his message. Through the prophet, the Lord implored the people to abandon their evil ways and turn back to Him, but they rejected his counsel. Jeremiah even foretold the exile in Babylon that would last for 70 years, but still, the people remained unbelieving (Jeremiah chapter 25). Jeremiah used various symbols and vivid illustrations to convey the message of the Lord's mercy and the consequences of disobedience. However, despite these efforts to get through to the people, they remained defiant and unwilling to believe in him. Consequently, the people had to endure the exile to Babylon as his prophesy.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Jeremiah's mission?
2. Summarize the key messages in Jeremiah's prophecy.
3. What is Jeremiah's vision regarding Christ?
4. Provide an overview of the content of the book of Lamentations.
5. Briefly describe Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the exile in Babylon.

Chapter 17. Ezekiel

Objective: To learn about the prophet Ezekiel and his prophecies.

Bible References: Ezekiel

Prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, lived in the 6th century B.C. He worked among the Jews during the Babylonian exile. Ezekiel received the gift of prophecy while living on the banks of the river Chebar. Ezekiel aimed to turn the people back to God, especially those who had embraced idol worship during the exile.

The Mission of Ezekiel:

Some Jews, lacked faith in God's word about the return from exile after 70 years, and believed their plight was due to God's failure. They neglected God, mingled with the Babylonians, and became part of Babylonian culture. However, another group sought the true God after realizing that their plight was due to their misconduct and their reluctance to turn to God, neglecting the warnings of prophets. They believed in God's commandments. Being steadfast in the Lord, they began to return to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices. The elders of Judah offered sacrifices under the leadership of Ezekiel, who was also a priest. Ezekiel aimed to turn the people to God, and away from idol worship and false prophets.

Major Thoughts:

1. Chapters 1 to 33 predict punishment for the infidelity and sins of Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet repeatedly states that the day of judgment is at hand. He also predicts that the nations oppressing Israel will also be punished.
2. Chapters 34-38 focus on the deliverance of Israel, emphasizing that the Lord God himself will feed His sheep, seek and rescue the scattered sheep, and bind up the injured.

Prophecy Application:

The prophet gives hope and speaks of a time when Israel will be reinstated. There will be safety and prosperity for the people. A renewed heart will be given to the people. The new temple will become the fountain of living water. The prophecy of Ezekiel applies to social order as well as individuals, emphasizing personal accountability for salvation or punishment.

Vision about Christ:

1. The cedar tree (Ezekiel 17:22-24): A tender sprout of a cedar tree will be planted on a high and lofty mountain of Israel. It will bear fruits and would become a noble cedar. Every kind of bird will live in the shade of its branches. This denotes the supremacy of Messiah.
2. The real heir of the ruler (21:27): Until He comes whose right it is; to him I will give it. This denotes that Messiah will come as the real ruler.
3. The True Shepherd (34:11-31) "I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd." The prophet states that Israel, the flock, will be safe under Jesus Christ, the True Shepherd. (See St. John 10).

QUESTIONS

1. What are the main thoughts of Ezekiel prophecy?
2. What is Ezekiel's vision about Christ?

Chapter 18. Daniel

Objective: To learn about the prophet Daniel and his prophecies.

Bible References: Daniel

Daniel was a prophet who lived in the 6th Century B.C., while the Israelites were exiled in Babylon. Daniel and his three friends were amongst the several captives that King Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon when he attacked Jerusalem in 605 B.C. During the second attack in 587 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city completely and prophet Ezekiel was also made captive.

Even though Daniel prophesied during exile, there are differing views on when this book was written. Some historians think that this book was written during the exile, while others think that it was written during the religious oppression by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 – 164 B.C. Another interesting difference is that the original Hebrew version of the book of Daniel has 12 chapters, whereas the Greek version has 14 chapters.

Major thoughts

The book which consists of 12 chapters, can be divided into two parts.

The first part comprising of chapters 1 – 6 contains the unshakable trust in God and adherence to the traditional rituals of Jews, shown by Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respectively).

Chapters 7 – 12 is a narration of Daniel's vision. The vision reveals that all worldly powers are against God and only the Kingdom of God will survive. Prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and references to the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13-14 makes this book noteworthy. The prophecies of Daniel represent a divinely inspired revelation of the raising of the dead in the future, which makes this book different from others (12:2-3).



Vision about Jesus

1. The vision of Daniel about the Messiah is peculiar in many respects. The books narrate a statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay being crumbled by a stone that is not touched by anyone. The stone represents the Messiah (Son of God) and the statue represents the colonialist forces. The book reminds us that at the right time, Messiah will destroy colonialist forces and rule the world (2:31-35,44).
2. Daniel describes Messiah as the Son of Man with absolute dominion and kingship over all people, nations, and languages. His dominion is everlasting that shall not pass away, and His kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (7:13-14).
3. Daniel prophesied of an anointed prince coming to rebuild Jerusalem but he will be cutoff and thereafter there will be war and misery. This anointed prince is the Messiah (9:25-27).
4. Another representation is a man clothed with belt of glory (gold), which is similar to that mentioned in the book of Revelations (Revelations 1:12-16).

Relevance of the prophecies of Daniel in today's world

Daniel gives hope to those facing severe persecutions and slavery. He affirms that ultimately God's Kingdom will be established and those who trust in Him will be saved and reinstated in the end. This is the essence of New Testament and the hope that we Christians live in.

The steadfast faith and courage of Daniel and his companions in the face of adversity serve as examples for believers facing challenges in the modern world. Our Saviour Jesus Christ will come again to gather those who kept their trust in Him amidst of all adversities the world has thrown at them.

EXERCISE

1. In which century did the prophet Daniel live, and when was this book written?
2. What are the main thoughts in the prophecy of Daniel?
3. Write briefly about Daniel's vision of Christ.
4. What does Daniel assert in his prophecy?

PROJECT WORK:

1. Compare the book of Daniel with the book Revelations and understand the theology embedded.

Chapter 19. Minor Prophets

Objective: To learn about minor prophets, the key message of their prophecies, and the vision they provided to the people about Christ.

Bible References: Chapters ???

Amos



Amos was a shepherd who lived during the beginning of the 8th Century B.C. The word “Amos” means “one who carries burden”.

The background of the prophecy by Amos

Israel enjoyed a period of prosperity during the reign of King Jeroboam. This prosperity created a new set of hegemony leaders, which included landlords, businessmen and officers. The traders sold wheat mixed with chaff and used false measurements. (Amos 8:4) The Judges took bribes and set aside justice (Amos 5:12). To pursue hedonism the women wanted more money and they encouraged their husbands to oppress the poor (Amos 4:1). Rituals became an extraneous show. They irritated God by conducting insincere sacrifices every day. (Amos 4:4-5).

Amos told the people through the prophecy that as the Lord is just, He also expects justice and

righteousness from His worshippers. The main message of the prophesy of Amos is Justice, True and Sincere Worship, and Care for the Weak.

Vision about Christ

A clear picture of Jesus Christ can be seen in the prophecy of Amos (Amos 1:1-10, Amos 9:11-15). He expects Jesus as the Ruler, Saviour who restores his people and also as the Judge with all powers.

Amos' prophecy about the restoration of David's Kingdom (Amos 9:11-12), is a reference to the Messiah, who is a descendant of David, and establishes an eternal Kingdom of God.

Amos calls on the Israelites to seek the Lord in the verses Amos 5:4-6. Jesus also taught about seeking the Kingdom of God.

Amos calls for "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" in the verse Amos 5:24. This verse reflects themes from Jesus's teachings about social justice and righteousness, including caring for the oppressed.

Jonah

The meaning of the word “Jonah” is “dove”. Jonah was a contemporary of Amos who lived in the 8th century B.C. Theologians consider that the book of Jonah was written after the exile between 400-300 B.C.

The background of the prophecy by Jonah

Jonah was asked by God to deliver a message of warning and repentance to the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which was known for its wickedness. However, Jonah was reluctant to fulfill this task. He disobeys God and decides to flee. He boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, a country in the west, which was in the opposite direction of Nineveh.



While on the journey, a great storm arose, threatening to sink the ship. The disobedient Jonah is thrown overboard and swallowed by a large fish. Jonah remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. During this time, Jonah prayed for forgiveness and vowed to obey God's command, and is brought to the shore of Nineveh.

After reaching Nineveh, Jonah preached to the people. The people of Nineveh heeded Jonah's message, repented and proclaimed a fast. They dressed in sackcloth and put ashes on their body as signs of their repentance, and turned away from their evil deeds.

When God saw that the people had repented and had turned away from their evil ways, then God saved them. This story emphasizes the obedience to God's will, the consequences of disobedience, and the possibility of repentance and forgiveness in the face of sin.

The Jews believed that salvation was their right and nobody else had the right to salvation. However, the book of Jonah gives us the message that God's mercy has no boundaries and underscores God's concern for all nations, not just the Israelites. Jonah is sent to preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh, a foreign and hostile nation. All people are children of God and God desires to give salvation to all those who repent. In our Church, it is customary to read from the book of Jonah and mediate on obedience, repentance, God's mercy, and the scope of His grace during the Three-Day Lent.

The Jews believed that salvation was their right and nobody else had the right to salvation. However, the book of Jonah gives us the message that God's mercy has no boundaries and underscores God's concern for all nations, not just the Israelites. Jonah is sent to preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh, a foreign and hostile nation. All people are children of God and God desires to give salvation to all those who repent. In our Church, it is customary to read from the book of Jonah and mediate on obedience, repentance, God's mercy, and the scope of His grace during the Three-Day Lent.

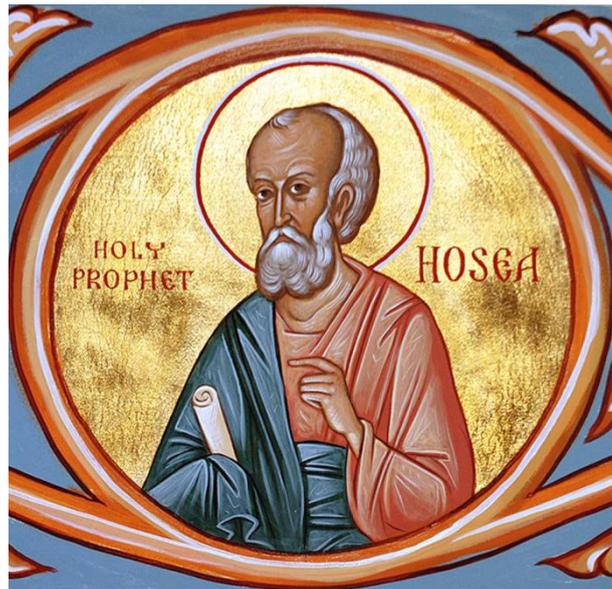
Vision about Christ

Jonah is the only prophet whom which Jesus has compared Himself. (St. Matthew 12:39-41) Jesus says, that “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Just as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of fish, so does the Son of Man spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The experience of Jonah in the belly of the fish is a hint of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Hosea

The prophet Hosea lived in the 8th century B.C. He declared God's commands through his life experiences. The book of Hosea has 14 chapters.

- Chapters 1 – 3 illustrate the relationship between God and Israel in the background of Hosea's married life.
- Chapters 4 – 13 deliver prophetic warnings about the punishments that would fall on Israel for their sins and unfaithfulness towards God, including the threat of foreign invasion and exile.
- Chapter 14 is a calling for repentance and talks about the endless mercy of God who restores the people to His Love by forgetting their sins.



The background of the prophecy by Hosea

Hosea started his prophesy at a time when the people of Israel had forsaken their true Lord and started idolatry and worshipping other gods. God instructed Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman named Gomer, who becomes a symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Gomer's unfaithfulness to her husband, mirrors the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel to their covenant with God.

Despite her unfaithfulness, Hosea bought her back and accepted her again. Through this action, the prophet gives the message of mercy and redemption. Hosea gives a message to the world through this prophecy that God will redeem those who return to God even if they were much unfaithful.

Vision about Christ

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God called the Israelites, back from Egypt, when the nation of Israel was in its infancy. Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus fled to Egypt to escape King Herod's massacre of infants. God called the infant Jesus, back from Egypt, after Herod's death. God restored both the nation of Israel and Jesus from Egypt. Hosea draws a parallel between Israel as God's chosen people and Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.

- Hosea 11:1 states that *“Out of Egypt I called my son.”*
- St. Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1, when he describes the childhood of Jesus and says *“This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called my Son’”*. (St. Matthew 2:15).

Furthermore, Hosea redeemed his unfaithful wife by giving price of fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. In a similar manner Jesus Christ redeemed us by paying with his Blood as the price.

Micah

Micah means “Who is similar to God?” Micah was a villager from Moresheth, which is south west of Jerusalem.

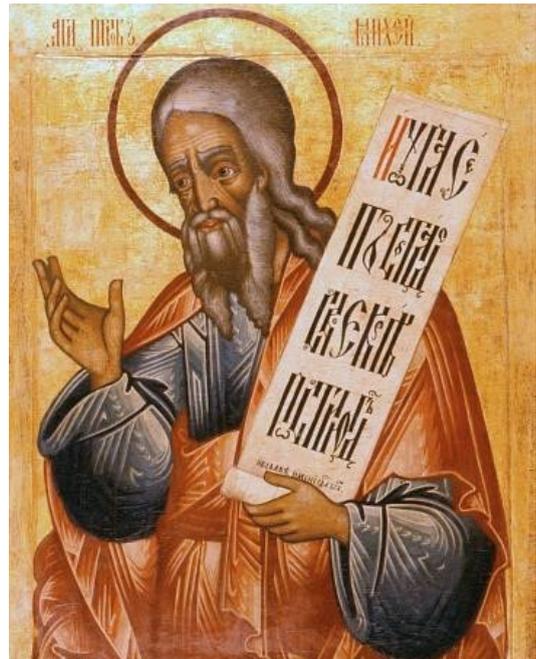
The background of the prophecy by Micah

During the period of Micah, the authorities used to exploit the poor, the traders used to profit unfairly, the judges used to participate in injustice, and the priests used to live sinful and immoral lives.

The book of Micah has seven chapters. One-third of the book describes the sins of the people. The next one-third speaks about the punishments from God for their sins. The last part is a message of Redemption. Sinners would be punished for their sins. However, if they repent and return to God, then He is gracious enough to forgive their sins. The main message of Micah's prophecy is "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession" (7:18).

Vision about Christ

The birthplace of the Messiah and His everlasting rule have been clearly stated by Micah. It is noteworthy that this prophecy was made about 700 years before Jesus was born. "O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." (5:2). It is evident, that the scribes and priests were quite aware of this prophecy. The wise men from the east asked King Herod, where the baby to be the King of Jews was born. Herod in turn enquired with the scribes and chief priests where the Messiah was to be born, and they answered immediately, "In Bethlehem of Judea" (St. Matthew 2:1-6).



Nahum

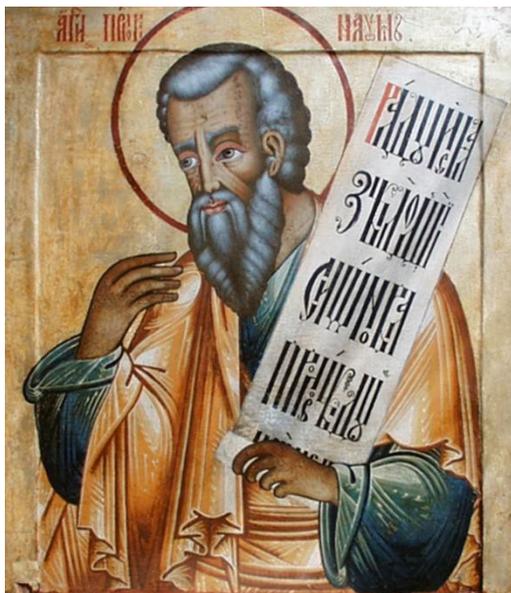
Nahum focuses on the destruction of the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

The background of the prophecy by Nahum:

Nineveh had repented after the preaching of Jonah, and the compassionate God had spared them. However, a century later, they returned to evil deeds, idol worship, and cruelty towards the Israelites. Nahum predicts the complete destruction of Nineveh without offering them a chance to repent, contrasting with Jonah's earlier prophecy.

Reason for Destruction:

The people of Nineveh's return to wickedness, idolatry, and cruelty towards the Israelites led to Nahum's prophecy of their imminent destruction.



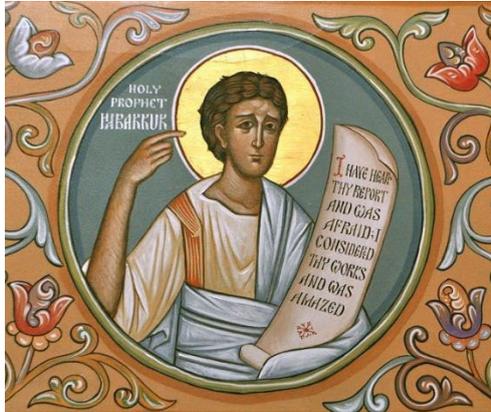
Comparison with Jonah's Prophecy:

Unlike Jonah, who prophesied in Nineveh, Nahum prophesied against Nineveh without going there.

Vision about Christ:

While there is no direct reference to Jesus Christ, chapter 1:2-8 indirectly alludes to Christ as the King of Kings who will judge all people with absolute power at his second advent.

Habakkuk



The book of Habakkuk, is a brief prophecy spanning three chapters, that centres on the destruction of a tyrannical ruler who oppressed the people of Israel. While the ruler's identity remains unclear, some believe it may be an Assyrian emperor.

The background of the prophecy by Habakkuk:

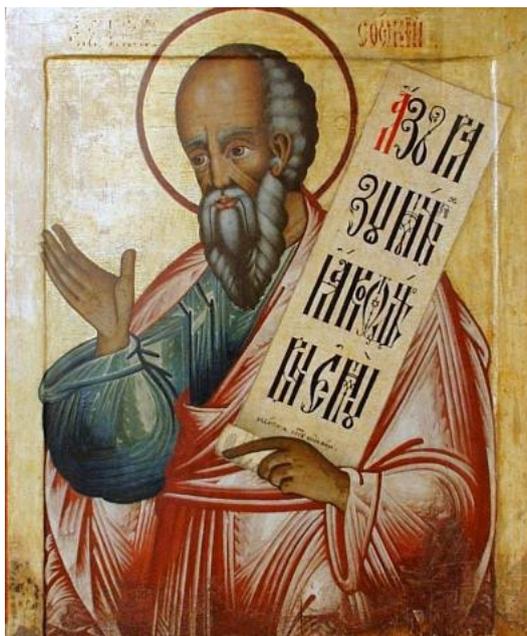
The prophecy is presented in the form of a song of lamentation, featuring two questions posed by the prophet to God, followed by God's responses. The third chapter is a hymn of praise to the Lord.

The first question (1:1-4) expresses the prophet's frustration at unanswered cries for help and the prevalence of violence. The second question (1:12-17) inquires about God's apparent silence in the face of the wicked overpowering the righteous. In Chapter 2, God's reply assures that the wicked will be destroyed, and the righteous will be saved, emphasizing that "the righteous live by their faith."

Vision about Christ:

Although the prophecy doesn't explicitly mention Jesus Christ, there are indirect references to Salvation or a "Saviour" in two instances (3:13-18). The name "Jesus," meaning "Savior," is derived from the concept of salvation. While St. Matthew 1:21 connects Jesus with the role of saving people from their sins, there is also an implied reference to the Kingdom of Messiah in the prophecy, envisioning the earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord during the reign of the Messiah (2:14).

Zephaniah



The background of the prophecy by Zephaniah:

Zephaniah, meaning 'hidden by God,' prophesied during a time of widespread sin, idol worship and renouncement of God in Israel. He was known as the prophet of judgment, and foretells a Day of Judgment, emphasizing God's impending punishment for the people's wickedness (1:14-16). Zephaniah also conveys a message of hope - calling for repentance and assuring that God will forgive sins (2:3).

Vision about Christ:

While the book doesn't directly prophesy about Christ, Zephaniah anticipates a Savior for Israel, and that Saviour is Jesus Christ (3:9-20). Jesus indirectly refers to Zephaniah when speaking about

His second coming. This can be seen by comparing Zephaniah 1:3 and St. Matthew 13:41 and Zephaniah 1:15 and St. Matthew 24:29.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ fulfils the Old Testament promises and prophecies, including those related to the nation of Israel. This shows continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and highlights Jesus as the fulfilment of God's plan for salvation.

EXERCISE

1. What is the background of the prophecy of Amos?
2. What are the main messages of Amos?
3. Explain the vision about Christ by Amos?
4. How does the book of Jonah show that God's salvation is for all?
5. What are the main messages of the prophecy of Jonah?
6. Which prophet declared God's commands through his own life experience?
7. What are the main messages of the prophecy of Hosea?
8. Who are the minor prophets lived in the 7th Century B.C. before the exile?
9. What is the message of the book of Micah?
10. Who clearly prophesied the birth place of Jesus? Write the chapter and verse of the prophecy?
11. Against whom did Nahum prophesy?
12. What prophecy is free from complaints about the prophet's own people?
13. Which prophet did not offer an opportunity for repentance?
14. Can you describe the two questions posed by Habakkuk and God's responses to them?
15. Who is known as the prophet of judgment?

Chapter 20. Gospels

Objective: To learn about the four gospels, their categorisation, the similarities and differences between them, and the vision of Christ from each Gospel.

Bible References: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Gospels – An Introduction



The first four books in the New Testament of the Holy Bible, are called the Gospels. The word Gospel means good news. The word originates from the Greek word “Evangelion” and in English it is “Gospel”. Jesus himself refers to his messages as the “Good News” (Luke 4:18, Mark 1:14).

In the Christian Church that came into existence after the Pentecost, the memories of the life of Jesus, his ministry, his Passion and his Resurrection were very much alive. When the lives of many people who lived with Jesus and witnessed his ministry, were nearing an end, many tried to record those events and preserve them. St. Luke begins his Gospel by reminding this need to write an account, orderly and carefully, of all matters from its beginning.

Many authors wrote such records about Jesus. However, only the books of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John were accepted as Gospels.

The recognition of the four Gospels took place around AD 100, and these canonical Gospels are included in the Holy Bible. While, none of these books provide a complete biography or a full description of the ministry of Jesus Christ, these books collectively reveal the personality of Jesus Christ. Each author emphasises a particular personality trait of Jesus and explains that point with further proofs and instances.

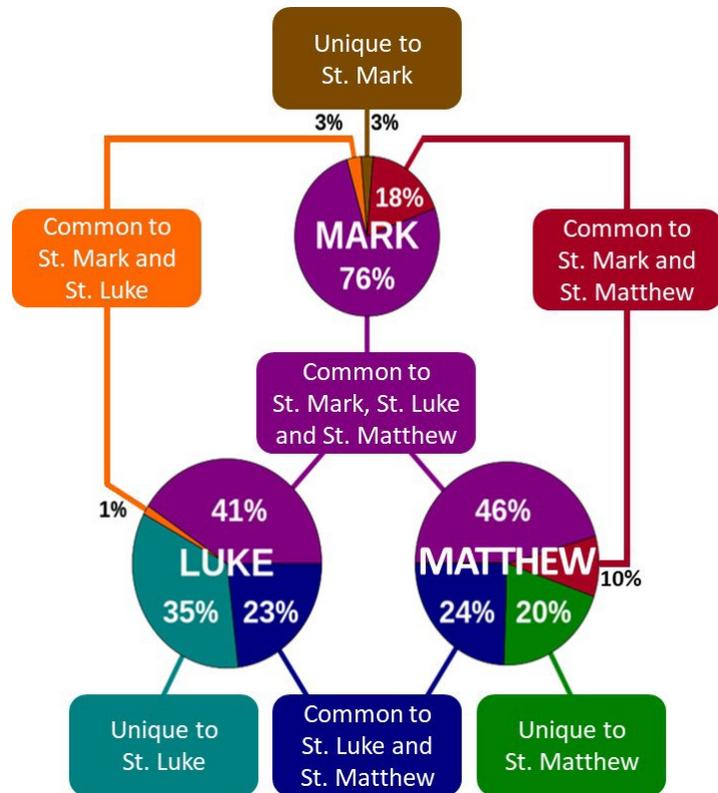
Synoptic Gospels (St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke)

The first three Gospels (St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke) are known as Synoptic Gospels. There is a similarity in the contents, narration of the events and order of incidents in these three Gospels. Many of the stories are same in the synoptic Gospels and are often narrated in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording. In contrast, the Gospel of St. John, is quite distinct in content from the three Synoptic Gospels. The term synoptic comes

from the Latin word “synopticus” (which has been derived from Greek) and means "seeing all together". However, there are also clear differences between the three synoptic Gospels. These similarities and differences are still a point of debate among the theologians. This is known as Synoptic Problem.

The Gospel according to St. Mark is the first written Gospel. St. Mark was a close associate of St. Peter, and translated the preachings of St. Peter. Pappiyas, one of the church fathers had recorded that St. Mark must have used the information received from St. Peter and made a chronological record of events in the Gospel. St. Matthew and St. Luke used this book and have the same chronology in writing their books.

More than 90% of instances quoted by St. Mark are also present in the other two synoptic gospels. However, there are differences too, as St. Matthew and St. Luke have added about 200 verses in their books. It shows that they have depended on another source. This source is noted as ‘Q’ by theologians. ‘Q’ is ‘Quelle’, a German word meaning ‘source’. This source is not available now.



The Gospel according to St. John is the last gospel written. This gospel is quite different from the Synoptic Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke in message, expression and substance. St. John is giving a theological interpretation of the redemptive works of Jesus.

In short, Gospels are books written by the Evangelists based on the traditions of the early church developed from the experiences of the Apostles and other eyewitnesses, interpreted by the Evangelists with their own view points and theological visions.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew

St. Matthew was a disciple of Jesus. He was a tax collector. He was also called Levi, and both St. Mark and St. Luke refer to him as Levi in their Gospels.

The Gospel of St. Matthew was written in Aramaic between the years 65-75 A.D. The Gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to David and then to his foster father Joseph. Thus, Jesus is pictured as a person of the chosen people of God. It is mainly written for the Jews. Therefore, Hebrew words are not explained further (5:22) and the rituals of the Jews are given without explaining their origin. (15:3, 23:5)

Vision about Christ

- **As the new Moses and Teacher:** Jesus is revealed as the new Moses by St. Matthew. Just like Moses gave them the Commandments of God at Mount Sinai, Jesus teaches these Laws in their fullness through the Sermon on the Mount.
- **As Messiah the King:** In this Gospel, Jesus is depicted as Messiah the King, the hope of Israel. The phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” is used 32 times in this Gospel. In the New Testament, this phrase cannot be seen anywhere else. There are 40 quotations from the Old Testament to prove that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Law and prophecies.

Moreover, St. Matthew reports many events that are not included in the other Gospels, such as the appearance of the Angel of the Lord to Joseph (1:18-26), the visit of the wise men (2:1-12), the escape to Egypt (2:13-18), and the dream of Pilate’s wife (27:19).

Contents

The Gospel of St. Matthew has 28 chapters and 1,071 verses. There is a special reference to the Church in this Gospel (16:18, 18:17) and the word “Church” can be seen only in this Gospel. Therefore, this Gospel is also called the ‘Church Gospel’. St. Matthew deviated from the chronological order while writing the ministry of Jesus, and has grouped inter-connecting, similar events together in his Gospel. The Gospel can be divided into the following –

- Genealogy and Birth (Matthew 1:1–2:23)
- Beginning of the ministry of Jesus (Matthew 3:1–4:25)
- Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–7:25)
- Miracles (Matthew 8:1–9:35)
- Preaching about the Kingdom of God (Matthew 9:38–11:1)
- The unfaith and rejection of Jews (Matthew 11:2–12:50)
- The Parables about the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:1-52)
- Training for the Apostles and teaching about the Church (Matthew 13:53–18:35)
- Ministry in Judea and Jerusalem (Matthew 19:1–23:39)
- Sermon about the End of the Age (Sermon on the Mount Olive) (Matthew 24:1–25:46)
- Passion of Christ (Matthew 26:1–27:66)
- Resurrection (Matthew 28)

The Gospel according to St. Mark

St. Mark was a co-worker and helper to both St. Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter sent him to Alexandria and he established a church there. His house in Jerusalem is famous the Mansion of St. Mark or Zeion Mansion. Today the Mansion of St. Mark is a Dayara and a blessed monument of our church.

The Gospel of St. Mark was written between AD 66-70 in Rome. St. Mark sourced the book from the preachings and teachings of St. Peter. When we examine the contents, we can see that the book was written for believers other than Jews. He has left out topics like the genealogy, the fulfilled prophecies and the citations from the Law. St. Mark has only recorded the events from John the Baptist to the Ascension of Jesus. There is no mention of the birth or the childhood of Jesus. The intention of the book is to draw a clear picture of Jesus as the Son of God. Rituals of Jews and names of places are given in detail so that the Gentiles may understand them (7:2, 14:12, 15:42). The meaning of Aramaic (Syriac) words is given (3:17, 5:41, 7:11, 7:34, 15:34). The majority of the Gospel deals with the ministry of Jesus, presented in a concise, vivid manner. St. Mark presents the story of Jesus in a straight forward manner with an emphasis on what Jesus did rather than on the words and teachings.

Vision about Christ

The Gospel begins with the statement: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. St. Mark points out this at the time of His Baptism (1:11), Transfiguration (9:6), Declaration of Peter (8:29) and the Declaration of the Centurion (15:39). At the same time, St. Mark gives equal importance to the idea that Jesus is also the ‘Son of Man’. He uses the word ‘Son of Man’ 14 times. In the Old Testament this word first appears in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:13). Jesus also calls himself the “Son of Man” (8:31).

Among the four Gospels, St. Mark provides the most insight into the human traits of Jesus, including his emotions like anger (3:5), surprise (6:6), compassion (6:34), and hunger (11:12).

Contents

The Gospel of St. Mark is the smallest Gospel having 16 chapters and 678 verses. Its contents include –

- Ministry in Jordan (Mark 1:1–13)
- Ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14–7:23)
- At places between Galilee and Jerusalem (Mark 7:24–10:52)
- In Jerusalem (Mark 11–13)
- Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension (Mark 14–16)

The Gospel according to St. Luke

Amongst the four Gospels writers, St. Luke is the only Gentile who had converted to Christianity. He has also written the Acts of Apostles. Both these books are dedicated to Theophilus. St. Luke was the companion and co-worker of St. Paul. During the captivity of St. Paul, St. Luke was his helper. He was a physician and an artist too. A picture of St. Mary drawn by St. Luke is still preserved in the Dayara of St. Mark. It is believed that this book was written around 70 A.D. before the destruction of Jerusalem.

St. Luke depicts a clear picture of Jesus, who was born as a man, and was the Saviour of the whole mankind. In the prologue, the author declares that as many wanted to write about Christ, he too desired to write an orderly account. With beautiful language and excellent presentation, this book stands prominent among the New Testament books. St. Luke has written elaborately about the birth and childhood of Jesus. St. Luke quotes very few Old Testament verses. Unlike St. Matthew, he does not give much importance to the fulfilment of prophecies. He gives the meaning of the Aramaic words just like St. Mark. St. Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus while presenting the beginning of His public ministry (St. Luke 3:23-38). While St. Matthew writes the genealogy from Abraham onwards, St. Luke traces the ancestry all the way back to Adam and to God, to prove that salvation is for the whole humanity. Many topics related to prayer are mentioned in this Gospel (St. Luke 3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:29, 23:46). Hence, this Gospel is also called the “Prayer Gospel”. Compared to other Gospels, names of many more women are given in this Gospel. ‘Mary’s Song of Praise’, which is used in our prayers is from St. Luke 1:46-55.

Vision about Christ

- **Salvation for All Humanity:** St. Luke gives importance to the fact that Jesus came for the salvation of the entire humanity, and not for the chosen races. John the Baptist presents Jesus, quoting from the Book of Isaiah, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”(3:3-6)
- **Love and Compassion:** St. Luke has written the Gospel giving emphasis to the love and compassion that Jesus had for the humble and poor. It is made clear that Jesus was the

true Son of Man, who was sympathetic to the sorrows and sufferings of the sinners and offered them invaluable gift of salvation.

- **Redemption for Sinners:** St. Luke also confirms, through the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, that Jesus came in search of sinners, so that they would repent. (Luke 15)

Contents

The Gospel of St. Luke has 24 chapters and 1,151 verses. Its contents include –

- Introduction (Luke 1:1–4)
- Birth and childhood of Jesus and John the Baptist (Luke 1:5–2:52)
- Activities of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1–20)
- Baptism and Temptation of Jesus: (Luke 3:21–4:13)
- Ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50)
- Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:27)
- Ministry in Jerusalem (Luke 19:28–21:38)
- Passion of Jesus (Luke 21:1–23:56)
- Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven (Luke 24:1–53)

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John is the son of Zebedee, and brother of St. James. Only St. John had a natural death among the Apostles. This book, written in Ephesus in 98 or 99 A.D., is the last Gospel to be written. St. John has given more importance to the personality of Jesus rather than his ministry. The 17th Chapter deserves special attention. This is a long Prayer of Christ, as the High Priest, to the Holy Father and is known as the “High Priestly Prayer”.

The Gospel of St. John is quite different from the other Gospels in substance, presentation and content. His intention was not to write an historical record. Taking into account the needs and challenges of that time, his aim was to reveal to the world who was Jesus and what was his mission. His style of writing is also noteworthy. This Gospel gets special attention because of symbolism, discourse style and usage of irony.

The seven metaphors –

St. John records seven allegories that Jesus had said about himself –

1. I am the bread of life (John 6:48)
2. I am the light of the world (John 8:12)
3. I am the gate (John 10:9)
4. I am the good shepherd (John 10:11)
5. I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
6. I am the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6)
7. I am the true vine (John 15:1)

The differences of the Gospel of St. John from the Synoptic Gospels.

1. St. John has written six miracles of Jesus, that are not recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. These miracles are –
 - Water turned into wine,
 - Healing of the official's son,
 - Healing at the pool of Bethzatha,
 - Healing of the man born blind,

- Raising of Lazarus,
 - The miraculous fishing (after resurrection).
2. The Synoptic Gospels include many parables, whereas the Gospel of St. John does not include any parables. Instead, St. John uses allegories like Living Water, Bread of Life, True Vine, and so on.
 3. Birth from a Virgin, Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, and the establishment of the Holy Qurbana appear in the Synoptic Gospels. However, these are not present in the Gospel of St. John.
 4. The washing of the feet of the Apostles is only present in the Gospel of St. John.
 5. The Synoptic Gospels give more emphasis to the activities of Jesus in Galilee and nearby places, whereas St. John gives more importance to His activities in Jerusalem.
 6. The Synoptic Gospels mention about one Passover feast only. St. John records that Jesus celebrated three Passover feasts (John 2:13, John 6:4, John 12:1). From this, we can assume that the public ministry of Jesus lasted at least three years.
 7. The farewell speech of Jesus at the Mansion is elaborately explained by St. John. (John 14–17). However, this is not found in the Synoptic Gospels.

Vision about Christ

St. John himself declares that his intention is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. (20:30-31) St. John proves that Jesus is the Complete God (1:11-18, 5:20, 8:25, 10:30, 20:28) and the Complete Man (4:6, 11:33, 12:27, 13:21). St. John undoubtedly shows the union of the personalities of Christ. The Eternal Word became a human being. St. John depicts this Word as giving life to the World (6:33), the Bread of Life (6:48), the Living Water (7:37) and the Eternal Light (8:12).

Contents

The Gospel of St. John has 21 chapters and 876 verses. Its contents include –

- Introduction – Declarations about the Word (John 1:1–18)
- Signs and Symbols – Seven miracles (signs) of Jesus (John 1:19–12:50)
- Glory – Jesus reveals His glory to the disciples who accept Him. The farewell speech at the Mansion, High Priestly Prayer, the Passion, Death and Resurrection (John 13:1–20:31)
- Appendix – Appearance of Resurrected Jesus to His disciples (John 21)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the word 'Evangelion'?
2. What are the reasons for writing the Gospels?
3. How can we fully understand the teachings of Jesus Christ?
4. What is the 'Synoptic Problem'?
5. How can we understand that there was a source known as 'Q'?
6. Which Gospel was written first?
7. How do we know that St. Mark wrote the Gospel for believers other than Jews?
8. Who is the apostle among the synoptic gospel writers?
9. For whom did St. Matthew write the Gospel? Explain.
10. Which Gospel is known as the 'Church Gospel'? Why?
11. In the Holy Bible, which books were written by St. Luke?
12. Name the Gospel writer who was a physician and an artist too?

13. How is the Gospel according to St. Luke different from the other Gospels?
14. What is known as the 'High Priestly Prayer'?
15. Describe the writing style in the Gospel of St. John.
16. What allegories did St. John use about Jesus?
17. How is St. John's Gospel different from the Synoptic Gospels?
18. What is the proof that the public ministry of Jesus lasted three years?

PROJECT

1. Form groups within your Sunday School class and create a PowerPoint presentation that provides details on any three miracles performed by Jesus, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels but not mentioned in the Gospel of St. John. Quote the chapters, verses, and the book in the presentation. Enhance your presentation by adding images, animations, sound of the miracles, etc., to make it engaging. Present this as a group to the rest of the students in your Sunday School, ensuring that each group member has an opportunity to speak.

Chapter 21. Sermon on the Mount

Objective: To understand the Christian Vision and Mission.

Bible References: St. Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7

Note: There would be some minor additions to this chapter in the next version.

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of teachings by Jesus Christ, which are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. It is one of the most famous and influential passages in the Bible.

Jesus proclaims the laws of His kingdom and reveals the nature and characteristics of its subjects in the form of beatitudes. Jesus, through this sermon, encourages His followers to spread God's love and work towards righteousness in their daily lives.

When Jesus saw the crowd following Him, He went up a hill. Sitting there He taught them the gist of the laws a Christian should follow in his life. This is called the sermon on the mount by Jesus Christ. As the fulfilment of laws given through Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus gives new commandments on another mountain.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives certain commandments, different from the Sinai declaration, pointing to the inner experience and mental condition that inspire human actions. For instance, when Old Testament instructs "You shall not murder", Jesus, while recognising it, draws attention to the tendency of mind pursuing that evil action. For instance, Jesus says "But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool", you will be liable to the hell of fire (Matthew 5:22). In the sermon on the mount, we realise that more than the observance of commandments, we are taken into the atmosphere of creative affection and change. Sermon on the mount is the continuation of the preaching on the Kingdom of God as seen in St Matthew 4:17, 23.

The Sermon on the Mount can be divided into five parts

1. Who are the blessed ones (5:12)
2. The status of disciples (5:13-16)
3. New interpretation to the Old Testament commandments (5:17-48)
4. New objective for the Old observances (6:1-18)
5. Matters to be taken care of in the way to Holiness (6:19,7:29)

Who are the blessed ones

Jesus gave eight qualifications for being blessed. He calls those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, who are pure in heart, who are peace makers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, as beatified. The promise for all of them is great happiness from God.

The status of disciples

The position of the disciples in the world is compared to salt and lamp. Salt makes food tasty. It is also used for preserving food without decay. Likewise, those following Christ should lead a model life and should help in maintaining moral values in the society. The function of the lamp is to give light. The disciples of Christ, should be the ones who received light from Christ being the true light and should spread the light so received; in the society.

New interpretation to the Old Testament commandments

The Jews were criticising that Christ and the disciples were ignoring the teachings of Moses and Prophets. But Jesus disclosed the correct sense contained in the advice of prophets and the books of law and brought about their fulfilment through him. Jesus taught that the morals of a faithful Christian should exceed surpass the morals of the leaders of the Jews and that only then they can enter the Kingdom of God. In order to clarify this, he has chosen six laws in the Old Testament: such as you shall not kill, shall not commit adultery, divorce, shall not swear in the name of God, shall not take revenge, should love the neighbour, and has given new interpretation to them.

New objective for the Old observances

Jews had been considering the following three acts as acts for nourishing devotion: Alms giving, prayer and fasting. Jesus taught that the observances are not for getting praises from the people, but for praising God.

Matters to be taken care of in the way to Holiness

Jesus specifies the matters to be taken care of on the path to the kingdom of God. These are:

- **The real treasure (St. Matthew 6:19-21)**
The treasures stored up selfishly for oneself only will be lost. That which is given as charity will be converted as treasure in heaven. The treasure in heaven is more precious than the treasure on earth.
- **Faith and dependence on God (St. Matthew 6:22-34)**
To love God and riches at the same time is not possible. The reliance on riches cause anxiety and full faith in God will remove the same. “ Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well6:33)
- **About judging (St. Matthew 7:1-5)**
Do not find fault with others and judge; forgetting your own mistakes.
- **About prayer (St. Matthew 7:7-11)**
God will answer our prayer by our three continuous action namely ask, seek and knock.
- **The mode of action (St. Matthew 7:12)**
In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.
- **Two ways (St. Matthew 7:13-14)**
One to destruction and other to life. The way to life will be narrow and hard.
- **Two kinds of prophets (St. Matthew 7:15-20)**
There will be true teachers and false prophets. Identify the false prophets (heretics) and be careful of them.
- **Word and deed (St. Matthew 7:21-23)**
Our words and deeds should match. The one who enters the kingdom in heaven is he who acts according to the will of God.
- **Fool and the wise (St. Matthew 7:24-27)**
One who hears the words of Christ and lives accordingly is the wise and he who disobey Him is the foolish one. The life of the wise man will overcome all adversities.

The people who listened to the words, of Jesus were amazed because His teachings were different from those of the teachers of law and Pharisees. Instead, He taught like a person of authority.

Verse for memorising: “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple”. Palms 19:7

EXERCISE

1. How does the Sermon on the Mount differ from the commandments of the Old Testament?
2. Who are considered blessed according to the Sermon on the Mount?
3. According to Jesus' teachings, what is the disciples' position in relation to the world?
4. Which laws did Jesus reinterpret with new meanings?
5. What aspects were considered necessary by the Jews for nourishing devotion?
6. What are the considerations that a Christian should keep in mind on their path to purity?
7. Why were people amazed after hearing the Sermon on the Mount?

PROJECT WORK

The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are two different sermons delivered by Jesus Christ to large crowds. The Sermon on the Mount is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, and the Sermon on the Plain is recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 12. The people who were present to listen to these sermons were also different, as per the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Find out the similarities and the differences between both the sermons.

UNDER REVIEW

Chapter 22. Passion of the Lord

Objective: To learn about the Passion of the Lord.

Bible References: St. Matthew 26, 27, St. Mark 14, 15, St. Luke 22, 23, St. John 11, 13, 18, 19



Introduction

All four Gospels provide detailed explanations about the Passion of the Lord. The early Church accorded more importance to this because the fulfilment of His ministry of salvation occurred through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. For ease of study, the Passion of the Lord can be divided into the following parts:

1. Plot against Jesus
2. Celebration of the Passover Feast and the Institution of the Holy Qurbana
3. The Prayer at Gethsemane
4. Arrest of Jesus
5. Trial of Jesus
6. Crucifixion

Plot against Jesus

(St. Matthew 26:1–5, St. Mark 14:1–2, St. Luke 22:1–2, St. John 11:45–53)

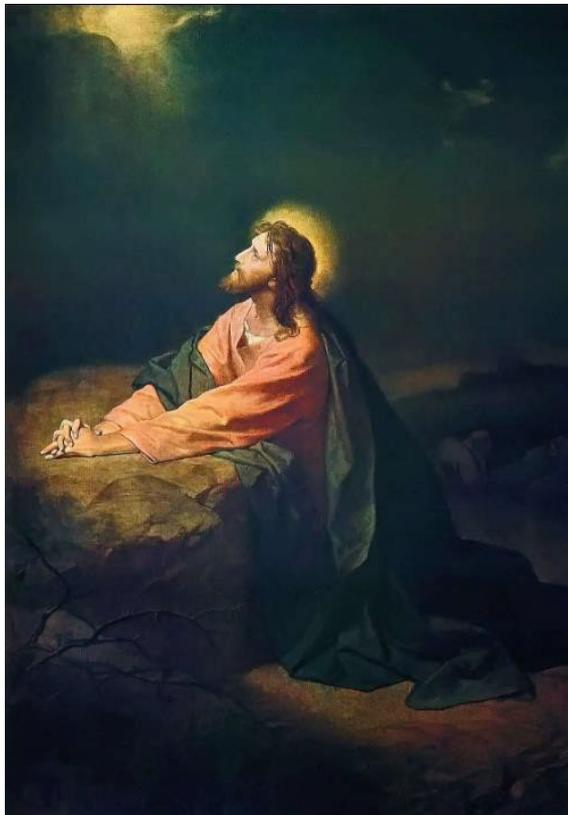
The Pharisees and the Scribes were afraid of the popularity that Jesus had gained and the grand reception that He had received on Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. They were afraid that sooner or later all the people will be at His side. The High Priests, Scribes, and elders of the people convened at the court of Caiaphas, the High Priest. They conspired to destroy Jesus at any cost, during the days of the feast. They planned to arrest Jesus discreetly and execute their plans after the feast to avoid a riot among the people. Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples of Jesus, agreed to betray Him for 30 pieces of silver. Since 30 pieces of silver was the price of a slave, this fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy. (Zechariah 11:12-13)

Celebration of the Passover Feast and institution of the Holy Qurbana (St. Matthew 26:17–29, St. Mark 14:12–21, St. Luke 22:7–27, St. John 13:1–30)

Jesus instructed Peter and John to prepare the Passover Feast, which took place at the Mansion of Mark. They ate the Passover meal in accordance with the Law (Exodus 12). During the meal, Jesus mentioned about the betrayal of Judas. Judas left the place. A dispute arose among the disciples about who was the greatest, leading Jesus to wash their feet as a demonstration of humility and service.

After completing the observance of Passover feast according to the Law, Jesus instituted the Holy Qurbana. Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Prayer at Gethsemane (St. Matthew 26:36–46, St. Mark 14:32–42, St. Luke 22:39–46)



After celebrating the Passover feast and the institution of the Holy Qurbana, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives with His disciples. He reminded them of Zechariah's prophecy – “Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7) thereby predicting His impending arrest and resurrection. He also gives them hope by saying that He would be resurrected and He would go to Galilee ahead of them. Peter declares that he would never desert Jesus even if everyone else become a deserter. Despite Peter's declaration of loyalty, Jesus foresaw Peter's denial, and told him that before the cock crows, Peter would deny Him three times that night.

Jesus then went to the garden of Gethsemane in the western valley of Mount Olive. Leaving 8 disciples at one place, Jesus took Peter, Jacob, and John with Him and went ahead to pray. In Gethsemane, Jesus experienced intense mental anguish. He tells His disciples to stay awake with Him. He goes a little farther, and

throws himself on the ground praying for God's will to be done. He prayed, “My Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but you want.” Jesus was without sin. So, He had great anguish when He took upon Himself the sin of the whole world. Therefore, His blood came out as drops of sweat.

We must understand the complete dedication of Jesus to His Father even in this great mental distress. In the Garden of Eden, the first man started the sin by disobeying God. On the other hand, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, by His perfect obedience to His Father, even in times of distress, demonstrated the contrast with the disobedience in the Garden of Eden. His dedication opened the way for salvation.

After gaining strength through prayer, Jesus returned to find His disciples asleep. He urged them to wake up, declaring that the hour had come, and the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The Arrest of Jesus

(St. Matthew 26:47–56, St. Mark 14:43–52, St. Luke 22:47–53, St. John 18:3–12)

After eating the Passover meal with Jesus, Judas Iscariot informed the high priests that the time was right to arrest Jesus. Judas led a group of soldiers carrying swords, clubs and lanterns to Jesus. He had given them a signal that one whom he kisses would be Jesus. He came forward and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. Jesus calls him, “Friend”. Here we see the eternal love of God who calls the one who betrays him as ‘Friend’. The soldiers arrest Jesus. Witnessing this, Peter got so angry that he drew the sword and struck the High Priest’s slave and cut off his ear. The slave’s name was Malcuse. Jesus warned Peter and cured the man. When the disciples saw that Jesus was being arrested, they fled in fear. The disciples had slept earlier instead of praying and hence had not found strength through prayer. The disciples’ fear contrasted with Jesus’ calmness, as He had strengthened Himself through prayer. However, these disciples who ran away at the time of the Crucifixion, were subsequently strengthened through prayer and faced many hardships with courage after Resurrection. They suffered persecution and died as Martyrs for Jesus. For example, St. James was put to death with a sword by King Herod (Acts 12:2), St. Peter was crucified upside down, and St. Thomas was martyred in Mylapore, India, where he was stabbed with spears.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Jews decide to condemn Jesus?
2. The Jews paid the price of a slave for Jesus. Could you explain the reasons behind this?
3. How did the Jews observe the Passover?
4. How did Jesus teach his disciples the way of humility?
5. What hope did Jesus offer to His disciples during His passion?
6. How did Jesus find strength for His passion?
7. Why did the disciples sleep even when Jesus urged them to stay awake?
8. Jesus referred to Judas Iscariot as His friend. What can be inferred from this?
9. Why did Jesus issue a warning to Peter?
10. Why did the disciples flee when Jesus was arrested?

Chapter 23. Trial of Jesus

Objective: To learn about the different phases in the trail of Jesus Christ, and understand the illegalities of the trial.

Bible References: St. Matthew 26:51-27:32, St. Mark 14:53-15:21, St. Luke 22:54-23:25, St. John 18:13-19:17

The Phases of the Trial

Jesus faced trial in six important phases.

1. Before Annas, the previous High Priest, during the night (St. John 18:12-14).
2. Before Caiaphas, the current High Priest, and the Scribes and elders, informally at night (St. Matthew 26:57, St. Mark 14:53, St. Luke 22:54).
3. Before the Sanhedrin formally, in the morning (St. Matthew 27:1-12, St. Luke 22:66).
4. Before Pilate, the Governor of Judea (St. Matthew 27:1-2, St. John 18:28-41).
5. Before Herod (St. Luke 23:6-12).
6. Again, before Pilate (St. Matthew 27:15-26, St. Mark 15:6-15, St. Luke 23:13-25, St. John 18:39-19:16).

The Illegalities of the Trial

Jesus faced a trial devoid of any form of natural Justice. All decisions in the trial were one-sided. Furthermore, the decisions taken during the trial were wrong, even according to their own law itself. The trial faced by Jesus was not according to the Laws of the Jews nor that of the Romans.

Justice was denied to Jesus in the following ways:

1. The Jewish leaders had condemned Jesus to death, even before questioning him (St. Mark 14:1, St. John 11:50).
2. False witnesses were produced (St. Matthew 26:59). The statements of the witnesses should have been accepted as proofs only after verifying the faithfulness of the witnesses through various means, which was not done.
3. There was no opportunity provided to Jesus for self-defence (St. Luke 22:67-71).
4. It is unlawful for the Sanhedrin to meet at night. However, the first two phases of the trial were held at night. (St. Luke 22:53-55).
5. They placed Jesus under oath. When Jesus answered, they used his own reply for judging him (St. Matthew 26:63-66).
6. The Sanhedrin should have met in their office adjacent to the temple. The trial should have been conducted only in the office of the Sanhedrin. However, during the trial of Jesus, they met at the house of the High Priest (St. Luke 22:54).
7. It is not lawful to pronounce judgment on the same day of the trial. It could be done only on the next day. In this case, they broke their own law.

The Trial Before Annas

This incident is recorded only in the Gospel of St. John. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current High Priest. His family used to sell doves in the Jerusalem Temple. Moreover, Annas had been the previous High Priest earlier and was very influential. He questioned the teachings of Jesus. Annas wanted to establish that Jesus was the leader of a group of conspirators against the Roman government. His intention was not lawful. The trial of any convict must be conducted only after hearing all the witnesses. This was the reason that Jesus said to ask those who had heard Him.

One of the guards standing nearby struck Jesus on the face. Jesus asked him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas.

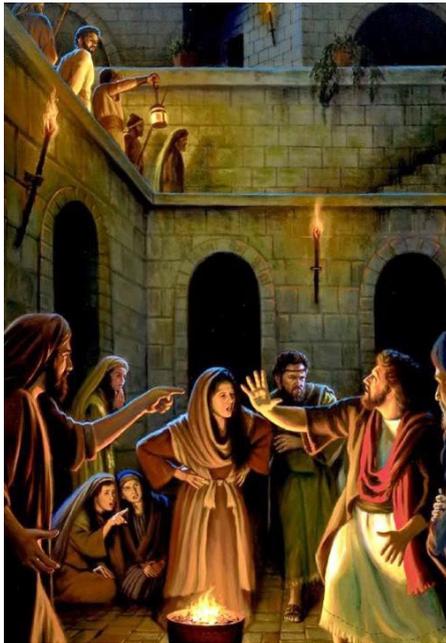
The Trails Before Caiaphas

Jesus was tried twice before Caiaphas. The first trial was during the night, when only a few members of the Sanhedrin were present. The second trial was later in the morning, when all the members of the Sanhedrin were present, and they questioned Jesus formally.

The word Sanhedrin means 'Council'. The Sanhedrin was a council of the Judges of the Jews, including Pharisees, Sadducees, and elders of the people and had about 70 to 72 members. The High Priest was the head of Sanhedrin. This council had no legal authority to put a man to death. They could only try convicts in the daytime with at least two witnesses, whose statements should agree with each other.



They engaged false witnesses by giving bribes to testify against Jesus. However, the statements of these false witnesses were contradictory. When the High Priest asked Jesus why he was not answering anything, Jesus remained silent. The High Priest told Jesus, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." The intention of this question was to make Jesus declare that He is the Messiah. Their plan was to impose blasphemy on Jesus and thereby request the Roman government for executing a death sentence. Jesus declared that He is the Messiah. The High Priest tore his clothes and gave the verdict that Jesus had blasphemed. They spat in his face and struck him.



Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, warming himself. Many people there identified him as a disciple of Jesus. He felt scared, became weak and denied Jesus three times. The cock crowed after his third denial of Jesus, and Peter remembered Jesus saying “Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times”. Jesus turned around and looked at Peter. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

This incident serves as a warning to all of us. Peter had been proud that he was more loyal to Jesus than anybody else. However, when he was supposed to pray, he slept. Instead of being with Jesus, he kept away. When Jesus looked at him, he was heartbroken by his guilt and wept bitterly. This led to his repentance. He grew stronger in faith and years later requested his oppressors to crucify him upside down so that he could kiss the feet of his master when he died.

The Trial Before Pilate

After the trials before Caiaphas, the Council decided to take him to Pilate for trial and crucifixion. Pilate was the Governor of Judea during 26-36 A.D., and his headquarters were in Caesarea. He came to Jerusalem to look after law and order during the festival. The trial of Jesus was conducted both inside and outside his palace. They did not enter the headquarters themselves to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover.

The Sanhedrin had accused Jesus of blasphemy, but thinking that Pilate would not take this charge seriously, the Jews imposed two additional charges against Jesus when they took him to Pilate:

1. Jesus taught not to pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman Emperor;
2. Jesus declared himself a King.

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Jesus to Herod, who was the ruler of that province. As it was the festival season, Herod was also in Jerusalem.

The Trial Before Herod

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great who had ruled Judea at the eve of the birth of Jesus. Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist, and Jesus had called him a ‘fox’ (St. Luke 13:31-32). When Herod saw Jesus, he was happy, thinking that he could see some miracles being performed by Jesus. He asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus remained silent. Herod and his soldiers treated him with contempt, mocked him, put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. On that very day, Herod and Pilate became friends; before this, they had been enemies.

The Second Trial before Pilate

Pilate had realised that Jesus was innocent and tried to explain this to the priests and the people. Since Herod did not see anything wrong with Him and as He had not done anything to deserve death, Pilate told the people that he could flog and release Him. At every Passover feast, the Governor was accustomed to releasing a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. Pilate asked if he could release Jesus accordingly. They replied that they wanted Barabbas to be released, and Jesus should be crucified. Barabbas was a notorious prisoner.

Pilate again requested to set free Jesus. Then the crowd shouted, "Crucify, Crucify Him." Meanwhile, Claudia Procula, Pilate's wife, sent him a message not to become involved in the judgment concerning Jesus. Pilate requested them for the third time to flog and release Jesus, as He had not done anything to deserve death. When Pilate saw that couldn't do anything, without a riot beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"



The Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothes, put a purple robe around him, and flogged Him. They wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, placing a reed in His right hand and kneeling before Him to mock Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and dripping blood all over, before the crowd. Pilate told them, "Here is the man!" The crowd answered back, "We have a law, and according to that law, he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." Hearing that Jesus was the Son of God, Pilate became afraid.



Pilate entered his headquarters (the Praetorium) and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate asked Jesus the reason for his silence and reminded Jesus that he had the authority to crucify him or to set him free. Jesus replied that, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above." Hearing this, Pilate became restless and wished to release Jesus. However, the crowd shouted back, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the Emperor. Everyone who claims to be a King sets himself against the Emperor." He decided to go along with the wish of the people since he did not want to lose his position. Pilate took Jesus outside, sat on the Gabbatha (Stone Pavement - Judge's bench), and said to the Jews, "Here is your king!" The crowd answered, "We have no king but

the Emperor." Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. The soldiers made Jesus wear his own clothes and led him to Golgotha to be crucified.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the different phases of the trial of Jesus?
2. Could you provide evidence supporting the claim that the trial of Jesus was unlawful?
3. What was Annas's intention in questioning Jesus?
4. Can you explain the significance of the term "Sanhedrin"?
5. What were the two trials before Caiaphas?
6. Why did Caiaphas require Jesus to swear an oath?
7. What prompted Simon Peter to repent?
8. What charges did the Sanhedrin bring against Jesus?
9. Why did Pilate come to Jerusalem?
10. What accusations did the Jews raise against Jesus before Pilate?
11. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?
12. Why was Herod pleased when he saw Jesus?
13. How did Herod and Pilate become friends?
14. Why did Pilate sentence Jesus to death, even though he knew he was innocent?
15. What were the sufferings that Jesus had to endure at the headquarters of Pilate?
16. Why did the Jews not enter Pilate's palace?
17. What did Jesus tell Pilate about authority?

Chapter 24. Crucifixion, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

Objective: To learn about the crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and appreciate the fulfillment of various prophecies during these events. To understand the significance of the resurrection in the lives of Christians.

Bible References: St. Matthew 27:33-66, St. Mark 15:21-47, St. Luke 23:26-56, St. John 19:16-42

Introduction

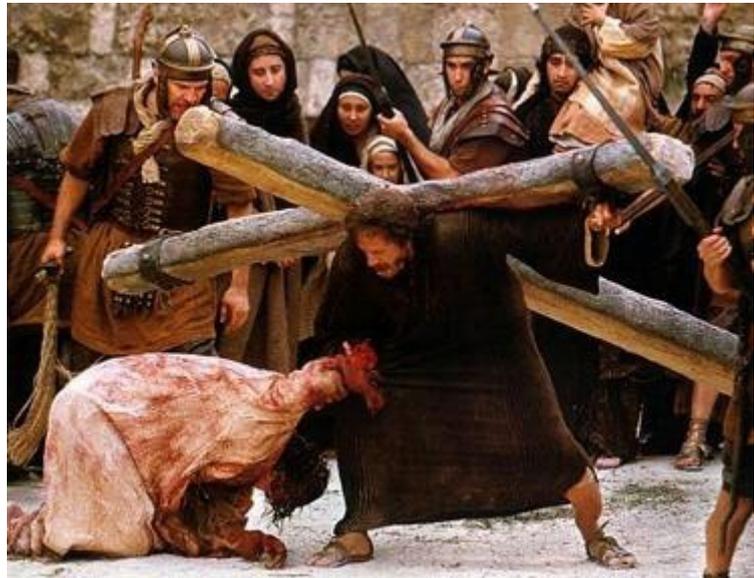
Crucifixion was an extreme punishment sanctioned for rebels, rioters, traitors, and slaves who deserted their masters. Its intention was to serve as a warning to others and to discourage the public from engaging in wrongdoing. The convicted individual was expected to carry his cross to the location where the punishment would be executed. An inscription of the crime was displayed on the cross for public information. This chapter will briefly describe the sequential events from crucifixion to the ascension of Jesus on the fortieth day after His death. You will learn that all these events occurred in accordance with various prophecies and fulfilled scriptures from the Old Testament.

Journey to Golgotha

(St. Matthew 27: 32-33, St. Mark 15:21-22, St. Luke 23:26-33, St. John 19:16-18)

After the trial, the Roman soldiers took Jesus to Golgotha, which meant 'skull hill,' for crucifixion. Golgotha is located outside the city of Jerusalem. In those days, criminals were not executed inside the city. The Roman government treated Jesus as a criminal and decided to execute him at Golgotha. Nevertheless, a large crowd, including many Jewish leaders, followed Jesus to this place.

Golgotha is approximately 30 feet high and is shaped like a skull.



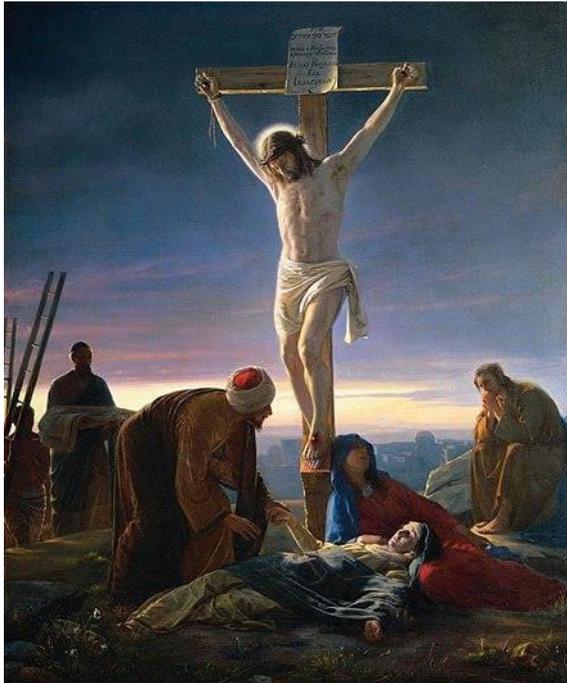
In the Bible, this place holds significant references:

1. The Skull of Adam is buried here.
2. This is where Abraham built the altar to sacrifice Isaac.
3. Melchizedek offered a sacrifice at this place.
4. David offered sacrifices here.

Despite being weary from the sufferings, Jesus progressed to Golgotha while carrying his heavy wooden cross. Jesus warned the women who were weeping at the scene, saying, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.” He was reminding the crowd of the imminent destruction of the city. The Roman soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene (Tripoli, Libya) to assist Jesus in carrying the cross when he became weary. During this time, the Romans offered a mixture of wine and myrrh (gall) to alleviate the pain of death. According to tradition, Jesus was also offered this, but he refused and decided to die suffering pain.

Crucifixion

(St. Matthew 27:35-44, St. Mark 15:24-32, St. Luke 23:32-43, St. John 19:21-32)



From the cross Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Jesus’ words reflect his extraordinary compassion and willingness to forgive, even in the midst of immense suffering. Despite being unjustly accused, mocked, and crucified, he demonstrates a spirit of mercy and forgiveness toward those responsible for his execution. Jesus’ words align with his teachings on love and forgiveness. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:44), he instructs us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Jesus’ plea for forgiveness, is a powerful example for us and illustrates that mercy, forgiveness, and love should be the core features of our character. It emphasizes the transformative nature of forgiveness.

Though Jesus was a lamb without blemish, He was crucified between two notorious criminals. The criminals crucified with Jesus despised Him. However, when one of them heard Jesus praying to God to forgive the men who crucified Him, he repented and believed in Jesus. He rebuked and advised the other criminal, who continued to mock Him. He then said to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” This incident proves that even at the time of death, a sinner can repent and redeem their sins.

It was customary to inscribe the crime on the cross for which the person was crucified. Pontius Pilate wrote, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Jews” (Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum - INRI) on Jesus’s cross in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The Jews wanted this inscription to be amended to “This man said, I am the king of the Jews.” *Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”* (John 19:22)

The soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His clothes into four parts, one part for each soldier. They took His tunic too, but they found it was seamless and woven in one piece from top to bottom. They decided to cast lots for it. This fulfilled the scripture, which said, “*They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing, they cast lots.*” (John 19:24)

Beside the cross stood His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, and His disciple John, whom He loved the most. When Jesus saw His mother and His disciple, He said,

“Woman, here is your son,” and to John, “Here is your mother.” (John 19:25-27) Jesus thus entrusted His mother’s responsibility to John, who took Mother Mary home with him.

Death of Jesus

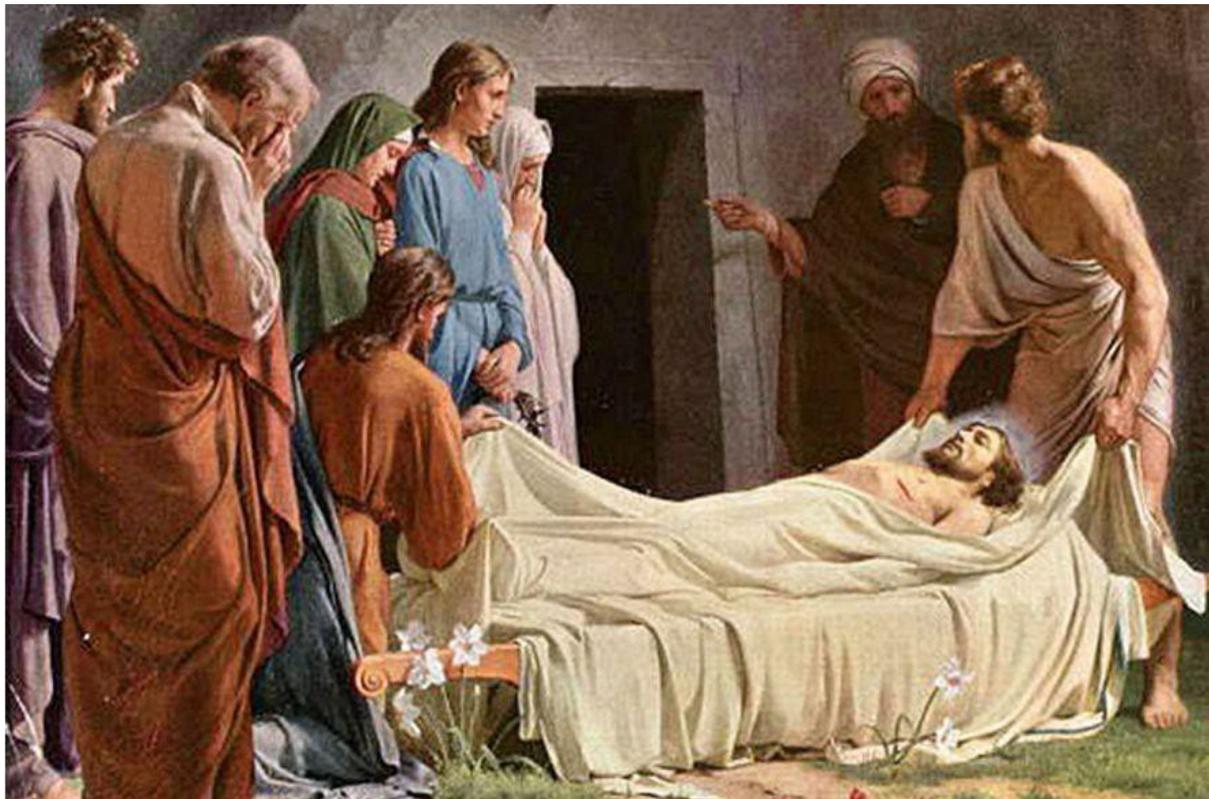
(St. Matthew 27:45-56, St. Mark 15:33-41, St. Luke 23:44-49, St. John 19:28-37)

Jesus was crucified at the third hour (9:00 am). From the sixth hour to the ninth hour (12:00 pm to 3:00 pm), there was darkness over the whole earth. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth shook, the rocks were split apart, and the tombs were opened. Jesus breathed his last at the ninth hour, crying out, “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.” Seeing all these, the centurion, who was a gentile, believed in Jesus.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies to be left on the cross on the Sabbath day. They approached Pilate to get permission to remove the bodies from there. Soldiers used to break the legs of the crucified to verify their death. They broke the legs of the two criminals and then came to Jesus. When they found that Jesus was already dead, they exempted Him from breaking His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. This incident has not been recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. St. John, who was a witness to it, has recorded it to show that Jesus, who died on the cross, was truly the complete Man and the complete God.

Burial of Jesus

(St. Matthew 27:57-61, St. Mark 15:42-47, St. Luke 23:50-56, St. John 19:38-42)



Joseph of Arimathea was a righteous and good man, who also happened to be a secret disciple of Jesus. Although he was a member of the Jewish council, he did not agree with their plan and actions. Boldly, he approached Pilate and requested Jesus's body for burial. Assisting Joseph in the burial was Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin

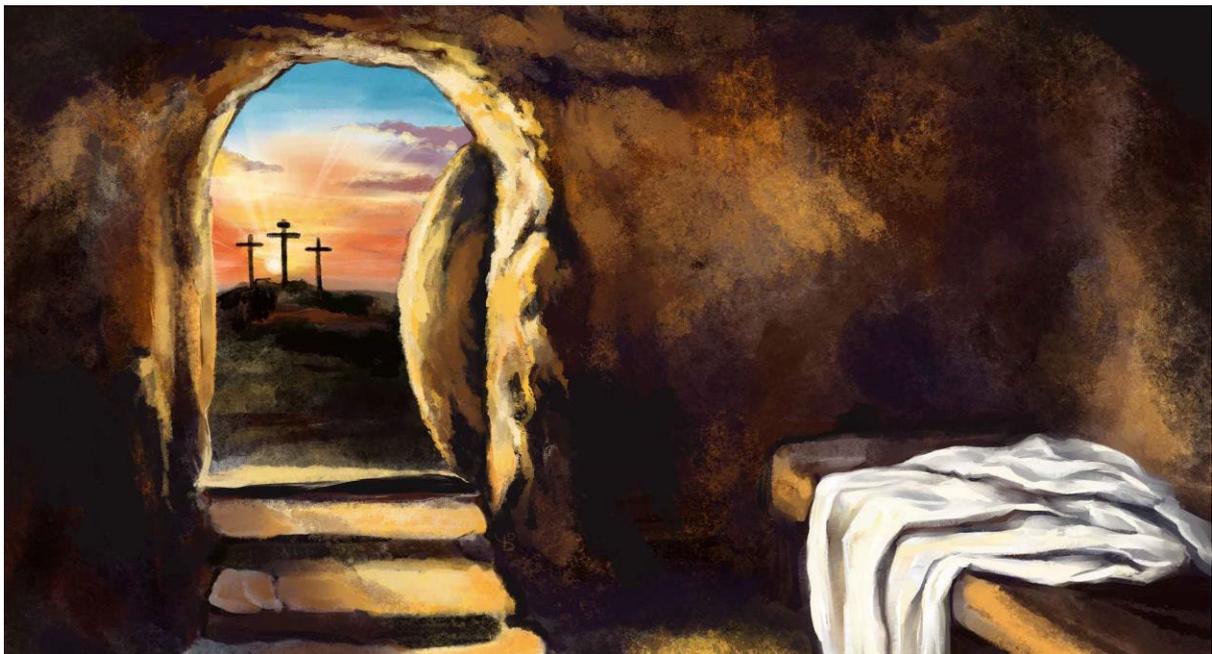
(Jewish Council). Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds (45 kg). They then took Jesus's body and wrapped it with the spices in linen clothes, following the burial customs of the Jews.

In the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden containing a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. This garden belonged to Joseph. After burying Jesus there, a large stone was rolled to cover the entrance. To prevent the disciples from stealing His body at night, the Pharisees and chief priests secured the tomb with their own guards for three days. They were aware of Jesus' preaching about His resurrection on the third day after His death.

Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

(St. Matthew 28:1-20, St. Mark 16:1-19, St. Luke 24:1-53, St. John 20:1-21,23)

Following the Jewish custom of anointing the body up to the third day, the women who witnessed the crucifixion (Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome) came to the tomb with spices that they had prepared. It was at the dawn of the first day of the week. Suddenly, there was an earthquake. An angel descended from heaven, rolled the stone that covered the tomb, and sat on it. He appeared as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The women were terrified to see that the stone had been rolled away. They went inside the tomb, searching for Jesus, but did not find him. The man asked them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen." The angels comforted the women and instructed them to inform the disciples that Jesus had resurrected and gone to Galilee before them. After his resurrection, Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.



The woman ran to Simon Peter and others to inform them of what happened. Peter and other disciple ran to the tomb to see for themselves that what they heard was true.

Seeing all this, the guards were frightened. They reported the events to the chief priests, who decided to bribe the soldiers to spread the news that the disciples had stolen Jesus's body while the guards were asleep. They feared that if the people learned of Jesus's resurrection, they would believe in Him, and the chief priests would be punished for crucifying an innocent man.

It is recorded in the Holy Bible that the resurrected Jesus appeared ten times to His disciples and others:

1. To Mary Magdalene alone, near the tomb. (St. John 20:11-18)
2. To Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (St. Matthew 28:1-10)
3. To St. Peter alone (St. Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5)
4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus (St. Luke 24:13-35)
5. To the ten disciples, excluding St. Thomas, on the same day of the Resurrection in the evening at the Mansion of Mark. (St. John 20:19-24)
6. To the eleven disciples, including St. Thomas, on the eighth day of the Resurrection at the Mansion of Mark (St. Mark 16:14-18)
7. To the disciples at the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (St. John 21:1-23)
8. To the eleven disciples and five hundred other brothers and sisters in Galilee (St. Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Corinthians 15:6)
9. To St. James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
10. To all those who had gathered at the time of His Ascension (St. Mark 16:19, St. Luke 24:50-52)

It is also recorded in the Acts of Apostles that Jesus appeared to St. Paul (Acts 9:3-9).

While being with Jesus, the disciples could not understand what He meant by resurrection. On the day Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples were hiding from the Jews in the Mansion of Mark. Though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among His disciples in the room, proving that the resurrected body of Jesus was beyond the limits of space and time. He entered through the locked door and greeted them with peace. In His presence, fear and anguish disappeared from the disciples, and they were delighted. He then gave them the authority to forgive sins by breathing on them and saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (St. John 20:21-23). The authority that the Son of God had to forgive sins was given to the disciples here and, through them, to the priests. The essence of the Sacrament of Holy Confession is involved in this.

While all these events took place, Apostle Thomas was not there. When this was explained, Thomas disbelieved. He said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in His side, I will not believe." The next Sunday, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and My God!" By saying so, he declared his faith.

As decided earlier (St. Matthew 28:7, 26:32, 28:10), the 11 Apostles went to Galilee, where Jesus appeared to them. In addition to what has been given, Jesus gave the Apostles more authority, duties and promises in Galilee. The powers and duties given are:

1. Make disciple of all nations.
2. Baptise them (people) in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
3. Teach them to obey the commandments of Jesus.

The great promise that Jesus gave to the Apostles was, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples for the third time at the Sea of Tiberias. Here, a miraculous fishing takes place. Jesus gives them food. After food, Jesus gave Peter the administrative powers of His Church (St. Matthew 28:16-20).

The facts that we should understand about the resurrection of Jesus Christ are:

1. The foundation of Christian belief is on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:14).
2. The most important message of Resurrection is Peace. Resurrection removes fear and gives hope.
3. Before Christ, dead men have come back to life. But the differences are a). They did not rise by themselves, but by people chosen by the Father. b). They were brought back to the same life and not a resurrection to eternity. Through resurrection, Jesus acquires the glorified body, which is beyond physical laws.
4. Through Resurrection, Jesus defeated death completely and released man from the slavery of sin and Hades.
5. Resurrection of Jesus is a forerunner of the resurrection of humanity to take place in future (Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 6:15, 1 Corinthians 15:44-54, Philippians 3:21)
6. Jesus Resurrected for the justification of humanity (Romans 4:25)

Ascension of Jesus

(St. Mark 16:19, St. Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:3-11)



For 40 days following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, confirming to them that He is alive and imparting teachings about the Kingdom of God through various miracles. He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit.

After this, they went to Mount Olive. There, Jesus blessed them by raising His hands. As they watched, Jesus was lifted, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. While they were gazing up towards Heaven, two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into Heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into Heaven." As Jesus had told them, they returned to Jerusalem and waited for the Holy Spirit. They waited for 10 days, and on the 50th day after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended on them in the form of tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost, reminiscent of the second Babel.

QUESTIONS

1. To what kind of people is death by crucifixion given?
2. According to the Holy Bible, what is the importance of Golgotha?
3. What did Jesus tell the weeping women who followed him?
4. Why did Jesus choose not to take a drink to reduce the pain of death?

5. How did one of the criminals obtain salvation?
6. What circumstances led the Gentile centurion to believe in Jesus?
7. Who took the initiative for the burial of Jesus?
8. Explain the burial of Jesus.
9. Why did the chief priests and the scribes demand Pilate to put guards at the tomb of Jesus?
10. To whom did the resurrected Jesus appear first?
11. According to the Holy Bible, to whom and when did the resurrected Jesus appear?
12. How did Jesus confirm the faith of St. Thomas?
13. What are the duties and authorities that Jesus gave to His disciples in Galilee?
14. How did Jesus grant the authority to forgive sins to the apostles?
15. What lessons do we understand from the resurrection of Jesus?
16. Describe the ascension of Jesus.

Chapter 25. Worship – A Study

UNDER REVIEW

Chapter 26. Mulanthuruthy Synod

Objective: To appreciate the significance of the Mulanthuruthy Synod in the history of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church.

The Mulanthuruthy Synod is an important event in the history of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church. The Holy Synod was summoned by His Holiness Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch of Antioch and met in the Mar Thoman Church, Mulanthuruthy on 28, 29 and 30th June 1876. Some documents and websites (like Wikipedia, etc.) refer to His Holiness as Ignatius Peter IV instead of Ignatius Peter III, as St. Peter is considered as the 1st Patriarch of Antioch.

Abraham Malpan, a 19th Century priest and theologian in the Malankara Church, wished to introduce reforms. These reforms included revised liturgy and changes in practices of the Church. These reforms displeased the conservative members in the Church, who did not wish for change. His nephew, Palakunnath Mathews Mor Athanasius was influenced by his uncle's (Abraham Malpan) teachings and by the Church Mission Society (CMS). He made a trip to Antioch and was ordained as a Bishop in 1842 by HH Moran Mor Elias II, Patriarch of Antioch, who was unaware of his reformist leanings. Palakunnath Mathews Mor Athanasius also had the support of the British missionaries in India.

The conservatives led by Pulikottil Mor Dionysious V, Metropolitan sought intervention from the Holy See of Antioch against the reforms. His Holiness Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch travelled to London in 1874 and appealed to ecclesiastical and governmental authorities in UK requesting an end to the British support for Mathews Mor Athanasius in India. The Patriarch impressed the British with his knowledge of the Bible and held audience with Queen Victoria to consider his cause. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Archibald Campbell Tait apprised the patriarch of a change in British stance wherein the British government accepted a position of neutrality in the affairs of the Malankara Church.

His Holiness subsequently sailed for India. Three weeks prior to the Synod, His Holiness Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch of Antioch sent a summons bull to all churches, informing them about the meeting of the Holy Synod to discuss and decide on the general spiritual matters of the Church. The arrangements for the Synod were done by the secretary to His Holiness, Very Rev. Geevarghese Ramban Chathuruthil of the Mulanthuruthy parish (later the great sacred saint, Geevarghese Mor Gregorius 'Kochu thirumeni'). The Synod was attended by –

- 130 priests and 144 laymen from 103 churches.
- Two Metropolitans - His Grace Abdulla Mar Gregorius of Jerusalem (later H.H. Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla) and Joseph Mar Dionysius from Malankara Church.

On the first day of the Holy Synod, the registration of the representatives took place. The agreement papers brought by the Church Representatives were submitted before the Holy Father. The inaugural speech by His Holiness also took place on the same day.

The Apostolic Bull of the Patriarch was read on the second day. The consequences of the ordination of Mathews Mor Athanasius in the Malankara Church and the measures taken by His Holiness to eliminate them were narrated by His Holiness in detail. The bull also mentioned the need of a powerful administrative machinery to avoid such occurrence in the future. Detailed discussions took place for giving a suitable response to the bull.

A reply was submitted by the Holy Synod on the third day to the Holy Father. It declared obedience, attachment, and obligation of the Church to the Holy See of Antioch and –

1. The members of the Malankara Church, maintaining the past true faith shall unitedly stand behind the Holy See of Antioch. Accordingly, those who violate that Holy faith shall have no position either in the congregation or in the Church. In the light of this the reformers who move away from the holy faith became alien to the Church.
2. It was decided to provide the printed canon law of the Church to all the congregations.
3. It was decided to keep separate registers for baptism, marriage, and burial in all congregations.
4. It was decided to create a permanent fund for the common use of the church.
5. It was decided to constitute a committee of priests and laymen under the Chairmanship of Metropolitan to look after the general administrative system of the Church. Thus, a communal democratic administrative system under spiritual leadership came into existence in the church.

It was decided to record the minutes of the decisions of the Holy Synod, undersigned by all the members who attended the meeting of the Holy Synod and to submit one copy of the same to His Holiness and to keep another copy at the Headquarters of the Church. An Affidavit recording all these decisions were submitted by the members of the Church to His Holiness.

Realising the vastness of the Malankara Church and the difficulty to administer it by a single Bishop, the Holy Father decided to divide Malankara Church into Seven Dioceses. It was decided to continue the headquarters of the Malankara Metropolitan at Kottayam itself and to create three dioceses each in the north and south of Kottayam. The new dioceses were Angamaly, Kochi and Kandanad in the north and Kollam, Niranam and Thumpamon in the south. For administering these dioceses six additional Bishops were consecrated by this Holiness. The Bishops of the new Dioceses were –

- Angamaly - Geevarghese Mor Koorilose (Ambat)
- Kochi - Simon Mor Dionysius (Karottuveetil)
- Kandanad - Paulose Mor Ivanios (Murimattom)
- Kollam - Paulose Mor Athanasius (Kadavil)
- Niranam - Geevarghese Mor Gregorios (Chathuruthiil)
- Thumpamon - Geevarghese Mor Julius

The Malankara Metropolitan, Joseph Mor Dionysius (Pulikottil) was also in charge of Kottayam Diocese. Later taking into consideration, the heavy workload of Malankara Metropolitan, His Holiness ordered the Mutual exchange of Kollam Dioceses to Joseph Mor Dionysius and Kottayam Dioceses to Paulose Mor Athanasius.

As per the discussion of the Holy Synod, a committee of 8 priests and 16 laymen from different parts of the Malankara Church, was constituted for administrative purpose. This committee under the chairmanship of Malankara Metropolitan is known as Syrian Christian Association.

His Holiness worked for the Malankara Church, and would be remembered as its saviour due to his timely, spiritual action. His Holiness had no difficulty in taking this decision, which helped

the Jacobite Church in maintaining the true faith. His Holiness returned to the Holy See of Antioch in 1877.

The supporters of reform separated from the Malankara Church and established Mar Thoma Syrian Church. The Mar Thoma Church is an Independent Reformed Syrian Church governed by its own Bishop in India and describes itself as Apostolic in origin, Universal in nature, Biblical in faith, Evangelical in principle, Ecumenical in outlook, Oriental in worship, Democratic in function, and Episcopal in character. According to the 2011 Census it was the sixth largest Christian Church in the state of Kerala, India.

QUESTIONS

1. When was the important event in the History of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church, The Holy Synod of Mulanthuruthy happened?
2. What important events happened on each day of the synod?
3. What is the Mulanthuruthy Padiyola?
4. What is Syrian Christian Association and how many members were elected to this association during synod?

Chapter 27. Mor Dionysius V

Objective: To learn about Mor Dionysius V.

UNDER REVIEW

Chapter 28. Holy Qurbana Songs

Objective: To learn Holy Qurbana Songs.

Agniyathmeryamareererum Dhoothanmarum

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Agnyathmeryamareererum Dhoothanmarum Thee Poondor Kadeeska-Deesennar-Thum Kondinnakkabaringal Vannu Dhaivam Kabaree-Nnuthanam Cheythettam Mahimavode Kavalkkar Kandandhanmar Ray Me-Leenneerenmare Yavar Kanday Mritharepole Barekhmore</p> <p>Pattakkaran : Subuho</p>	<p>¹ On Sunday there came down to the grave Watchers of fire and sprit And heavenly angels, clothed in flame, Crying Out, holy, holy' God has risen from the tomb In glory and in great might At that sight guards were blinded And they fell down, like dead men, On seeing watchers from the heights.</p> <p>Barekh- mor shubho ...</p>
<p>² 'Mudrakki-Lle Sathyama- Kede' Nnarayunnacharyanmar Onnichu- Tharamathinavar-Chonnar 'Mudhrakkottum Kedilla Mritharay Njangale Yakkitheerthascharyam Kanman Njangal Swapnam Kanunno ? Enna-Lum Dhaivam Kattum Sathyathe Maravakkamo ?'</p> <p>Janam : Menolam ...</p>	<p>² 'Do the tomb's seals remains intact? Asked the high priests to the guards They all answered in one accord, 'The seal remains unbroken; Come and see the wonder that Made us similar to dead men Perhaps it was a vision; It is impossible to Hide the truth which god reveals'</p> <p>People: men 'olam wa damo l'olam 'olmeen ameen.</p>
<p>³ Vangippo- Ya Pithrikkal-Kkum Bhrathakkalkkum Nalkaswasam; Ninnara-Dhakare Nin Parisudhanmar Sangathil Cherkka Nee Simhasanamereetta Dhushttanmare Neekkumbol Njangade Mrithar Dhaya Kananame Nin Ma-Haththmyamudhikkumbol Valabthagathayeedenam. Moriyarahem Meelainu Adharain</p>	<p>³ O Lord, grant rest and remembrance To the departed fathers And brethren; and may they stand in The company of Your saints When You sit on Your throne to Sep'rate the good and evil Let them see your compassion On the day of your glory May they stand at your right side (Moryo ...) Lord, have mercy upon us and help us.</p>

QULO (LOK MORIYO)

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Dhaivathin Puthrane Mariya-Mudhanathil Sesham Thottakkaranpol Kandal Thottathil 'Neeyenthinu Karayunnareyarayunnu'? Yennathinen Nadhaneyavarko-Ndengo Poyennal Thanavale- 'Mariyame' Yennan Odippo- Yudanvalariyichal Karthavuthanam Cheythe-Nna Sleehanmare. Barekmore.</p> <p>Priest: Subuho ... Halleluyya</p> <p>² Uthanam Cheythudane Thnnekurisichasehiyone Nasippichu, Sbha-Panieegrahanathe Othuyirin Than Mesayorukkam Cheythathinul Thanrakthamathil Cherthora Puthrannay Sthothram Sthothram Slee-Bayal Veendavanay Sthothram Cha-Valuyir Cherthavanay; Sthothram Punnyathinu Thanurudhi-Rangal Thannavanay</p> <p>People : Menolam ... Halleluyya</p> <p>³ Than Sudha Sareeram Bhakshichum Than Raktham Panam Cheythum; Mritharayor Thanna- Thmakkal Mel Azhiyaloke Papatthi-Nnirul Vazhvaivan Prarthichiduka Nam Misiha Thannodavar Perkkai Avarathma-Kkale Vangiya Natha ! Avar Ninnekkondadiyathale Neyyavare Vilichunirutheedaname- Valabhage</p>	<p>¹ Mary saw - God's living son - like a gardener. In the garden after He had risen - and He asked (her) 'Why you weep and whom you seek?' for which she said 'They've taken away my Lord and know not - where He is' 'Mary! He - called; and she knew Him Ran to a-postles and announced: 'Lord has risen and He redeemed the - creation'.</p> <p>² Glo-ry to - the son of God, who rose from grave, Destroyed Zion, His <<crucifer>>, and es-poused the Church Set in her the table, and His living flesh Mixed for her His precious blood, the cup of - salvation Praise Him, who - saved her by His Cross Praise Him, who - gave her life by death Praise Him, who gave us His absolving - flesh and blood</p> <p>Men'olam Halleluiah</p> <p>³ Let us entreat for those departed ones who Ate His holy body and drank His living blood So that the darkness of sin shall not reign on Their souls and minds in the world which does not pass away O Lord, you re-ceived their souls, for They confessed - You and your suff'rings Call them up and make them stand at Your right Hand side</p>

MOR YAKOBINTE BHOVOOSO

Manglish	English
<p>¹ Uthanathal Thansabhaye Veendonam Puthra Nin Sainoo Nalkithan Pragaye Kakkenam Nee</p>	<p>¹ Son, Who by Your - Resurrection - redeemed Your Church, Grant peace, and guard - her children by - (Your) Resurrection</p>
<p>² Chavekkeezhakki Bhalavan Skeppayilurangi Moonnam Nalilunarnnezhunnettan Bhalavanai</p>	<p>² The mighty slept - on the Cross and - trampled on death And He woke up - on the third day - and rose strengthened</p>
<p>³ Ksheenam Mari Moonnu Dhinam Mevikkurisinmel Ksheenichonadikundu Nasikkathingeshunnettu</p>	<p>³ When He rested - for three days, His - burden lightened He rose without - decay from his - wounds and sufferings</p>
<p>⁴ Dhavedham Tha-Than Than Varavingane Kandappol Odichenna- Veenayumayi- Kambimuru-Kki</p>	<p>⁴ David, His fa-ther saw Him come; he ran before Him and he strummed - his lyre and sang - in prophecy</p>
<p>⁵ Chonnan Mathu-Kurangamanuga-Noppam Nadhan Mithrangalkka-Nadhavumarikal- Kkarthiyumeki</p>	<p>⁵ Lord has risen - like a strong man, - who shakes off wine; He has struck His - foes and relieved His - friends in grief</p>
<p>⁶ Vinman Lokarkkaikyam Nalkeedum Saino Ninnuthanathal Ninsabhayil Saino Nalkenam</p>	<p>⁶ O Peace, who re-conciled those in heav'n and on earth By your Resu-rrection grant peace - and guard Your Church</p>

Chapter 29. References

UNDER REVIEW