

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS  
CLASS 6**

**LESSON - 2**

**GOD'S PROMISE FULFILLED**

**BOOK OF JOSHUA**

**Introduction**

While returning from Egypt, the children of Israel reached Paran Wilderness. Then Moses sent spies to secretly search out Canaan; one man from each tribe. Joshua (old name Hoshea) and Caleb, son of Jephunnah of the tribe of Judah were among the twelve spies sent out to Canaan. On their return both of them told the people that the land they explored was an excellent one. If the Lord is pleased with them, He will take them there and give them the rich and fertile land. But the other spies spread a false report and frightened the people saying that the inhabitants of the land were stronger and they had even seen giants among them. The cities were very large and fortified. Since the people refused to trust in the Lord, they were made to wander thirty nine years in the wilderness, without directly entering Canaan from Paran Wilderness. It is believed that the events during this period recorded earlier by two or three historians were consolidated in a book from after the children of Israel returned from Babylonian captivity during 5th century B.C., under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. Even though the details are available, no mention is made about the author of this book. Since it contains the detailed history of Joshua it is aptly named as the Book of Joshua.

The Children of Israel enter the Promised Land

Aim: To understand that the Lord himself was leading the people.

Moses who led the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land could not enter there. On reaching the plains of Moab, he went up to mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah. The Promised Land was shown to him by the Lord from one end of the country to the other. Then the Lord said to him "This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" saying "I will give it to you descendants". I have caused you to see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross ever there" Moses passed away and he was buried in a valley in the land of Moab opposite to Bethpeor. Now Joshua, the son of Nun chosen by the lord to succeed Moses, was full of spirit of wisdom for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the children of Israel heeded him and did as the Lord has commanded Moses. After the death of Moses, the leadership was passed on to him. He sent out two spies with orders to go and secretly explore the land of Canaan especially the city of Jericho. When they came to the city, they went to spend the night in the house of a harlot named Rahab. Hearing about this, the King of Jericho sent word to Rahab to bring them out. She replied that they left at sun set before the city gates were closed. Actually she kept them hidden under some stalks of flex on the roof of her house. The King's men left the city and went in search of the spies as far as the place where the road crosses Jordan. Rahab lived in a house built into the city wall. At night she let the men down from her window by a rope. These men returned to Joshua and told him all that has befallen them. The children of Israel camped on the eastern side of Jordan for three days waiting to cross it. The leaders then went through the camp and said to the people "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, break camp and follow then at a distance. Then Joshua commanded the people to sanctify themselves, because the Lord will perform miracles among them. Then he told the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and go with it ahead of the people. The Lord then said to Joshua "What I do today will make the people of Israel begin to honour you as a great man they will realize that I am with you as I was with Moses. Tell the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant that when they reach the river they must wade in and stand near the bank".

When the people left the camp to cross Jordan, the priests went ahead of them carrying the Ark of the Covenant. As soon as the priests stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing and piled up far upstream at Adam. The flow down stream to the Head Sea was completely cut off and the people were able to cross over to Canaan near Jericho walking across on dry ground. Then the river regained its original position. The people stayed in Gilgal.

**Questions:**

1. Why the book was given the name of Joshua?

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2. How did Moses see the Promised Land?
3. Describe how the children of Israel did cross over Jordan?
4. How the spies sent out to Jericho were saved?

***Memory Verse: "and the Lord is with us: fear them not". (Num. 14:9)***

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**LESSON - 3**

**IMPORTANT BATTLES LED BY JOSHUA**

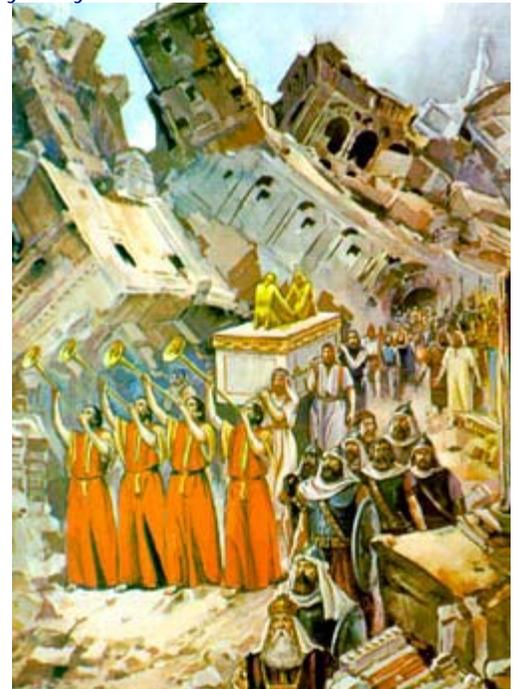
Aim: To recollect that Israel's success in battles will always be by God's power and not on their own might or cleverness.

1. Battle of Jericho:

Jericho was securely shut up and guarded to keep the Israelites out. As ordered by the Lord, Israelites marched around the city once a day for six days. Seven priests each carrying trumpets of ram's horns went in front of the Ark of the Covenant. Those carrying weapons were in front of the priests and the remaining men behind the ark. On the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. When the priests were about to sound trumpets for the seventh round, Joshua ordered the people to shout and he said "The Lord has given you the city. The city and every thing in it must be totally destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only the prostitute Rahab and her household will be spared, because she hid our spies. You are not to take anything that is to be destroyed. If you do so you will bring trouble and destruction of the Israelite camp. Everything made of silver, gold, bronze or iron is set apart for the Lord. It is to be put in the Lords treasury". As directed, the people gave a loud shout when the priests flew the trumpets and the walls of the city collapsed. Then the army went straight unto the hill into the city and captured it. They also killed every one in the city except Rahab and the members of her family. They also killed the cattle, sheep and donkeys. Then they set fire to the city and burned it to the ground along with everything in it except the things made a gold, silver, bronze and iron which they took and put in the Lord's treasury. But Achan belonging to the tribe of Judah disobeyed the order of the Lord not to take from Jericho anything that is to be destroyed. He took two kilograms of silver and a bar of gold weighing half a Kilogram and a beautiful Babylonian cloak and hid them without the knowledge of any body else.

2. Battle of Ai

Ai was a small city near Jericho and its population was comparatively small. Hence about 3000 Israelites made the attack. But they were forced to retreat. The men of Ai chased them from the city gate and killed 36 men. Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes in grief, threw themselves to the ground before the Ark of the Covenant and lay there till evening with dust on their head to show their sorrow. The Lord said to Joshua "Israel has sinned. They have broken the agreement with me that I ordered them to keep. They have taken some of the things condemned to destruction. They stole them, lied about it and put them with their own things." As ordered by the Lord, the people were sanctified by Joshua and brought before the Lord early next morning. They were checked tribe by tribe, cleans by clean and family by family. At last, Achan of the tribe of Judah was picked out. Joshua along with all the people of Israel, seized Achan, the silver, the cloak and the bar of gold together with Achan's sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and everything he owned and they took them to the valley of Achor. All Israel stoned Achan and his family with stones and burned his possessions with fire.



In the second battle, the city of Ai was captured by Joshua and the whole population of Ai was killed that day - twelve thousand men and women. Joshua burned Ai and left it in ruins and it is still like that today. Then Joshua built on mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel. As written in the Book of the Law of Moses, he made it with whole stones over which no man has wielded any iron tool. In it they offered burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings. There in the presence of the children of Israel Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses. Every one of the commandments of Moses was read out by Joshua to the whole gathering which included women and children as well as foreigners living among them. He warned the people who were going to stay in land of idol worshippers, not to deviate from the instructions of the Lord.

3. Battle of Gibeon

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Joshua made a treaty of friendship with the people of Gibeon and promised to protect them. The Amorite kings of Southern Canaan joined forces, surrounded Gibeon and attacked it. Then Joshua and his whole army made a surprise attack on the Amorites. The Lord made the Amorites panic at the sight of Israel's army. While the Amorites were running down the pass from the Israel's army, the Lord made large hail stones fall down on them all the way to Azekah. More were killed by hail stones than by Israelites. On the day that the Lord gave the men of Israel, victory over Amorites, Joshua spoke to the Lord. In the presence of Israelites he said "Sun stand still over Gibeon, Moon stop over Aijalon valley". The sun stood still and the moon did not move until the nation had conquered its enemies. The five Amorite kings however had escaped and were hiding in the cave of Makkedah. Some one found them and told Joshua where they were hiding. As ordered by Joshua large stones were placed at the entrance of the cave. The Israelites became safe of the southern part of Canaan after the victory in this battle.

4. Battle of Hazor

The kings on the northern side of Canaan joined forces, came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel, So Joshua and all his men attacked them by surprise. The Lord gave the Israelites victory over them. The king of Hazor was captured and killed. No one was left alive and the city was burned. Joshua did everything the Lord had commanded and it was the secret of his success. Thus all the important regions of Canaan were brought under the control of Joshua.

**Questions:**

1. Which are the important battles fought by Joshua?
2. How did the people of Israel capture the fort of Jericho?
3. Who among the inhabitants of Jericho escaped death?
4. What was the sin of Achan?
5. What was the punishment for his sin?
6. Who made the sun and the moon stand still? When did it happen?

***Memory Verse: "The Lord, your God is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11)***

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**LESSON - 4**

**DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND**

Aim: To ascertain how God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled.

Moses assigned to the tribes of God, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh, the territory on the eastern side of the Jordan River, opposite to Jericho. The conquered territory west of Jordan was divided by Joshua among the remaining nine and a half tribes. The tribe of Levi did not inherit any land. As the Lord instructed Moses, they were to receive as their possession a share of the sacrifices burnt on the altar to the Lord, God of Israel. They were however given some cities to live in and pasture land around these cities. Even though there was no permanent temple for worship, the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was set up.

When the children of Israel were crossing river Jordan the priests took twelve stones from the river. These stones were set up by Joshua at Gilgal which was their first camp. He said to the people "In the future when your children ask you what these stones mean, you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Tell them that the Lord your God dried up the water of Jordan for you until you had crossed just as He dried up the Red Sea for us". As commanded by the Lord, Joshua circumcised the males born during the forty years spent crossing the desert by the Israelites. While they were camping at Gilgal on the plain near Jericho they observed Pass Over on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. The next day was the first time they ate food grown in Canaan; roasted grain and bread made without yeast. The manna stopped falling then. From that time on they ate food grown in Canaan. The Lord made Joshua do great things. He was steadfast in his devotion to the Lord. He repeatedly taught the people the commandments of the Lord. His famous declaration was "As for my family and me, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15). The later history of the Israel clearly reveals that whenever they obeyed the commandments of the Lord, they were victorious and they tasted defeat whenever they disobeyed.

Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten. He was buried on his own land at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. The bones of Joseph brought from Egypt by the children of Israel were buried at Shechem.

**Questions**

1. Narrate the important events of Gilgal?
2. When did the heavenly bread Manna stop falling?
3. Where were the bones of Joseph buried?

***Memory Verse: "As for my family and me, we will serve the lord" (Joshua 24:15)***

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**LESSON - 5**

**PEOPLE'S LIFE IN THE PROMISED LAND**

Aim: To remember that Lord act through His faithful servants.

After Joshua, the Lord engaged Judges to protect the children of Israel from the enemies and for the administration of justice. Othneil was the first and Samuel the last of the great judges of Israel. During the time of Samuel the period of monarchy was established. Judge Samuel was also a prophet.

The books of Samuel I & II deal mainly with Samuel and Saul and David the king anointed by him. Modern scholars are of the view that in writing these two books more than one man had participated. It is believed that these books were written during 7th century B.C.

Hannah and Elkanah, the parents of Samuel were highly God fearing. Being children Hannah continued here prayers to the Lord. Hannah made a solemn promise "Lord Almighty look at me your servant! See my trouble and remember me! Don't forget me! If you give me a son I promise that I will dedicate him to you for his whole life and he will never have his hair cut." A son was born to her as a result of her prayers. She called his name Samuel and said "Because I have asked for him from the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:20) As soon as the child was weaned she took him to Shiloh and entrusted him to Eli the priest, dedicating him to the Lord as promised.

The boy Samuel stayed in Shiloh and served the Lord under the direction of priest Eli. Lord was with him. Samuel was sleeping in the sanctuary. One night the Lord called Samuel. He answered "Yes Sir" and ran to Eli and said "You called me and here I am" But Eli answered "I didn't call you, Go back to bed" So Samuel went back to bed. The Lord called him again and again. When the Lord called him the third time Eli advised him to say "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." When the Lord called him to say "Speak Lord, your servant is listening". When the Lord called him the fourth time he responded as advised by Eli. Then the Lord disclosed to Samuel the disaster to fall upon Eli and family. After the death of Eli and his sons, Samuel became the priest of Shiloh.

Throughout his life Samuel administered justice for Israel. He led the people giving good advice. As a result, there was great spiritual awakening. He said to the children of Israel "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and We will deliver you from the hands of the Philistines".

He advised the people (1) To search for the Lord (2) To abandon idolatry, dedicate to the Lord completely and worship Him only (3) To repent over sins and confess and (4) To pray and fast (1Sam 7:3-6)

Samuel sincerely yearned that all the tribes of Israel should live and prosper under the sovereignty and judgment of God. He was very much annoyed on the request of the people for a king to rule over them as other nations have. As commanded by the Lord he anointed at his residence Saul, Son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin as ruler of the people of Israel. Suddenly the spirit of God took control of Saul. Later he was chosen by the Lord in the presence of the people at a religious gathering at Mizpah (1 Sam 10: 20-24)

**Questions:**

1. Who was the last judge of Israel?
2. What is the meaning of the word Samuel?
3. What was the reply of Samuel to the call of the Lord?

***Memory Verse:: "The boy Samuel continued to grow and to gain favour both with the Lord and with men (1 Sam 2:26)***

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**LESSON - 6**

**SAUL THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL**

Aim: To locate the consequences of incomplete obedience to the Lord.

When Saul was chosen as the king, Samuel explained to the people the behaviour of royalty, wrote it in a book as laid it up before the Lord. Later Samuel proclaimed Saul king at an holy place at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:11-15). Saul was 30 years old when he became the king.

Saul sent one thousand men under the command of his son Jonathan to attack the Philistines. Jonathan defeated a garrison of the philistines at Geba Infuriated Philistines posed a serious thread to Israel. Saul decided to offer burnt sacrifices and peace offerings at Gilgal before commencing the attack on the Philistines. He waited seven days for Samuel as Samuel had earlier instructed him to do. But still Samuel had not come to Gilgal. The people in panic began to desert Saul. Then Saul offered a burnt sacrifice and just as he was finishing Samuel arrived. He admonished Saul for his disobedience of the Lord's stipulating that priests alone are authorized to offer sacrifices. The Lord was displeased on this unauthorized action.

On the day of battle none of Israelite soldiers except Saul and his Son Jonathan had sword or spears. Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons secretly entered the camp of Philistines. The philistines were terrified. The raiders and soldiers in the camp trembled with fear. The earth shook and there was great panic. Thus Israel could win over Philistines without any army or weapons.

Samuel commanded Saul to attack Amalekites and to completely destroy every thing they have. Saul defeated the Amalekites. Saul and his men spared the life of Agag the king of the Amalek and did not kill the best sheep and cattle; the best calves and lambs and any thing that was good. They destroyed only what was useless or worthless. When questioned, Saul answered that the best sheep and cattle were kept to offer as sacrifice to God. Samuel said that since Saul rejected the Lords' command, the Lord has rejected Saul as king of Israel. The Samuel went to his house in Ramah. Never again they met thereafter.

When it was decided to reject Saul as king of Israel, as commanded by the Lord Samuel secretly anointed David son of Jesus as king at Bethlehem, (1 Sam. 16:13). The Lords spirit left Saul and an evil spirit tormented him. David who was proficient in playing harp was brought to Saul. Whenever the evil spirit came on Saul, David would get his harp and play it. The evil spirit came on Saul, David would get his harp and play it. The evil spirit will leave and Saul would feel better and be all right again. David accompanied Saul in the battle fields. This provided an opportunity for David to gain expertise in warfare and administration of the state.

**Questions:**

1. How Israel could greatly win over Philistines?
2. What was the disobedience shown by Saul in his war against the Amalekites?

***Memory Verse:: "To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of ram" (1 Sam 15:22)***

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**LESSON - 7**

**SAUL AND DAVID**

Aim: To recognize that one who is with God has nothing to be afraid of.

In retaliation, the Philistines gathered for battle and camped at a place called Ephes & Damnum. Israelites under the leadership of Saul assembled and camped in the valley of Elah. The Philistines lined up on one hill and the Israelites on another, with a valley in between. A man named Goliath came out from Philistines camp to Challenge the Israelites. He shouted at the Israelites to choose one of their men to fight him. If he is able to kill Goliath, then the Philistines will be the servants of Israel. If Goliath kills him, the Israelites should become their servants. It was a prevailing custom to declare the army of the person winning such a duel as victorious Goliath was nearly three meters tall and wore bronze armour that weighed about fifty seven kilogrammes and a bronze helmet. His spear was as thick as the bar on a weaver's loom and its iron head weighed about seven kilograms.

One day David came to the camp and hearing the Philistine giant insulting the Lord, told Saul that he will go and fight him. With the consent and best wishes of Saul, David went out with five stones and his catapult, to meet Goliath. When the army on both sides were watching, the stone from his catapult hit Goliath on his forehead and broke his skull. Goliath fell face down on the ground. David ran to him took Goliath's sword and cut off his head. Seeing this the Philistines ran away. Israelites followed them and killed many and looted their camp.

When Israelites were returning home, women from every town in Israel came out singing joyful songs, dancing and playing tabourines and lyres. In their celebration the women sang. Saul did not like this and he became very angry in that David received better complements. Saul was jealous and suspicious of David from that day on.

Next day an evil spirit suddenly took control of Saul. David was playing harp as he did every day and Saul was holding a spear. He threw the spear at David twice, but David dodged each time. David was afraid of Saul.

Saul had declared at the valley of Elah that he will give his daughter in marriage to the man who kills Goliath. Honoring this promise, Saul gave his daughter Michal to David. Still Saul treated David as his enemy. Saul told his son Jonathan that he planned to kill David. But Jonathan who was very fond of David praised him to Saul. Displeased at this, Saul tried to kill Jonathan. Learning about this David escaped and went to the priest Ahimelech in Nob. Since he did not have any ordinary bread, he gave hungry David the show bread which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests. The sword of Goliath kept there was also given to David. He went disguised to King Achish of Gath. When the King's officials identified this war hero of Israel and tried to retain him, David feigned insanity, searched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down on his beard David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullan and stayed there. Psalm No. 3 was written at this time.

**Questions:**

1. What is the reason for Saul's envy to David?
2. How did David subdue the giant Goliath?

***Memory Verse:: "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good, Blessed is the man who trusts in Him." (Ps 34:8)***

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**LESSON - 8**

**FALL OF SAUL**

Aim: To realize that envy and ill treatment there upon beget disaster.

Saul accused eighty five priests in Nob that they conspired with David and helped by giving him food and the sword of Goliath. On his orders all of them were slain by sword. Among the sons of Ahimelech, Abiathar alone escaped. He met David and told him how Saul slaughtered the priests of the Lord. He stayed with David.

Saul was repeatedly attempting to kill David, who with his followers escaped by shifting their stay in the wilderness caves and mountains. David got several opportunities to kill Saul. He spared his life saying that who can stretch out his hand against the Lords' anointed and be guiltless. Once he cut off a corner of the robe of Saul when he was sleeping in a cave. On another occasion, he took his spear and water jug kept behind Saul's head. Demonstrating these items David convinced Saul that he spared the life of Saul even though he had ample opportunities to kill him.

Again Philistine troops assembled to fight Israel. When Saul saw the Philistine army he was terrified and so he asked the Lord what to do. But the Lord did not answer him at all. So the Saul disguised himself and went to a woman who is a medium and requested her to call up the spirit of Samuel. Samuel told him that the Lord will hand the army of Israel to the Philistines and Saul and his sons will be slain (1 Sam 28:7-19). The Lord was displeased since Saul consulted a medium for guidance (1 Chr. 10:13)

Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua were killed in the battle on Mount Gilboa. Saul was hurt by enemy arrows and badly wounded. He asked the young man carrying his weapons to kill him so that the Philistines and Saul and his sons will be slain (1 Sam 28: 7-19). The Lord was displeased since Saul consulted a medium for guidance (1 Chro. 10:13).

Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua were killed in the battle on Mount Gilboa. Saul was hurt by enemy arrows badly wounded. He asked the young man carrying his weapons to kill him so that the Philistines will not gloat over him and kill him. To young man was too terrified to do so. So Saul took his own sword and threw himself on it. The Philistines came and cut off Saul's head. When the people of Jabesh in Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, they took down the bodies of Saul and his sons to Jabesh and burned them. Then they took the bones and buried them.

**Questions:**

1. Why the Priests in Nob were killed by Saul?
2. How did David prove that the he nurtured no ill will towards Saul?
3. How was the end of Saul?

***Memory Verse:: "Who ever sins is guilty of breaking Gods' law, because sin is breaking of the law" ( 1 John 3:4)***

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**LESSON - 9**

**DAVID-THE KING WHO WHOLE HEARTEDLY RELIED ON THE LORD**

Aim: To remind that the Lord's kindness will protect all those who rely on him.

As already mentioned, David was secretly anointed at Bethlehem by Samuel as ordered by the Lord. Immediately spirit of the Lord took control of David and was with him from that day on. While taking care of the sheep, David could rescue a lamb carried off by a lion or bear, by beating it to death.

After the death of Saul, as commanded by the Lord, David went to Hebron with family and settled there. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and anointed David as king of Judah (2 Sam. 2: 1-4). He ruled in Hebron over Judah for seven and a half years. Then Joab was the commander of his army. Abner the commander of Saul's army made Ishbosheth son of Saul king of Israel. The fighting between the forces supporting Saul's family and those supporting David went on for a long time. As David became stronger and stronger his opponents became weaker and weaker (2 Sam 3:1). Later Abner went to Hebron deciding to join David's camp. Then he made an agreement with David. On his way back, Joab took him aside at the gate as though he wanted to speak privately with him and there he stabbed him in the belly. Two officers of Ishbosheth killed him. Then they cut off his head and presented it to David in the fond hope of getting some reward. Though Ishbosheth was his enemy, David was furious over the wickedness of these officers. He gave the order and his soldiers killed them and cut off their hands and feet which they hung up near the pool in Hebron. Later the leaders of Israel came to David and made a sacred alliance. They anointed him and he came the king of Israel (2 Sam. 5:3-4). Then David captured Jerusalem the city of Jebus and made it his capital naming it as David's city. He reigned over whole of Israel for 33 years.

David was the most valorous warrior among the kings of Israel. After several battles he expanded his territory. King David was settled in his palace and the Lord kept him safe from all his enemies. Then David desired to build a temple for the Lord to live in. But the Lord did not allow him to build the temple because he had shed much blood on earth. He made abundant preparations and accumulated large quantity of gold and silver required for making the temple during the reign of his son. (After the death of David his son Solomon got the opportunity to build the temple).

After becoming king of Israel David enquired whether any one from the family of his bosom friend Jonathan was alive. He learned that Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan was alive. King David sent for him. He gave back every thing that belonged to his grand father Saul and his family. Mephibosheth stayed in the king's place and ate at the king's table.

**Questions:**

1. Where was David anointed as King by Prophet Samuel?
2. Why the Lord did not allow David to build the temple?
3. How did David show kindness for Jonathan's sake?

***Memory Verse: "The lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1)***

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**LESSON -10**

**THE END OF DAVID**

Aim: To study that disasters arise out of Sin.

On the command of David, Uriah one of his war heroes was cleverly murdered and his wife Bathsheba was taken as David's wife. The thing that David had done displeased the Lord. Then the Lords sent Prophet Nathan to David who communicated the Lords decision "The sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." David wept and repented for his sin. Then Nathan consoled him saying" The lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. However because of this deed, you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die (2 Sam 12: 10-18). The child died on the 7th day.

Absalom and Amnon were the sons of David. By the command of Absalom, Amnon was murdered by his servants. Thereafter Absalom went to Hebron with some of his followers and declared himself as the king. Ahitophel one of the David's counselors and several others joined Absalom. Frightened over these development David fled from Jerusalem. David and his followers went eastwards crossing Jordan River. Psalm No.3 was sung by David when he was fleeing from Jerusalem to escape from his son Absalom.

Hushai one of the faithful friends of David pretended as a follower of Absalom, gathered information and passed on to David, the movements of Absalom from time to time. Ahithophel persuaded Absalom to allow him to pursue David with a large army and kill him. Absalom accepted the counsel of Hushai that it was better that the army is led by Absalom himself. When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he went home disappointed and hanged himself to death. Absalom accepting the counsel of Hushai led an army to pursue David. They crossed Jordan and reached woods of Ephraim. The mule on which Absalom was riding went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree and his head caught in the terebinth. So he was left hanging between heaven and earth and the mule which was under him went away. Learning about this Joab took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart. Then ten young men surrounded Absalom, struck and killed him. Hearing the news David wept for his son.

When the days of David drew near that he should die, his son Solomon was announced as King. He charged Solomon his son saying "Keep the charge of the Lord, your God to walk in His Ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and His testimonies as it is written in the Law of Moses" ( 1 Kings 2:4) Then David died.

The greatest Achievement of David was that he was the Israel King who wholeheartedly served the Lord. David is the model for the comparison of the later kings in Judah and Israel.

All the good things plundered from the enemies attacked by David were sanctified and dedicated to the Lord. Among these were the silver, gold and bronze for the construction of the temple.

David was never shy in public adoration of the Lord singing the Psalms. He was convinced that due to his sin, he full deserved all the punishments given to him by the Lord. He repented and wept before the Lord.

He never forgot those who were him during his adversity. He entrusted his son Solomon to help the descendants of those who had done good deed and to give deserving punishments to those who were guilty of purposely doing harm.

He accepted Saul as the Lords' anointed and respected him, Even when Saul tried kill him.

**Questions:**

1. The thing that David has done displeased the Lord. What was it?
2. Describe the circumstances when David sang Psalm No.3?

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3. Who was Ahithophel? Why did he hang himself?
4. How was the end of Absalom?

***Memory Verse:: "Blessed is he whose transgression is foreign, whose sin is covered" (Ps: 32:1)***

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**LESSON - 11**

**LORD, THE ONLY**

Aim: To learn that, when wisdom to rule the people with justice was sought for, the Lord gave every thing.

Solomon was the son born to David in Bathsheba. David had assured her that her son shall reign after him and shall sit in his throne (1 Kings. 1:17). But when David became old another son Adonijah, declared himself as king. But as described by king David, Zadok, the priest anointed Solomon as king at Gibeon.

After the death of David, Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices there. There Solomon offered a thousand and burnt offerings. That night the Lord appeared to him in a dream and asked " What would you like me to give you" Solomon sought wisdom he needed to rule the Lord's people with justice and to know the difference between good and evil. The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So he said to him "Because you have asked for the wisdom to rule justly, instead of long life for yourself or riches or the death of your enemies, I will do what you have asked. I will give you more have again. I will also give you what you have asked. I will give you more wisdom and understanding that any one has ever had before or will ever had before or will ever have again. I will also give you what you have not asked for; all your life you will have wealth and honour more than that of any other king. And if you obey me and keep my laws and commands as your father David did, I will give you a long life" (1 Kings 3:5-14)

Solomon did not enter into any major battles since David had already conquered all the nearby places. Solomon's kingdom included all the nations from river Euphrates to Philistia and the Egyptian border. They paid him taxes and were subject to him all his life (1 Kings. 4:21) Solomon used to get large quantity of gold from Tarsus and Ophir. The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom and reputation. She traveled to Jerusalem to test him with difficult questions. The wisdom and majesty of Solomon left her breathless and amazed (1 Kings 10: 1-5). The decision of Solomon in identifying the actual mother in the dispute of two women over a child testified his wisdom (1 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon was a great writer. He was well versed in prose and poetry. He is the author Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Solomon said 3000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs. Solomon's proverbs were copied by men at the court of King Hezekiah of Judah (Prov 25: 1) Psalms 72 and 27 were written by Solomon.

The beautiful temple constructed by him at Jerusalem was his greatest achievement. It took seven years to complete the construction of the temple. After King Solomon had finished building the temple he prayed to the Lord (1 Kings 8:12-53). The Lord appeared to him again as he had in Gibeon and said to him " I have heard your prayer. I consecrate this temple which you have built as the place where I shall be worshipped for ever. I will watch ever it and protect it for all time (1 Kings. 9:2,3)

(The temple constructed by Solomon was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar during 6th century B.C. Later a second temple was constructed by Zerubbabel. When this temple was spoiled, Herod the King of Jerusalem built a beautiful temple in the place of the old temple. This third temple which was in existence during the days of Jesus Christ was destroyed by Roman army in A.D. 70)

- In addition to thousands of workers and artisans chosen by Solomon, workers sent by Hiram King of Tyre were also engaged in building the temple. The temple was divided into Most Holy Place, Holy Place and Court all around. The High Priest goes into the Most Holy Place only once a year. He takes with him blood which he offers to God on behalf of himself and for the sins which the people have committed without knowing that they were sinning. The Ark of the Covenant all covered with gold and containing the gold jar with manna in it, Aaron's stick that had sprouted leaves and the two stone tablets with commandments written on them were kept in the Most Holy Place. Above the ark were the winged creatures representing Gods' presence, with their wings spread over the place where sins forgotten. In the Holy place were the lamp stand of seven branches, table for the bread offered to God and the altar for burning incense. The Court around was in two parts, the inner part exclusively for the priests. The bronze altar for burning offerings was placed there.

Solomon's devotion to the lord diminished in due course. His Gentile wives made him turn away from God. By the time he was old, they had led him into the worship of foreign gods. He built places of worship where all his foreign wives could burn incense and offer sacrifices to their Gods. Even though

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the Lord, the God of Israel had appeared to Solomon twice and had commanded him not to worship foreign gods, Solomon did not obey the Lord, but turned away from Him. So the Lord was angry with Solomon and said to him "Because you have deliberately broken your covenant with me and disobeyed my commandments, I promise that I will take the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your officials. Due to his extravagant way of life, Solomon's treasury got depleted. Thereupon heavy tax was imposed over burden his subjects. After forty years of rule Solomon died and joined his ancestors. His Son Rehoboam succeeded him as King.

**Questions:**

1. Who anointed Solomon? Where?
2. Where did the Lord appear to Solomon for the first time?
3. How did Solomon become the wisest of the wise men?
4. Name the books written by Solomon included in the Holy Bible?

***Memory Verse:: "Remember you creator in the days of your youth" (Eccl. 12:1)***

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**LESSON - 12**

**SOLOMON'S KINGDOM TORN INTO TWO**

Aim: To establish that internal disorder is inevitable whenever the king refuse to heed to the wishes of the people"

Internal strife had set in during the last of Solomon. Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, one of the officials of King Solomon rebelled against him. One prophet Ahijah from Shiloh told him that the Lord, the God of Israel has decided to take the kingdom away from Solomon and to give ten tribes to Jeroboam, keeping only one tribe for Solomon (1 Kings 1:30-31). Learning about this Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam who escaped to Egypt and stayed there till the death of Solomon.

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam became the king in Jerusalem. All the people of northern Israel gathered at Shechem under the leadership of Jeroboam and went to king Rehoboam who reached there. They said to him that his father Solomon treated them harshly and placed heavy burdens on them. They told him that, if he makes these burdens lighter and make life easier for them they will be loyal subjects. Rehoboam replied that he will only increase the tax burden instead of decreasing it. When the people saw that the king would not listen to them, they got angry. The people of Israel rebelled leaving Rehoboam as king only of the people living in the territory of Judah. The remaining people made Jeroboam their king. The kingdom of Jeroboam was thereafter known as the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Rehoboam known as the kingdom of Judah.

David and Solomon ruled over all the tribes of Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital. As already mentioned was divided into Israel Kingdom and Judah kingdom during the time of Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah kingdom. After Rehoboam, 18 persons who were members of the David's family became kings at Jerusalem. Queen Athaliah was the only person not from the family of David who ruled at Jerusalem. She being the wife of Jehoram, one of the kings in the family, was also related to the family. You will get opportunity in the next class to study in detail about the Judah kings who ruled from Jerusalem.

**Questions**

1. During whose time the children of Israel were divided into two kingdoms?
2. Who was selected as the first king of the ten tribes?
3. Who is the queen not coming from the family of David who ruled at Jerusalem?

***Memory Verse: "I wait for your deliverance Lord" (Gen. 49:18)***

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**LESSON 13**

**KINGS OF ISRAEL KINGDOM**

Aim: To find out that those who fail to heed to the exhortation of the Lord face utter disaster.

Kingdom of Israel commenced with the reign Jeroboam, covered to tribes on the northern side. King Jeroboam fortified the town of Shechem and lived there for a while. Then he left and fortified the town of Penuel and stayed there ( 1 Kings. 12:25). He made two bulls of gold and placed one of the gold bulls in Beethel and the other in Dan. He compelled the people to worship these gold bulls and prohibited them from going to Jerusalem. Idol worship among Israelites was thus officially initiated by him. His successors from different tribes were also idolaters.

Tirzah was the capital when Baasha, Elah and Simri were king of Israel. Zimri set the palace on fire and died in the flames when they city was besieged of the enemies. Omri the next king shifted the capital from Tirzah to Samaria. All his successors ruled from Samaria. Emperor Shalmanser of Assyria captured Samaria in B.C. 721 and took Hoshea the last king and the Israelites to Assyria as prisoners and settled them in different places (2 Kings. 17:4-6). The king of Assyria brought people from different parts of his country and placed them in the cities of Samaria, in the place of exited Israelites. They took possession of the cities and lived there. They mingled with those who were not taken as prisoners and in due course they became a mixed race. They worshipped pagan gods and also the Lord treating him as one of the gods. During the days of Jesus these people were known as Samaritans.

Including Jeroboam, 19 kings ruled Israel. They belonged to eight families and tribes. The first king Jeroboam belonged to Ephraim tribe and Baasha to Issachar; the tribes of other kings were not mentioned. They were known as individuals and not a representing their tribe. Among these 19 kings seven were murdered and the murders succeeded to the throne.

Omri who built Samaria as his capital introduced certain administrative reforms. During the days of his son Ahab and his wife Jezebel the country witnessed the culmination of idolatry and wickedness (1 Kings. 16:30-33). The Lord gave ample opportunity through prophet Elijah, for the people to repent about their sins. But the king and the people ignored the warnings of the Lord. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who ruled before him. Consequently the country was ravished by severe draught when there was not a drop of rain for three years and six months. Ahab was killed and his blood was licked by dogs. Ahaziah the son of Ahab succeeded him. On his death his brother Joram succeeded him. Both of them were as wicked as their father.

Jehu one of the army officers, anointed as king of Israel on the instructions of prophet Elisha, killed Joram and became the king of Israel. They body of Jezebel was eaten away by dogs. There were killed and their heads put in baskets, were sent to Jehu as ordered by him. Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel. Jehu was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz who was succeeded by his son Jehoash. He was succeeded by Jeroboam II and after him his son Zechariah ruled for 6 months. Zechariah was assassinated thereafter (2 Kings 15:10). Thus the promise which the Lord had made to king Jehu "Your descendants down to fourth generation will be of Israel" was fulfilled (2 Kings 15:12).

Shallum who assassinated King Zechariah ruled in Samaria for one month. Menaham assassinated him and succeeded as king. On his death his son Pekahiah became the king of Israel. He ruled Samaria for two years. Pekah an officer in Pekahiah's forces assassinated him and became king of Israel. It was while Pekah was the king that Tiglath Pileser, the emperor of Assyria captured several cities and took people to Assyria as prisoners. Hoshea plotted against king Pekah, assassinated him and succeeded as king. During the reign of Hoseha Emperor Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and deported people from Samaria as already mentioned.

Almost all the Israel Kings were worshipping other gods. Then the Lord, through his brave prophets exhorted the kings and the people. But they did not care to heed to these warnings.

Not only that Jeroboam consecrated two gold bulls at altars he had built, he chose priests from families who were not of the Levi tribe. He himself offered sacrifices at the altar. He did not abandon his evil ways despite

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specific warnings. Because Jerobaom sinned and led the people of Israel into sin the Lord destroyed the dynasty of Jeroboam and uprooted the people of Israel from the good land which he gave to their ancestors and scattered them beyond the river Euphrates (1 Kings 14: 14,15)

**Questions:**

1. Official idol worship among Israelites was initiated by whom?
2. How did Samaritans originate?
3. Who is the king who set flame to his palace and committed suicide?

***Memory Verse:: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it" (Ps 127:1)***

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**LESSON-14**

**IMPORTANT PROPHETS OF ISRAEL**

Aim: To confirm that God work wonders through His prophets.

Prophets who liaisoned between the Lord and the common man played an important role in the history of Israelites. Things to happen were revealed by the Lord to the people through the predictions of the prophets. Formerly they were known in Israel seer (1 Sam. 9:9). Elijah who never experience death but taken up to haven was the most zealous in the tradition of the prophets. He had the rare fortune to be present along with Moses at the time of transfiguration of Jesus. John the Baptist was identified by Jesus to Elijah who bore similarity in his dress, strength and might (Mal 4:5, Math. 11:14, Luke 1:17). He belonged to the village of Tishbite of Gilead. During the days of Ahab, Jezebel attempted to kill him because he strongly protested against idolatry. Of course he could convince the king and the people that the Lord is God and the Lord alone is God by getting the sacrifices at Mount Carmel burned by the fire sent by the Lord from heaven. He killed all the prophets, of Baal. While he was hiding near the brook of Cherith, the Lord commanded ravens to bring him bread and meat every morning and evening. The Lord protected him wonderfully when he was provided by the widow of Zarephath. The bin of her flour was not used up nor did her jar of oil run dry.

As commanded by the Lord, Elijah anointed Jehu as king over Israel and Hazael as king over Syria and Elisha as his successor prophet. When it was time for the Lord to take away Elijah, he took his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water of Jordan and it was divided this way and that, so that Elijah and Elisha crossed over dry ground. Then a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire and separated the two of them. Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha got the mantle fallen from the hand of Elijah when he was taken up to heaven. With this mantle Elisha also could divide river Jordan.

Elijah had condemned Ahab and warned him about the severe punishment for cunningly taking of the vineyard of Naboth after murdering him.

Elijah fervently fought against injustice. Also during the days of Ahaziah the son of Ahab.

Elisha the only anointed prophet and the disciple of Elijah, fulfilled his mission during the days of the successors of Ahab. Elisha worked several miracles like purifying water causing miscarriage (2 Kings 2:19-22) filling the dry stream bed with water (2 Kings 3:20) increasing the oil of the widow, (2 Kings 4:7) giving life to the dead child of the woman from Shunem, (2 Kings 4:34-36), increasing loaves of bread, (2 Kings 4:42-44) curing Naaman's leprosy, (2 Kings 5:14). Inflicting the leprosy of Naaman to Gehazi and his descendants, (2 Kings 5:27) floating the iron axe head fallen into water (2 Kings. 6:7) striking Syrian army with blindness (2 Kings 6:18) etc.

Like Eliah, Elisha also was full of spirit.



**Questions**

1. How did Elijah prove that the Lord alone in God?
2. Who came with the spirit and might of Elijah to prepare the way for the Lord?
3. Who is the anointed prophet?
4. List out the miracles of Elisha

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***Memory Verse:: "There is none holy like the Lord (1 Sam. 2:2)***

**PART - III**

**NEW TESTAMENT**

**LESSON-15**

**THE GOSPELS**

Aim: To Understand that the only savior of the world is Jesus.

The New Testament is focused on Jesus Christ. The four Gospels provide important documentary evidence on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The events from his birth to ascension are narrated in a chronological order in no Gospel. St. Mark and St. John have documented the events after Jesus completing 30 years of age. St. Mathew and St. Luke provide details about the birth of Jesus. An incident when Jesus was 12 years old is mentioned by St. Luke. In continuation thereto events after attaining 30 years of are narrated by both of them. More than giving a factual narration about the life of the historical figure Jesus, the apostles have placed on record the information about the Christ assimilated by the early Christian church.

In Hebrew language the word Jesus means protection of the Lord and Messiah means the anointed. In Greek language it has been interpreted as Christ.

There is some difference in recording the genealogy of Jesus in the first and the third Gospels. St. Mathew has traced it in the ascending order from Abraham through Virgin Mary, while St. Luke has recorded the ancestry of Joseph to Adam. The Jews family believed that Messiah will arrive in the line of David in the tribe of Abraham. These two evangelists proved through the genealogy that both these aspects have come true in the case of Jesus.

**Question:**

1. What are the contents of the Gospels?
2. Give the meaning of the words Jesus and Messiah?
3. It was proved by the evangelists through the genealogy that these two aspects have been come true in respect of Jesus. What are they?

**LESSON-16**

**SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

Aim: To learn that Jesus Christ is complete God and at the same time complete man except for the human weakness of sin.

The first three Gospels are known as synoptic Gospels. They are similar in contents, order and narration. It is generally accepted that the gospel according to St. Mark was written first. Most of the sentences in the 2nd gospel were reproduced by St. Mathew and St. Luke in the first and third Gospels. It is the ministry of the Lord in Galilee that has been given importance in these three Gospels. In certain verses word by word similarity is also visible in these three Gospels eg. Healing the leper (8:2, 1:40, 5:12). Healing the paralytic (9:2, 2:5, 5:12), Questioning the authority of Christ (11:23, 11:28, 20:2) etc. In the case of certain verses similarity is between the first and second Gospels while in certain others between Gospels second and third.

This does not mean that the synoptic Gospels are similar in all respects. There are differences in several matters.

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1. The narration about the birth of Jesus is differently given in the 1st and 3rd Gospels while the 2nd Gospel is silent over this.

2. The sermon on the Mount has been described by St. Mathew with great importance in chapter 5,6 & 7 of his Gospel, while St. Luke has made only passing reference to this in chapter 6:17-49, 11: 19-12:33 etc.

St. Mark in his Gospel has interpreted Aramaic Syriac words on seven occasions (3:17, 5:41, 7:11, 7:34, 14:36, 15:22, 15:34) Out of them, St. Mathew has used only two while St. Luke has not at all used these words.

The Gospel According to St. Mathew

Author: St. Mathew one of the twelve disciples of Jesus has written this gospel. He has another name Levi. He was a tax collector at Capernaum till he was called by Jesus. This Gospel was written mainly for Jewish Christians. He has liberally quoted from the books of the prophets in the Old Testament. This evangelist has furnished the genealogy to prove that Jesus was born in David's line. It is believed that this Gospel was written in Hebrew language during A.D. 70 at a place outside Canaan, most probably Antioch.

Most detailed information about the life and teachings of Jesus is available in the Gospel of St. Mathew which serves as a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New Testament. On account of this first place among the Gospels has been assigned to it even though it was not written first.

This Gospel is called Church Gospel. The word Ecclesia is seen only in this Gospel.

It can be seen that this Gospel was written with several objects in view. Important among them were: -

1. To prove that the Old Testament predictions about Messiah have been fulfilled in Jesus.
2. To prove that Christian church is the true successor of Israel.
3. To prove that Jesus came to fulfill the scripture and not to do away with it.
4. Though Sabbath and commandments are most noble Jesus is that Lord of these laws also.
5. To convince the people that the Christ is the savior of all those who are over burdened with sin and sufferings; not exclusively for Jews but for all those who approach him and
6. Above all to prove that Jesus born as the seed of a poor woman and brought up as the son of a carpenter was the true king of Israel. The presentation of gold by the Wiseman to Jesus provides proof of his kingship.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

It is universally accepted that this gospel was written by Mark (Greek name) John (Hebrew name) about whom mention is made in Acts 12:12, 12:24, 13:5, 13:13, Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:11. He traveled with St. Paul from Antioch to Perga in the 1st missionary journey. Barnabas was Marks' cousin (Col. 4:10) but St. Peter may have the person who led him to Christ. St. Peter called him "Mark my son" (1 Peter 5:13). It was this close association with St. Peter that lent apostolic authority to Mark's Gospel, since Peter was evidently Mark's primary source of information. Famous church historian Eusebius holds that Mark having become the interpreter of Peter wrote down accurately all that he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord but not however in the order. This Gospel was probably written in Rome between A.D. 65 and 70 for Gentile readers in general and Romans particular.

Though this is the shortest of the four gospels, the narration of most of the events is as detailed as an eye witness report e.g. Peter's mother in-law healed 1:29-31, Apostles became cowards (4:40), seeing Jesus walking on the sea disciples supposed it was ghost (6:49) etc. The weakness of the disciples and the human nature of Jesus are not kept hidden by Mark (3:5, 4:38, 13:32). He has placed on record the care and compassion of Jesus towards others. He taught that Jesus, the son of God was also cent percent human, with

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sentiments such as happiness, sorrow, love, anger etc. who willingly adopted the role of suffering servant. He has not mentioned the events after the resurrection of the Lord. Theologians are of the view that sentences 9-20 of the last chapter of this Gospel were added on later by some one else.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE

In the matter of the beauty of language and hart touching presentation Gospel according to St. Luke stands first among the books in the now Testament. It is also the longest and most literary gospel. This gospel was written by Luke, a physician who was a close associate and traveling companion of St. Paul. Among the Gospels St. Luke alone gives a prologue where the author introduces himself and explains the purpose and method. This was written after A.D. 70. In continuation the Acts of the Apostles was also written by him about which we shall learn in another lesson.

The important message of the Gospel is that all human beings will witness salvation of God. St. Luke has made it clear that salvation is not exclusively for the Jews, but for the entire humanity. During the temple presentation, Simon has called Child Jesus as a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory to the Lords' people, Israel (2:29-31). The purpose of God becoming man was to preach repentance and remission of sin in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem (24:47).

The song of the Virgin Mary (1:46-55) discloses the sympathy to the poor. Jesus was born in poor surroundings. It was to the poor and worthless shepherds that the birth of Jesus was first announced and they had the good fortune to see the savior before any one else. The Lord taught that blessed are the poor and hungry (16:19-31) and the parable of the foolish rich man (12: 16-21) also contain this message. The danger of keeping wealth for one's own use, without spending it for noble purposes is clearly spelt out.

It can be seen that special consideration is given in the Gospel for women folk, ignored by the society during the days of Christ. The widow of the city called Nain (7:11-17), the sinner woman (7:37.50) the crippled woman (13:11-17) and the woman suffering severe bleedings (8:43-48) received the compassion of Jesus. In the parable of the woman having ten silver coins (15:8-10) and the parable of the woman and the Judge (18:1-8) women are the main characters. It was the women who followed him mourning and lamenting, when Jesus was led for crucifixion.

Two most popular and beautiful stories in the world literature are narrated by St. Luke. They are the parable of the God Samaritan (10:30-37) and the parable of the prodigal son (15:11-32). St. Luke has established that Jesus Christ, performing miracles, was perfect God and perfect man with all human attributes except sin, who came to seek and to save sinful men.

**Questions:**

1. Which are the Synoptic Gospels?
2. What are the special features of the Gospel of St. Mathew? What was the purpose of writing this gospel?
3. From where did St. Mark get the details to write his Gospel?
4. What are the special features of the Gospel of St. Luke?

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**LESSON - 17**

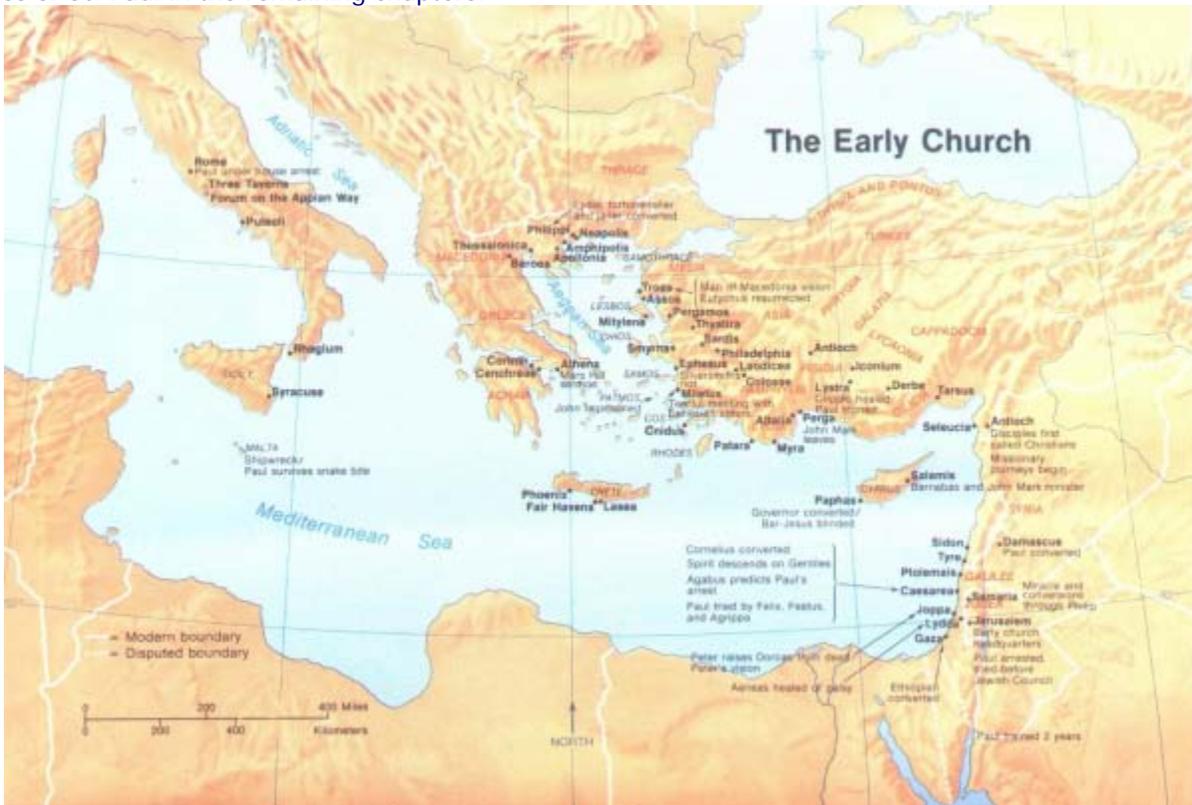
**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

**Aim:** To study the growth of the church after the ascension of Jesus Christ.

**Author:** As mentioned in the last lesson, St. Luke is the author of this book also. He was a gentile convert to Christianity, who was also a physician and close associate of St. Paul, accompanying him in the missionary journeys.

**Time:** It is believed that this book was written between A.D. 70 and 80. The Gospel according to St. Luke was completed earlier.

**Contents:** The contents of this book are the series of incidents from the ascension of Jesus Christ to the imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome. Activities of St. Peter are mainly dealt with in the first 12 chapters and the activities of St. Paul in the remaining chapters.



From the day of resurrection to the ascension, the Lord proved through numerous examples that he is alive. The apostles gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers (Act. 1:14). A few days later there was a meeting of the believers. Then, St. Peter suggested to choose some one to join as a witness to the resurrection of the Lord. They proposed two men and prayed to the Lord to choose one of them to serve as an apostle in the place of Judas. Thereafter lots were drawn and Matthias was chosen to be added to the group of eleven apostles (1:26).

**One the day of Pentecost, all the believers were gathered together in one place.** Suddenly there was a noise from the heaven which sounded like a strong wind blowing and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which spread over and touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, which enabled them to speak in different tongues. They were all excited because each one of them heard the believers speaking in his own language. Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other "What does this mean".

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Then St. Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and spoke to the crowd. Many of them believed his message and were baptized; about three thousand people were added to the group that day (Act 2:1-42).

**Questions:**

1. Briefly describe the contents of the Acts of the Apostles.
2. Describe the wonders that took place in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
3. Who was chosen as the disciple of Christ in place of Judas?

**LESSON - 18**

**PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM**

Aim: To study that persecution really contributed to the expansion of the church and not in its decline.

One day when Peter and John were going to the temple for prayers, they met a man who had been lame all his life. He begged to give him something. Then Peter told him "Silver and gold I do not have; but what I do have, I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk". He took him by his right hand and lifted him up. Immediately his feet and anklebones received strength. So, leaping up he stood, walked and entered the temple with them walking, leaping and praising God (Acts 3:1- 16). The people around were surprised and amazed at what has happened. Peter told them that the healing had happened not by means of their own power or godliness but it was the power of Jesus' name that gave strength to the lame man. Angered by this preaching, some of the priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards arrested them and put them in jail.

Next day when they were questioned, they boldly told that salvation is to be found only through Jesus. In the entire world there is no one else who can save us. They were let off and commanded not to speak nor teach in the name of Jesus. But the apostles continued to proclaim God's message boldly, disregarding the warning of the priests. Through the hands of the apostles many miracles and wonders were performed among the people. Again the apostles were imprisoned. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out and said, " Go, stand at the temple and speak to the people all the words of this new life". When they spoke again, the members of the council were furious and decided to kill them. But at the advice of Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all people, they were let off after a beating.

Stephen, a man richly blessed by God and full of power proclaimed God's message and performed great miracles and wonders among the people. Alleging that he was speaking against Moses and the commandments, he was seized and brought before the council. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Stephen preached to the council during interrogation, liberally quoting from the scriptures, narrating in detail the birth of Christ, his ministry, death and resurrection and established that he was the Messiah for whom they all were waiting for. As the members of the council listened to Stephen, they became very angry. They threw him out of the city and stoned him. At the time of his death, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" He knelt down and cried in loud voice "Lord! Do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60) Stephen is the first martyr for Christ. Saul of Tarsus witnessed this, while taking care of the cloths of those who were stoning Stephen. After the martyrdom of Stephen, believers in Jerusalem except the apostles were scattered. They went everywhere preaching the message.

Gospel is preached in Samaria

Those believers scattered from Jerusalem, preached the Gospel when they reached Samaria. Several Samaritans who heard the speech of Philip believed in Christ. They were baptized and made members of the church. Hearing about this, apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they placed their hands on those who were baptized, they received the Holy Spirit.

**Questions:**

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1. What was the reply given by Peter to the lame man?
2. What was the prayer of Stephen at the time of his death?
3. Who was Gamaliel?
4. Name the first martyr for Christ
5. What did the scattered believers from Jerusalem do?

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**LESSON - 19**

**CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL**

Bible Reference: Acts 9: 1-19

Aim: To confirm that God has chosen the person fit in all respects to look after the church.

There were several disciples of the Lord in Damascus. Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus with the authority from the Chief priest to arrest all those who worshipped the Lord.

As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus, suddenly a light from the sky flashed around him. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me" "Who are you Lord" he asked. "I am Jesus whom you persecute," the voice said. Trembling and astonished he said "Lord what do you want me to do" The Lord said to him "Arise and go to the city and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9: 4-6). Then Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes. He could not see anything. So the men traveling with him took him by hand and led him to Damascus. For three days he was not able to see. During this time he did not eat or drink.

There was a certain disciple of Christ at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord sent him to Saul. Ananias placed his hands on Saul and said that the Lord has sent him so that Saul might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. At once something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes and he was able to see again. He stood up and was baptized. It was this Saul who was later known as the Apostle Paul.

**Questions:**

1. Where was Saul from?
2. Why did Saul go to Damascus?
3. Describe Saul's experience at Damascus.
4. Who cured Saul when he became blind after the vision?
5. Explain the context "Who are you Lord"?
6. What was Saul named after his conversion?

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**LESSON - 20**

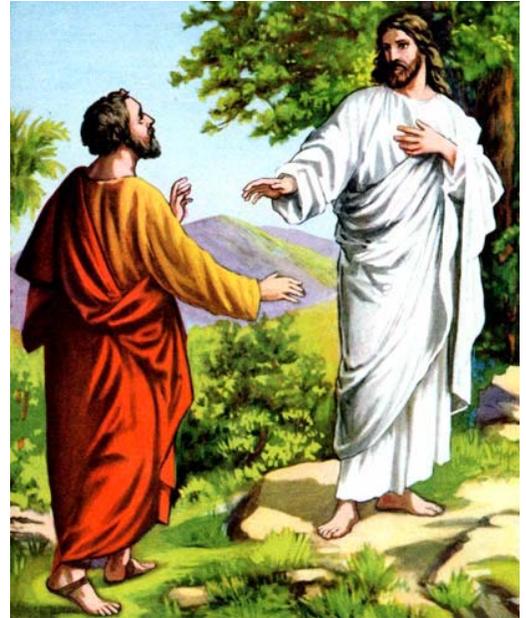
**ST. PETER**

Aim To learn that God entrusted the mission of the church in the hands of Peter, the fisherman.

From the very beginning, St. Peter held an important position among the twelve apostles of the Christ. Wherever the names of apostles are mentioned in the New Testament, the name of Peter is always the first to be written. Peter was among the three apostles specially taken along with Jesus on three occasions and he was one of the two sent to get the last pass over meal ready. It was Peter who walked over the sea to the Lord and paid the temple tax along with Jesus with the piece of money found in the mouth of the fish caught by him. When he was chosen as a disciple, the Lord changed his old name and called him Peter, meaning rock. The responsibility to strengthen his brothers, after the departure of Jesus from this world, was given to Peter (Luke 22:32). Above all it was to Peter that the keys of the Kingdom of heaven and the power to prohibit and permit on earth, as the visible head of the holy church was given, without considering his human weakness. (Matthew 16:19) It is based on this authority that the priests are giving remission of sins through the holy confession. Peter was the only apostle who firmly declared during the days of Jesus, that he was the son of the living God.

The Acts of the Apostles reveals that, inspired by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the leadership of the church was taken over by Peter as desired by the Lord. His intimate friend John also was with him. In the early Christian church the group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from sale and hand it over to the apostles. This money was distributed to each according to his need. Ananias sold some property belonging to him. With the agreement of his wife Sapphira, he kept a part of the money for himself and handed over the balance amount to the apostles. Realizing their dishonesty, Peter questioned him. He was told that he had lied to God. As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead. Ignorant about this incident, his wife came in. She also lied to Peter and soon fell down dead.

Peter met at Lydda a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed and had not been able to get out of his bed for eight years. Peter said to him "Jesus Christ makes you well. Get up and make your bed". At once Aeneas got up (Acts9: 32).



At Joppa, a port city, there was a woman named Tabitha, who was a believer (Her name means deer). She died after illness. Peter was called from Lydda. Peter put all others out of the room, knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the dead body and said "Tabitha get up". She opened her eyes and when she saw Peter she sat up. Peter helped her to get up (Acts: 40-41).

There was a man named Cornelius in Caesarea. He was a Captain in the Roman regiment called "The Italian Regiment". He was a religious man. When he was praying one day, at three O clock in the afternoon, he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming and instructing him to send for Apostle Peter who was staying in Joppa. Next day Peter had a vision at noon, when he was praying. He saw heaven opened and something coming down that looked like a large sheet, bound at four corners. In it were all kinds of animals, reptiles and wild birds. A voice said to him "Get up, Peter; kill and eat!". According to the commandments, certain animals and birds were considered unclean and forbidden from eating. Then Peter said, "Certainly not Lord. I have never eaten anything ritually unclean or defiled." In reply the voice told him that he should not consider anything unclean that the God had declared clean. This happened three times and the thing was taken back to heaven (Acts 10: 9-16). When Peter was wondering about the meaning of this vision, the men sent by Cornelius reached there. Then the Holy Spirit said to him "Listen! Three men are here looking for you. So get ready and go down, and do not hesitate to go with them". He understood that the meaning of the vision was that everybody irrespective of his religious faith is welcome to Christian church. While Peter was preaching to

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those assembled at the house of Cornelius, Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message. The Jewish believers who accompanied Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had poured out his gift of Holy Spirit on Gentiles also, since they heard them speaking in strange tongues and praising God's greatness. Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. On their request he stayed with them a few days.

When Peter came back to Jerusalem, those who were in favour of circumcising Gentiles criticized him saying "You were a guest in the house of uncircumcised Gentiles and you even ate with them. So Peter gave a complete account of what really happened from the very beginning. When they heard this, they stopped their criticism and praised God saying, "Then God has given the Gentiles also, the opportunity to repent and live." Thereafter missionary work commenced among the Greeks.

King Herod began to persecute some members of the church. James, brother of John was put to death by sword by Herod. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter also. After his arrest, Peter was put in jail bound with two chains between two soldiers. At night the angel of the Lord woke him up. At once the chains fell off Peter's hand. Peter followed the angel out of the prison. Very soon Herod who persecuted the apostles was struck down dead by the angel of the Lord (Acts: 1-10,23)

It is the traditional belief of the church that Apostle Peter spent his last days in Rome and during the persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero; he was crucified with his head down.

**Questions:**

1. Clarify the reason for the death of Ananias and Sapphira.
2. Narrate the miracles performed by St. Peter.
3. What is the evidence to show that from the very beginning St. Peter held the first place among the twelve disciples?

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**LESSON - 21**

**THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL**

Aim: To realize that salvation to all nations is only through Jesus Christ.

The main dispute in the early Christian church was regarding the conversion of Gentiles. One group argued that they should observe all the customs laid down by Moses, including circumcision, before they are baptized. The other group was of the view that all those who believe in Jesus Christ could directly become members of the church after baptism, without circumcision. They only need to keep moral laws abandoning idol worship. The apostles and leaders came together in Jerusalem in the year A.D. 51 to consider this issue and to take a decision. This meeting is known as the Jerusalem Council. This was held in between the first and second missionary journey of St. Paul. After a long debate, St. Peter explained from his own experience how the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit when they believed, even before their baptism. The whole group was silent when they heard Barnabas and Paul report all the miracles and wonders that God had performed through them among the Gentiles.

When they had finished speaking, St. James the brother of Jesus spoke fully endorsing the views of St. Peter. It was finally decided not to put any other burden on the Gentile believers besides these necessary rules: eat no food that has been offered to idols; eat no blood; eat no animal that has been strangled and keep out from sexual immorality. It was decided to send Judas and Silas along with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, an important Christian centre, with a letter clarifying the decision of the Council. It was further decided to authorize James, Peter and John as leaders for preaching the gospel to the Jews and Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-8). Peter then went to Antioch and stayed there.

**Questions:**

1. When was the Jerusalem Council held? What was the circumstance under which it was held?
2. What were the important decisions of the Council?

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**LESSON-22**

**FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF ST. PAUL (A.D. 48-50)**

Aim: To fulfill the commandment of the Lord to preach the Gospel to all nations.

St. Paul who was baptized, joined the believers in Damascus. He fervently preached in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. Infuriated over this, the Jews made a plan to kill him. Day and night they watched the city gates to kill him. One night his followers took him and let him down through a window in the city walls lowering him in a basket. Then he went to Arabia for meditation. When he came to Jerusalem he acquainted himself with the apostles there. Thereafter he went to Tarsus, his birthplace. Barnabas went to Tarsus and took him to Antioch (Act 11:25). For a whole year the two met with people of the church and taught a large group. It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians. In the church at Antioch, there were some prophets and teachers. While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do the work to which I have called them". They fasted, prayed and ordained them as bishops by placing their hands on them and sent them off.

From Antioch they reached Seleucia, a port city. Paulose, Barnabas and John Mark to help in the work sailed from there to the island of Cyprus. On reaching Salamis, on the eastern shore of the island they preached the word of God in the Synagogues. Then they went all the way across the island to Paphos an important city. In the Acts of the Apostles the old name Saul is used till now. Hereafter the name used is Paul which means small. The governor of the island Sergius Paulose called Barnabas and Paul before him to hear the word of God. But they were opposed by the magician Bar-Jesus (Elymas) staying with the Governor who tried to turn the Governor away from the faith. Then Paul was filled with Holy Spirit. He looked straight at the magician, rebuked him and made him blind for a time. The governor saw what has happened and he believed.

Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos and came to Perga a city in Pamphyha where John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem.

From Perga Paul and Barnabas reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went into the synagogue and preached the Gospel. Several people believed. When the Jews started persecution against Paul and Barnabas, they left for Iconium. The apostles stayed there for a long time speaking boldly about the Lord. They proved that their message about His Grace was true by giving them the power to perform miracles and wonders. Several people believed. Here also they were ill-treated by the Jews. Then they fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia and to the surrounding territory where they preached the Good News.

In Lystra there was a man who had been lame from birth. Paul saw that he believed and could be healed. So he looked straight at him and said in a loud voice "Stand up straight on your feet". The man jumped up and started walking around. When the crowd saw that Paul had done they started shouting in their own Lycaonian language "The Gods have become like men and have come down to us". They gave Barnabas the name Zeus and Paul the name Hermes. The priest of the God Zeus brought bulls and flowers. He and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice to the apostles (Acts 14:11-13). The apostles told them that they are only human beings like them and the power of Almighty God had healed the lame man. They announced the Good News, to turn them away from the worthless things, to the living God who made heaven earth and sea and all that in them. Later some Jews came from Antioch in Pisidia and from Iconium and won the crowd over their side, stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town thinking that he was dead. When the believers gathered around, Paul got up and went back to the town. The next day he and Barnabas went to Derbe. Paul and Barnabas preached the Good News in Derbe and won many disciples.

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Then they went back to Lystra, Iconium and on to Antioch in Pisidia. They strengthened the believers and encouraged them to remain true to the faith. In each church they appointed elders (priests) and with prayers and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust. From Pisidia they came to Perga and then went to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, the place where they had been commended to the care of God's grace for the work they have now completed. When they arrived in Antioch they gathered the people of the church together and told them about all that God had done with them and how He had opened the way for Gentiles to believe. They stayed a long time there with the believers.

**Questions:**

1. Who all accompanied St. Paul for the first Missionary Journey?
2. Who is Bar-Jesus? Why did Paul rebuke him?
3. Why did the people of Lystra believe that Paul and Barnabas were Gods in human form?
4. Explain the context "Stand up straight on your feet"

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**LESSON - 23**

**SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF ST. PAUL**

**(Acts 15:35-18:22)**

Aim: To establish that despite stiff opposition and resistance St. Paul fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.

After the Jerusalem Council which took place after the first missionary journey, Paul said to Barnabas "let us go back and visit our brothers in every town where we preached the word of the Lord and let us find out how they are getting on. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. But Paul did not think it was right to take him because he had not stayed with them to the end of their mission, but had turned back and left them in Pamphylia. There was a sharp argument and they separated. Barnabas took Mark and sailed off to Cyprus while Paul chose Silas and left by another route.

Paul went northwards from Antioch and then westward by land and reached Derbe and Lystra thro' his birth place Tarsus. In Lystra there was a Christian named Timothy. His mother Eunice and grand mother Lois were Christian believers. His father was a Greek. All the believers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy. Paul took him as co-worker. They traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit did not allow them to preach the message in the province of Asia. When they reached the border of Mysia they tried to go into the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So they went to Toas. That night Paul had a vision in which he saw a Macedonian standing and begging him "Come over to Macedonia and help us" Knowing that this is the will of God, Paul and his team left by Ship to Neapolis, the port of Philippi and reached Philippi by land.

They spoke about Jesus to the women gathered by the river side. One of those who heard them was Lydia from Thyatira who was a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her mind to pay attention to what Paul was saying. She was baptized along with the people of her house. The first to embrace Christianity in European continent was Lydia's family. She received Paul and his team as guests in her house. There was a slave girl in Philippi possessed by an evil spirit that employed her to predict the future she earned lot of money to her owners by telling fortunes. Paul drove out the evil spirit from her. When her owners realized that their chance of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities in the public square. The officials tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be whipped. After severe beating they were thrown into jail and their feet fastened between heavy blocks of wood. At night, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a violent earth quake which shook the prison to its foundations. At once the doors opened and the chains fell off all the prisoners. Hearing the loud sound, the jailer woke up. When he saw the prison doors open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped. So he pulled out his sword and was about to kill him, when Paul shouted at the top of his voice "Don't harm yourself. We are all here". The jailer called for a light, rushed in and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. Then he led them out and asked "Sirs, What must I do to be saved"? They answered "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved - you and your family" (Acts 16:30-31). The jailer took them and washed their wounds. He and all the members of his family were baptized at once. The first Gentile family in Europe baptized was that of this jailer. Then he took Paul and Silas to his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy because they now believed in God. Next morning the Roman authorities sent Police officers to let them go. Then only they knew that both of them were Roman citizens. They went and apologized to them and led them out of the prison. Paul and Silas went to Lydia's house. There they met the believers, spoke words of encouragements to them and left. They traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia and reached Thessalonica.

They stayed in the house of Jason. Adopting his usual practice, Paul went to the Synagogue. There during three Sabbaths he held discussions with the people quoting and explaining the scripture and proving from them that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from death "This Jesus whom I announce to you". Paul said "is the Messiah" Several Jews and a large group of Greeks were convinced and joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were the enemies to the Gospel created trouble and attacked the house of Jason, where they were staying. At night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they reached there, they went to the Synagogue and preached the Good News. Several people who heard them believed. When the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea also they came there and started exciting and stirring up the crowd.

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Immediately the believers took Paul to Athens. There Paul held discussions in the Synagogue with the Jews and the Gentiles who worshipped God and also in the public square every day with the people who happened to pass by. Paul spoke before the city council, the Areopagus. Some men joined him and believed. Among them was Dionysius a member of the council.

Later, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, the centre of trade and education of Greece. There he stayed with Aquila a maker of tents and his wife Priscilla. He worked with them because he earned his living by making tents. He held discussions in Synagogue every Sabbath, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks. Silas and Timothy joined Paul at Corinth. When the Jews opposed him and said evil things about him, he protested saying "From now on I will go to the Gentiles". He went to stay in the house of a Gentile named Titus Justus who worshipped God. He commenced here the mission among the Gentiles. One night Paul had a vision in which the Lord said to him "Do not be afraid; but keep on speaking and do not give up for I am with you. No one will be



able to harm you, for many in the city are my people" (Acts 18:10). Paul stayed there for a year and a half teaching the people the word of God. It was during this time that his first epistles viz. two epistles to Thessalonians were sent.

With Priscilla and Aquila from Corinth, Paul sailed off from the port of Cenchrea and reached Ephesus the most important town of Asia Minor. Very soon they sailed off to Caesarea. From there he reached Jerusalem by land. After meeting the church leaders there, he went to Antioch from where the journey was commended.

**Questions:**

1. How did St. Paul who desired to go to Bithynia reach Troas?

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2. How did they reach Philippi?
3. Describe the circumstances which led to the conversion of the Jailor of Philippi.
4. Explain the context "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved-you and your family".
5. Explain the context "Do not be afraid; but keep on speaking and do not give up".

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**LESSON-24**

**THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF ST. PAUL**

**(ACTS 18: 23 - 21:16) A.D. 54-58**

Aim: To recognize that St. Paul fulfilled his mission in full measure.

At the end of his second missionary journey St. Paul returned to Antioch. After staying there for some times, he left and went through the region of Galatia and Phygia strengthening all believers. Then the arrival of Paul, a Jew named Apoollos, an eloquent speaker having a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, taught correctly the faith about Jesus to the people of Ephesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home with them and explained to him more correctly the way of God. After that he went to Corinth. When Paul placed his hands on the believers in Ephesus, they received the Holy Spirit. Paul went into the Synagogue and spoke boldly with people for three months holding discussions with them and trying to convince them about the Kingdom of God. When there was resistance from some of the Jews, he held discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the people who lived in the province of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles, heard the word of the Lord. God was performing unusual miracles through Paul. Even hand-kerchief and aprons he had used were taken to those who were ill and their diseases were cured and evil spirits driven away. Many of those who had practiced magic brought their costly books together and burned them in public.

There was a temple of goddess Artemis in Ephesus. A silversmith named Demetrius made silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis and his business brought a great deal of profit to the workers. Since Paul taught that man-made gods are not gods at all and he succeeded in convincing many people, their business was seriously affected. Therefore Demetrius and his followers made the crowd create uproar through out the city in the name of religion. The authorities pacified the people saying that this was only a labour dispute and Paul and his followers have not robbed temples or said evil things about their goddess. After the uproar died out, Paul called together the believers and with words of encouragement said good bye to them. Then he went on to Macedonia.

After visiting the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica etc. Paul reached Corinth where he stayed for there months. From there he desired to return directly to Syria. Then it was discovered that the Jews were plotting against him. So it was decided to go back through Macedonia. He reached Toras in Asia Minor through Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi. The co-workers of Paul had reached there earlier. After spending a week there it was decided to proceed from Toras on a Monday. On Sunday when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. An young man named Entychus sitting in a window overcome by sleep, fell down from the third storey to the ground and was taken up dead. Paul brought the young man alive.

From Troas Paul went to Assos by land. Paul decided to sail on, past Ephesus so as not to lose any time in the province of Asia. He was in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost if at all possible. On reaching Niletus, he sent word to Ephesus asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they arrived, he made a heart touching speech. He told them that he is aware that none of them will see him again. He cautioned them against those who will tell lies to lead the believers away after them. He advised them to remember the words that Lord Jesus himself said "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving". When Paul finished, he knelt down with them and prayed. They all were crying as they hugged him and kissed him good bye. From Miletus he sailed to Tyre. There they found some believers. By the power of the Spirit they told him not to go to Jerusalem. He continued his voyage sailing from Tyre to Caesarea via. Ptolemais. At Caesarea a prophet named Agabus predicted that Paul will be tied up by the Jews if he goes to Jerusalem and handed over to Gentiles. Paul said "I am ready not only to be tied up in Jerusalem but even to die there for the sake of the Lord Jesus". Paul went to Jerusalem.

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When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the believers extended a warm welcome. Next day Paul went to see James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the church in Jerusalem. All the church leaders were also present. Paul greeted them and gave a complete report on everything that God had done among the Gentiles through his work. Here ends the third missionary journey of St. Paul. It was during this journey that the two epistles to Corinthians, epistle to Galatians and epistle to Romans were written by the apostle.



**Questions:**

1. Describe the wonders through St. Paul in Ephesus?
2. Describe the circumstances of the death of Euthychus?
3. What was the prediction of Agabus?

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**LESSON - 25**

**ST. PAUL UNDER ARREST**

(Acts 21:27-28:30)

Aim: To understand that every one eager for the appearance of the Lord, the righteous Judge, is sure to get the crown of Justice.

Some Jew when they saw Paul in the Temple at Jerusalem attempted to kill him alleging that he was brought some Gentiles into the temple and defiled the holy place. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized Paul. Knowing about this, Lysias the commander of the Roman troops rushed in with some officers and soldiers and arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with two chains. With the permission of the commander, he explained in detail to the people, the vision he had at Damascus and the experience thereafter. When the people were screaming, tearing their clothes, throwing dust up in the air and shouting to kill him, the Roman commander ordered his men to take Paul into the fort and to whip him to find out why the Jews were screaming like this against him. But when he knew that Paul was a Roman Citizen, the chains of Paul were taken off and he was kept under the care of the soldiers to protect him from his enemies. That night the Lord stood by him and said "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (23:11). Some Jews took a vow that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. The son of Paul's sisters heard about the plot and told about this to Paul and the Commander. The commander then called two of his officers and arranged to send Paul to Governor Felix at Caesarea under the escort of the soldiers. He also sent a letter to the Governor explaining why he is sent to him.

High Priest Ananias went to Caesarea with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They appeared before Felix and made their charges against Paul. Finding that he has not committed any offence under the Roman law, no punishment was awarded to Paul. But to please the Jews, he was kept under detention in Caesarea. When Felix retired after two years and Festus succeeded him as Governor, the Chief Priest and the Jewish leaders once again brought charges against Paul and begged Festus to do them the favour of bringing Paul to Jerusalem because they had made a plot to kill him on the way. Festus wanted to gain favour with the Jews. So he asked Paul whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried before him there. Realizing that he will not get justice at Jerusalem, he made use of the special privilege of a Roman citizen to appeal before the Caesar for the trial before him. Then Festus after conferring with his council, allowed the appeal. Some time later King Agrippa came to Caesarea to pay a visit of welcome to Festus. Then he expressed his desire to hear Paul. Hearing the bold speech of Paul, Festus shouted at him "Paul you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad" (26:24). King Agrippa also was convinced that Paul has not committed any offence under the Roman law. Agrippa said to Festus "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar".

An ordered by Festus, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to Julius, a centurion of the Augustian Regiment, for being taken from Caesarea to Rome by ship. When they reached with much difficulty, a place called Fair Havens in the Crete Island, Paul gave a warning and advised not to proceed further due to bad weather conditions. Ignoring this the ship proceeded. Very soon a very strong wind called Euroclydon arose. The wind kept on blowing very hard. For fourteen days the ship moved aimlessly when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days. The people in the ship gave up hope of being saved and waited for death without taking food. Paul stood before them and told them that an angel of God had informed him that God has spared the lives of all those who are sailing with him. Therefore he advised them to eat some food. After saying this Paul took some bread, gave thanks to God, before them all broke it and began to eat. They took heart and every one of them ate some food. The ship hit a sand bank near Malta Island. All the passengers reached ashore safely, either by swimming or holding on to the plank or some other broken piece of the ship. The natives showed unusual kindness. They kindled a fire and welcomed the ship-wrecked passengers, because it was raining and because of the cold. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. The natives saw the snake hanging on Paul's hand and said to one another that this man must be a murder and to fate will not leave him even though he escaped from the sea. But Paul shook the snake off into the fire without being harmed at all. When they found that he is unharmed, they said "He is a God" Paul healed through prayers several sick people including the father of Publius the Chief Official of the island.

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From Malta they left by another ship and reached Rome via Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli. When they reached Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him. For two years Paul lived in a place he rented for himself. There he welcomed all who came to see him. He preached about the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking with all boldness and freedom. After that he was set free (The narration in the Acts of the Apostles ends with the events at the end of the stay of two years in Rome). The epistles to Ephesians, Philemon and Philippians were written during this stay in Rome.

It is generally believed that Paul who was set free during A.D. 63 traveling to Asia Minor and Macedonia. It was during this period that the epistles to Hebrews, 1st epistle to Timothy and epistle to Titus were written. At last he wrote the 2nd epistle to Timothy during his last days. He has boldly recorded as follows "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that day and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Chapter 8 of the epistle to Romans and Chapter 13 of the first epistle to Corinthians are the priceless jewels of the theological literature.

History reveals that Paul who was imprisoned again in A.D. 65 during the persecution of Nero was beheaded in A.D. 67 and became a martyr.

**Questions:**

1. Describe briefly the events when the ship sailed ignoring the warning of St. Paul?
2. Which are the priceless Jewels of the theological literature?
3. Why Governor Felix did not punish St. Paul even though High Priest Ananias made charges against him.
4. Why St. Paul requested Festus to allow the appeal to Caesar.
5. When was St. Paul imprisoned again? When was he beheaded?

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**LESSON 29**

**HOLY MATRIMONY**

Marriage, which is the sacred relationship between a man and a woman, is one of the seven blessed holy sacraments of the holy church. It is a sacrament instituted by God Himself in the Garden of Eden. God created man and woman. (Genesis 1:27-28) In Matthew 19:6, our Lord says that what God has joined together, man should not separate. In the sacrament of marriage, God Himself unites man and woman as husband and wife.

Marriage is a sacrament where a man and woman are united in soul also, and their children receive blessings from God. Hebrew 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honored by all." In 1Timothy 4:3 it is written that nobody should be ordered not to marry.

Before the marriage ceremony, the relatives of the bride and the groom should meet and discuss matters and fix the marriage. This should be announced in the respective parishes of the bride and groom and made certain that there are no valid reasons against the marriage. The bride and groom must confess, receive the Holy Qurbana and with prayer, mentally prepare for the marriage. From the member parish, 'Desakuri' (no objection letter) should be obtained as a rule. Only a rightly ordained priest is allowed to conduct the marriage ceremony in church. Then the name of the couple should be entered in the marriage register.

The marriage service is divided into two parts. The first part is known as 'the blessing of the ring'. This is the ceremony of fixing the marriage. Since the church is the bride of the Lord, marriage is compared to the relationship between the church and the Lord. The unity between the church and the Lord is sealed with the body and blood of Christ. The same way, the engagement between the bride and the groom is sealed with rings.

The second part is the 'blessing of the crown'. In Revelation 19:7, we read about the marriage of the lamb. There, the Lord is pictured as the king, and the church the queen. Similarly, the bride and the groom are elevated to the level of king and queen and as the symbol of the heavenly crown being placed on them, the ceremony of blessing of the crown is conducted. It is done using a chain with a cross. These two services show the purity and nobility of marriage.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MARRIED COUPLE**

1. The couple should remain steadfast in their faith and have a Christian attitude in all the things they do. They should lead a life based on prayer.
2. They must love and tolerate each other and lead a harmonious life.
3. Children given to them as gifts from God should be brought up in Christian faith and parents should teach them the Christian way of living.

The couple can be separated only by death but under special circumstances, there is a clause in the church laws for the couple to separate according to the decision of the Metropolitan.

Matrimony is not a compulsory sacrament. One has the freedom not to marry.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What is Holy Matrimony?
2. What are the two parts of the marriage ceremony? What is the significance of each?
3. What are the responsibilities of the married couple?

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**LESSON 30**

**ANOINTING THE SICK**

When somebody is sick, for his mental and physical recovery, the church has instituted the sacrament of 'anointing the sick'. This is a healing sacrament for the body and the soul.

It is written in the epistle of James 5: 14-15, "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven."

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the authority to his disciples to preach the gospel and to heal the sick. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:7-13)

So, we see that Christ Himself made his disciples anoint the sick.

Only the 'saith oil' blessed by the Metropolitan is used for anointing the sick and only the priest is authorized to do this. The priest is authorized to increase the amount of oil by using it in 'kantheela' ceremony. Kantheela service is the prolonged version of the anointing the sick.

The priest can anoint the sick whenever a person is not well. The service has prayer to get well and prayer for deliverance from sins. There is opportunity to confess also. Confessing and receiving the Holy Qurbana make the sacrament complete.

Names like 'last sacrament' and 'uprushma' are misleading names for this sacrament. This sacrament is not meant to be given at the time of death, though it is common practice to do so. This sacrament is not for the patient to die, but for him to recover and live. The priest anoints the sick person with the prayer that his sins shall be forgiven.

With this sacrament, the sick get the blessings to get better. He gets the strength and courage to face the illness. Those suffering from serious illness should receive the sacrament while they are fully conscious. Once anointment is done, according to church laws, it can be repeated only after 40 days.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. When should the anointment of sick be done?
2. What is the blessing obtained by anointing the sick?

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**LESSON 31**

**MARANAYA FEASTS**

**DIFFERENT KINDS OF MARAYANA FEASTS**

Feast means 'big day' and 'maranaya feast' means a big day related to Christ. These days are considered dedicated to Christ.

Sunday is the Lord's Day. So it is a maranaya day. That day should be set apart to attend church, teach and learn at Sunday school, preach the gospel and get involved in humanitarian activities. Since that day is the rest day from worldly activities and to be dedicated to God's work, Sunday is the 'Sabbath Day' of the church.

The church has decided upon certain days related to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ as maranaya feast days. These days should be considered like Sundays. There are days which are considered along with maranaya feast days, and other days which are celebrated like maranaya feast days. So maranaya feast days are of three kinds:

**1. Days of significance in the life of Jesus Christ are celebrated like Sundays. They are**

1. Circumcision day
2. Deneha
3. Mayalto (entering the temple)
4. Suboro (vachanippu)
5. Transfiguration day
6. Sleeba feast
7. Birth of Christ (yeldho)
8. Hosana
9. Passover
10. Good Friday
11. Kemthya (resurrection)
12. Sulokho (ascension to heaven)
13. Pentecost

**2. Days to be considered along with maranaya**

- 1) Shunoyo (death of Mother Mary)
- 2) Remembrance day of St. Peter and St. Paul

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- 3) Remembrance day of St. Thomas (Duk rono – for India)

**3. Days to be celebrated like maranaya**

Remembrance Day of the Saint on whose name the church is dedicated should be celebrated as maranaya in that particular church. Also, 40<sup>th</sup> Friday of the Lent, days of the hasha week, Holy Saturday and middle Lent day are to be celebrated as maranaya days. Let us learn about these three kinds of feasts and other important days which are not included with them.

**MARANAYA FEASTS**

**1. CIRCUMCISION DAY – January 1**

According to the law instituted by God to the Israelites in Leviticus 12:3, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of his birth, Jesus was circumcised and given the name Jesus (Luke 2:21) Circumcision was the sign of the promises God gave to Abraham and the laws God made for Israelites. The rituals of the laws came to an end when Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of the laws, fulfilled them through His incarnation and circumcision.

As this is a maranaya feast day, it should be celebrated like Sunday. January 1<sup>st</sup> is the remembrance day of Mar Baseleous (AD 330-379) and Mar Gregarious (AD 330-390) who lead saintly lives. January 1<sup>st</sup> is the beginning of the New Year also. One must look at the life led in the year gone by, confess and start the New Year by dedicating it to the Lord.

**2. DENEHA – FEAST OF BAPTISM OF CHRIST (January 6)**

At the age of 30, John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. There was no need for God's Son to be baptized but according to Matthew 3:15, "Jesus replied, 'It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'" At the time of his baptism, heaven opened and the spirit of God descended on Jesus like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I love, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22)

Since the three personalities of the Trinity namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, were revealed at the time of baptism, this feast is known as Deneha (sunrise). The blessing of water is an important part of the service that day.

**2. MAYALTHO-FEAST OF ENTERING THE CHURCH (February 2)**

In Exodus 13:1 The Lord said to Moses "Consecrate to me every firstborn male". Obeying the above law Mary took her first born son Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord and to offer a pair of doves or two young pigeons (Luke 2:22-39). 40 days is the time of purification after a baby boy is born and on 41<sup>st</sup> day the baby is presented to the temple.

When Mary and Joseph reached the temple with baby Jesus, Simeon an old righteous devout man came there as destined by the Holy Spirit. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the redeemer of Israel. He took baby Jesus in his hands and praised the Lord saying "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel". Similarly Anna the old widow who lived in the temple also recognized Jesus and praised the Lord.

On Mayaltho day we must participate in Qurbana and engage in spiritual activities. We must pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit to be able to recognize Jesus Christ and to spread the gospel message.

**4. SUBORO- (VACHANIPPU FEAST) March 25**

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To redeem the whole humankind from sin, Son, the second personality in Trinity decided on incarnation. Angel Gabriel conveyed the above message of salvation to St. Mary. Mother of God. Remembrance of the above incident is Vachanippu feast

Angel Gabriel greeted Mary and told her that she will be with a child due to the power of the Holy Spirit. She will deliver the son of God and he was to be named Jesus. When Mary wondered how a virgin can be with child, the angel assured her that nothing is impossible to the Lord. Then Mary humbly says "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" and submits herself to the will of God (Luke 1: 26-38).

This feast is to remember the first incident in incarnation. Even if Good Friday falls on March 25, Qurbana must be held in the churches. We must participate in it and meditate about incarnation. We must pray to be humble like Mary and submit ourselves to the will of God.

**3. TRANSFIGURATION FEAST (FEAST OF THE TENT) AUGUST 6**

Jesus took with him his disciples Peter, James and John to mount Tabor. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. There appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus " Lord it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you one for Moses and one for Elijah". While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him". When the disciples heard this they fell facedown to the ground terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up", he said. "Don't be afraid". When they looked up they saw no one except Jesus. (Matthew 17: 1-13).

Transfiguration feast is in remembrance of the above incident. That day we must participate in Qurbana, meditate about our Lord's greatness and listen to his words. This was the second occasion when the Father witnessed about his son.

**6. SLEEBA FEAST (SEPTEMBER 14)**

The Jews hid the cross on which Jesus was crucified. In AD 306 the Roman Emperor Constantine had a vision about the greatness of the cross. In AD 312 he defeated his enemy Macsentius using the symbol of the cross on his flags. In 326, his mother, Queen Helene who was a devoted Christian went to Jerusalem and discovered the cross and brought it to Constantinople. Queen Helene found the burial place of Jesus and built a beautiful church around it.

Sleebea feast is in remembrance of the discovery of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The cross reminds us of the salvation our Lord has given us. It reminds us of his sufferings and death. It is written in Galatians 6: 14 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". Accordingly we boast ourselves at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since this festival comes at the time of initial harvest in Kerala it is also known as 'Puthari perunnal'.

This day the faithful must participate in Qurbana, meditate about the salvation gained at the cross and decide to lead a Christian life to be able to retain the salvation forever.

**7. YELDHO- BIRTH OF CHRIST (CHRISTMAS) DECEMBER 25**

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him, and was expecting a child. While they were there the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2: 1-7).

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Shepherds were the first people who were informed about the good news of the birth of the saviour. Shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and suddenly the glory of the Lord shone around them and the angels sang the song starting "Glory to God in the highest". 'Service of the flame' is conducted on Christmas day to remember the above incident.

This great day should be celebrated with prayer and faith. Last day of the Yeldho fast is the Yeldho feast day. It shows that the day should be celebrated with fast prayer and purity. Christmas should be an occasion for prayer service and good deeds and not a day for drinking and worldly celebrations. One must actively participate in the church service after midnight. We must pray for the purity to accept the Lord who was born as a child for us.

**Questions**

1. What are the different kinds of Maranaya Feasts? On what basis are they divided?
2. According to the calendar on which dates are the 1<sup>st</sup> kind of Maranaya feasts celebrated?
3. Why is Denaha feast known by that name?
4. What is the significance of sleeba feast?
5. What is the special service for Yeldho feast? What incident does it signify?

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**Lesson 32**

**MARANAYA FEASTS - CONTINUATION**

**8. HOSANNA FEAST**

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of lent is hosanna Sunday. From that day evening the 'hasah week' starts. The triumphant entry of our Lord riding the donkey into Jerusalem in a procession is remembered that day. The prophecy of Zechariah as written in Zechariah 9:9 that he is the king came true by this procession.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and got the colt for him to ride. They threw their cloaks over it and Jesus sat on it. Many people threw their cloaks on the road while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Holding olive branches and palm leaves in their hands and waving them high they shouted loudly, "Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest", and welcomed him to the Jerusalem temple (Mark 11:1-11).

In Matthew it is mentioned that Jesus used a donkey and a colt as vehicle. Theologians interpret the donkey as the Jews who had the laws and the colt as the gentiles who did not know the true God (Matthew 21: 1-11).

The word Hosanna is used to mean Praise or glory, but the real meaning of this Hebrew word is 'save'. Since this is a feast of victory, the meaning of hosanna has been transformed to glory or praise.

The feast of hosanna is to welcome Jesus Christ. With hearts pure as tender palm leaves and with the innocence of children, singing songs of praise, we must welcome our savior into our churches, homes and hearts.

During the church service on this day there is the solemn prayer of 'blessing the palm leaves'. During the procession and during the bible reading flowers and pieces of palm leaves are showered. The faithful attend the service holding the tender palm leaves. Later the palm leaves are taken home and kept with reverence. They help in healing the sick and bring blessing to the house.

**9. THE PESSAHA FEAST**

Thursday of the Hasha week is called Maundy Thursday. Prayers start after midnight on Wednesday. The holy Qurbana finishes by early morning.

This day is to remember how our savior Jesus Christ completed the Passover according to Old Testament laws, and started the New Testament Pessaha. After the Pessaha dinner Jesus took bread in his hands, blessed it and gave it to his disciples saying it is his body. Same way he blessed the wine and gave to the disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:7-23). Pessaha is the day the holy Qurbana was established.

It is compulsory for all the faithful to receive Qurbana this day. After confession one has to be prepared mentally and physically to receive the Qurbana. (Corinthians 11:27)

Pessaha means Pass Over. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for many years. Only after they were punished with the ten plagues did the Pharaoh allow them to go. With the tenth plague he killed all the firstborn of people and animals in Egypt. Obeying God, that day evening all the Israeli families killed the pessaha lamb and had food. They smeared the blood of the Pessaha lamb on their door frames. The destroyer who killed the firstborns did not touch the houses with the blood on their door frames. So to remember how the firstborns got saved because of the blood of the Pessaha lamb, the Israelites celebrated the Passover every year (Exodus 12, Leviticus 23:15).

The Pessaha lamb is the forerunner of Jesus Christ who was sacrificed for the sins of the whole world.

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"So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:4-11). To commemorate this event, the Metropolitan does 'Washing of the feet' Ceremony on Thursday evening. By washing the feet of his disciples Jesus taught us real nobility and humility. We also should be humble and serve others.

**10. GOOD FRIDAY**

This day we remember the sufferings, death on the cross and burial of Jesus Christ. From morning till evening the faithful fast and participate in the service with prayer and reverence. There is no Qurbana on Good Friday.

Our Lord was captured at night in the garden of Gethsemane by the high priests and teachers of law. He was tried before the Sanhedrin and later in front of Pilate who ordered Jesus to be crucified to death. They crucified him at the place called Golgotha which means 'The place of the skull'. Two thieves were crucified on each side of Jesus. Till about the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (3pm) our savior suffered for us on the cross. At the 9<sup>th</sup> hour he entrusted his soul to God the father and died. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus the secret disciple of Jesus brought the body down from the cross and buried it in a new tomb.

There are two processions during the service on Good Friday. The first one is after the morning and third hour prayer. This procession goes out of the south door, goes around the church and enters through the north door. This procession is to remember how our Lord walked with great difficulty towards Golgotha carrying the cross on his shoulders. After completing the noon and 9<sup>th</sup> hour prayer adoration of the cross is done to remember the pain our Lord underwent lying on the cross. Towards the end of this service prostration of the cross, procession and burial ceremony is conducted. While life was still hidden in him he was brought down from the cross as a dead person. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the ladies knelt down and adored the one who took death on his own will. From the prayer "Nangalude Atmathine..." it is clear that we are worshipping our Lord. The second procession is to remember how the body of Jesus was carried by Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb. This procession is done inside the church. All the arrangements that day denote sorrow. After the burial service the faithful drink bitter water to remember how our savior was given wine vinegar to drink while lying on the cross.

Our church remembers the sufferings of Christ with the solemn service of Good Friday. To attend this service brings blessings to the faithful.

**11. KYMTHA. FEAST OF RESURRECTION**

This is the feast of resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. His divinity and truth of his teachings are revealed by his resurrection. By resurrection he released humanity from the bondage of sin and brought reconciliation between Father and humans. Christian life does not end at Calvary. Calvary leads to resurrection and eternal life. Resurrection, which is the feast of victory and peace, is very important.

The ladies reached the tomb on Sunday early morning while it was still dark. They found an empty open tomb. Angels told them the good news that Jesus Christ has risen (Luke 24:6). But Mary Magdalene refused to leave the tomb and waited, crying all the time. Then Jesus himself appeared before her and convinced her that he is alive. (John 20 : 11-18).

The service starts after midnight on Saturday following the 3rd kauma of night prayer. Before 'Halleluiah', special service of resurrection is conducted and the priest announces the resurrection. The faithful say after him, "We truly believe that he has risen".

'Celebration of the cross', is special to the resurrection service. This is to show how the one who died on the cross won over death and sin.

To show the peace it brought to the whole human race the faithful exchange greetings of peace with hands (Kaikasthoori).

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There is no need to kneel down during the services between resurrection and Pentecost. During this period there is no need to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays also. This concession is allowed by the church to show the happiness resurrection has brought. All the Sundays which fall between resurrection and Sneebea feast are considered as resurrection Sundays..

## **12. ASCENSION DAY FEAST**

This is celebrated on the Thursday which comes forty days after the resurrection Sunday. After resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples on many occasions. He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and convinced them that he is alive. (Acts1:3).On the 40<sup>th</sup> day he gathered them together at Mount Olives and ascended into heaven in front of them. (Acts1:6-9).He is sitting on the right-hand side of the father and is interceding on our behalf. He has promised that he will come back and we have to be prepared for his second coming. During Ascension Day service, along with the Holy Qurbana there is celebration of the cross.

## **13. PENTECOST FEAST**

Pentecost means 50<sup>th</sup> day. It is celebrated on the Sunday which comes 10 days after the ascension day. 120 people including the 11 disciples of Jesus and his mother had gathered at the house of Mark. They were praying together and awaiting the arrival of the Holy Spirit. As destined by God, under the leadership of Peter they chose Matthias as the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle. On Pentecost day, "suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts2:2-6).Then Peter stood up with the other disciples and spoke to them about Jesus. That day 3000 people accepted the message, were baptized and joined the church.

With the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were filled with wisdom. They who were ignorant, timid and illiterate became orators, brave, strong and wise. Three important things took place on Pentecost day.

- 1-Church was given the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 2-Activities of the church started with the speech of St. Peter.
3. For the first time people were baptized and made members of the church

We have to wait for the Holy Spirit to dwell on us. There is special prayer for this during the Pentecost service which is divided into 3 parts. In each part we kneel down and pray for the Holy Spirit to reside on us. As a symbol of receiving the Holy Spirit blessed water is sprinkled on the faithful.

To receive the Holy Spirit we must pray in togetherness that day in church. The first church is Mark's house. There our Lord established Qurbana. There, the Apostles prayed together and received the Holy Spirit. There, St. Peter spoke gospel message for the first time. There, 3000 people became believers and were baptized. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to those who join the church and pray in unity.

### **Questions**

1. Hosanna feast is in remembrance of which incident?
2. What is the significance of Pessaha feast?
3. Describe the service on Good Friday. Write the importance of each part.
4. What are the three important things which took place on Pentecost day?