

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**CLASS 7**

**LESSON 2**

**CHRONICLES**

**Aim: To learn "Those who seek Yahweh, will find him.**

The Chronicles consist of two parts and come under the historical section of the Holy Bible. It is not clear who wrote this book, but it is sure that it was written by a firm worshipper of Yahweh. This book contains many verses from the recognized prophetic books and many documents from the chronicles of previous kings. It is repeatedly told in this book about the relationship between crime and punishment, and about the mercy of Yahweh to the people who obey his commandments. It is believed that this book was written between 330-30 BC.

This book was written after the Israelites returned after their exile in Babylon. By the time they returned, the middle part of the Promised Land, which was called Samaria, was under the control of gentiles. The main aim of writing of this book was to convince and encourage the people who returned from exile that they were the true descendants of King David and the whole of the land of Canaan was their Promised Land.

The books of Chronicles are largely a retelling of events recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings, but from a different point of view. More importance is given to the royal tribe of Judah and priestly tribe of the Levites than the other tribes. The writer of Chronicles gave more importance to the small southern province and specially the city of Jerusalem and its temple than to the larger Northern Province. This may be due to the prophecies in Isaiah 11:1 and Micah 5:2 that foretold the birth of the Messiah in the city and tribe of David. Jesus is called the son of David by many. The writer of Chronicles has portrayed David as a great person because he was the predecessor of the Messiah who was to come, and the proud symbol of the Israelites. The flaws in David's life that were mentioned in other books are not recorded in this one. The kings and rulers in King David's dynasty have been mentioned in detail while those of the northern kingdom have been mentioned only briefly. The author of Chronicles liked to portray Israel as a God-fearing society led by Yahweh rather than as a nation. The author has given a message to the contemporary society, which is, "The Lord is with you as long as you are with him. If you look for him, he will let you find him, but if you turn away, he will abandon you." (2 Chronicles 15:2)

The contents of this book can be summarized as below:

**Part 1** 1 Chronicle 1-10 Genealogies from Adam to Saul

**Part 2** 1 Chronicle 11-29 The reign of David

**Part 3** 2 Chronicles 1-9 The reign of Solomon

**Part 4** 2 Chronicles 10-36 The divided nation, exile in Babylon,

Cyrus commands the Jews to return

**Questions:**

1. When was the Chronicles written?
2. What was the main aim of writing these books?
3. What was the main message given to the people by this book?
4. The historical facts explained in the books of Samuel and the Kings were repeated in Chronicles. How do Chronicles differ from them?

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**LESSON 3**

**CHRONICLES- PART I**

**Aim: To learn "God will forsake those who forsake him."**

The book of Chronicles starts with a lengthy chain of genealogy. This genealogy proves that the people who returned from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem are the true successors of all Israel and are the under the protective ring of God. It also indicates that everyone, starting from the first man, is subject to judgment from God. God's grace and love for the restored community did not begin with David or the conquest or the Exodus – but with creation. In the genealogy, great importance is given to the tribes of Levites, Judah and Benjamin, and to the descendants of David.

After the genealogy, the narration goes straight to the death of king Saul. The three sons of Saul were killed by Philistines on the mount Gilboa, and on seeing that, Saul fell on his sword and died. When all the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard of everything the Philistines had done to Saul, all their valiant men went and took the bodies of Saul and his sons and brought them to Jabesh. Then they buried their bones under the great trees in Jabesh and they fasted for seven days. After copying the whole chapter from 1 Samuel 31 in 1 Chronicles 10, the author of Chronicles writes three reasons for this disaster that befell Saul: "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord. He disobeyed the Lord's commands; and even tried to find guidance by consulting the spirits of the dead instead of consulting the Lord. So the Lord killed him and gave control of the kingdom to David son of Jesse."

**Questions:**

1. Why is the lengthy genealogy mentioned in the beginning of Chronicles?
2. What were the reasons for the tragedy that happened to Saul?
3. Who buried the bodies of Saul and his sons?

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NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON - 4

THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

**Aim: To acquire general knowledge about the epistles of St. Paul.**

St. Paul's epistles are a great treasure for the whole of Christian church. These letters were written many years before the gospels were written. We get knowledge about the real situation regarding rituals and faith from the early church from these epistles. It is clear from these epistles that they were written by a person who had pain at heart regarding the problems of different churches. (2 Cor 11:28)



He has repeatedly told in several letters that he has been authorized to make decisions and made an apostle by Jesus Christ and whatever he wrote was not merely his opinions. In some letters to certain churches, importance is given to their particular problems but generally they are useful to all churches. Moreover, St. Paul wished that the churches that received these letters should exchange them between themselves and make it useful to each one of them. Accordingly people have collected letters written to different churches towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and assembled them. St. Peter also mentioned the letters of St. Paul. (2 Peter 3:16)

We have received 14 epistles that are written by St. Paul. There is a difference of opinion among the theologians about the authorship of these letters. The style and language used in these letters denote that they are written by St. Paul. The churches that received these letters were from different moral and traditional backgrounds. Their problems were also different. Some letters were written in extremely difficult and busy circumstances but some were written while the apostle was in prison and had lot of free time. In certain churches, matters of faith were the

main problem whereas in some other churches, the problem was their severe immorality. Most of the letters were written to Christians who were converted from Gentiles. But the letter to Hebrews written to Christians converted from Jews had different ideas and tone which were emphasized. We must remember that he had written to churches that were established due to his evangelical work and also, the letters to Romans and Colossians that he had never visited before. We must take into account all these differences before we question the authorship of St. Paul with regards to language and style. Our Holy church traditionally believes that all these 14 letters were written by St. Paul

For the sake of convenience, we can divide these 14 epistles into 5 groups.

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**Early letters**

This group consists of 2 letters to Thessalonica. These letters were written much before the others to an infantile church in Thessalonica.

**Evangelical epistles**

This group consists of a letter to Romans 2 letters to Corinthians and a letter to Galatians. It is because of their importance that these letters are put in the beginning section of St. Paul's letters.

**Captivity epistles**

This consists of letters to Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. These letters were written when he was languishing in the prison.

**Pastoral epistles**

This consists of 2 letters written to Timothy and one to Titus. Here, St. Paul writes to his faithful disciples whom he made the heads of the churches that he himself established.

**Epistle to Hebrews**

This epistle is different from the other letters in several aspects. Whatever may be the controversies regarding the authorship of this epistle, the Orthodox churches traditionally believe that the epistle to Hebrews was written by none other than St. Paul.

**Questions:**

1. Why are some letters of St. Paul called Pastoral Epistles?
2. Which are the Captivity Epistles?
3. Which are the most important epistles of St. Paul?
4. Explain why the letters of St. Paul are different in language and style.

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LESSON - 5

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

**Aim: To understand the relevance and importance of the epistle to the Romans.**

After the death of Alexander the great, the powerful Greek Empire disintegrated. The Roman Empire grew as a world power and took the place of the Greek Empire. This empire had much more land area and military power. The capital of this empire was Rome and was later known as the 'Eternal City'. The Christian church and its message reached Rome in its early stages and spread as a powerful force. The miracle of the tongues, obtained through the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost, was witnessed by many people including Jews who came to Jerusalem. As time passed on, Rome was considered to be one of the three main centers of universal Christendom (other centers were Antioch and Alexandria). The fact that St. Peter and St. Paul were martyred in Rome was another reason for Rome's importance. Both of them preached the gospel in Rome but even before that, there were a considerable number of Christians in Rome.

St. Paul thought that his activities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, Aasia and eastern Europe were completed with his third missionary journey. He also thought his next journey would be to Spain in Western Europe and he wished to visit Rome on his way (1524). It is natural for him to have wished to visit Rome because he was a Roman citizen. But before that, he had to give money collected by Greek to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Because of this financial help, the gentile Christians, who gave the money and the Jew Christians who received the money became more intimate and closer.

Even though he has not visited Rome before, he had heard about the strong faith of the church members there. Being very happy about this, he was making the stage set to meet them personally. During his journey to Jerusalem in a place called Miletos, he had spoken about the hardship he was going to face in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22 & 23). St. Paul stayed in Greece for three months before traveling to Jerusalem. During this period in A.D. 57 in Corinth, he wrote this epistle to Romans and sent it to Rome through a lady named Phebe who was a servant of the church in Cencrea (Romans 16:1-2).



The epistle to Romans is the longest one amongst the letters of St. Paul. God's plan of grace which lifts man from his state of sin which he cannot get rid of by himself is explained in this epistle.

The main subject the writer of this letter is emphasizing upon is the universality of sin. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one". (Romans 3:10-12) The Jew who received the Law of the Lord shall be judged according to the Law. The Gentiles who are outside the commandments shall be judged according to their conscience. Law of the Lord is the road that leads to Christ.

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If one lives according to the Law of the Lord salvation is possible only by means of one's deeds. But all saints starting from Abraham were justified not by deeds but by faith. Grace is the gift from God. We receive this Grace freely due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrected Christ acts as intermediary for us. If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? (Rom 8:31) But to attain this salvation we have to do two things from our part. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Rom 10:9)

In the beginning the Israelites received the word of the Lord. But they did not believe. But this was temporary. They will also come to salvation through Christ. The Apostle advises "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21)

The last chapters contain many advices about maintenance of moral guidelines and greetings to the faithful. He also explains how to lead exemplary lives in different phases of life. The Apostle takes time to explain how a saved person should lead his life. He abhors them to lead Christian life interacting with co-believers, governments and other people.

Questions.

Narrate the circumstances in which St. Paul wrote this Epistle?

How was the epistle to Romans sent to Rome?

What is the main subject in this Epistle?

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**Lesson - 6**

**EPISTLES TO CORINTHIANS**

**Aim: To learn more about faith, hope and love through the Epistles to Corinthians.**

During the period of the New Testament, the city of Corinth was a major commercial center and a great seaport. It was also a venue for a world famous university. But along with increasing economic activity, this city became more and more morally degraded. Julius Caesar had renovated this city and made it the new head quarters of Roman Empire in the Greek area. During his second Missionary journey, St. Paul reached this prosperous port city and stayed there for about one and half years. He visited this city during his third Missionary journey too.

In the Holy Bible we have obtained two epistles of St. Paul written to Corinthians. But in the first epistle we get the information that St. Paul had written to them at an earlier date.(1 Corinthians 5:9) Unfortunately that letter was lost to the Christian church.

The church in Corinth was a large one having many members and there were many problems involving these members. While St. Paul was staying in Ephesus, a nearby city, he came to know of these problems personally from many sources. The Christians in Corinth made different groups in the name of their leaders without their knowledge and quarreled with each other. Besides, there was obvious discrimination between the rich and the poor. There were disputes between believers pending in the Roman judicial courts. All these have saddened him greatly (1 Corinthians 6:17) The rampant immorality prevalent among the Christians (1 Corinthians 6:17), the eating of things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols (1 Corinthians 8:1-13), doubts about the grace of God (Corinthians 12:4-12), irregularities regarding the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:18-22)etc. were matters that disturbed the Apostle. Besides, there were people who even questioned the authority of St. Paul as an apostle as he was not one amongst the 12 Apostles of Christ. On the basis of these disputes and differences of opinions, he had dealt elaborately on the three cornerstones of Christianity ie Faith, Hope and Love in chapter 13. He also strongly condemns their doubts about the resurrection of the dead.

The first Epistle is believed to have been written in AD 57 from Ephesus and the second from Macedonia in the same or next year.

Both these epistles start with the declaration "Paul the Apostle of Jesus by the will of God", emphasizing that he had been selected as apostle by Jesus so that they should not nurture any doubts about his apostleship. After the initial salutation, he expresses deep sorrow on their division. He continues that even though they had prospered in worldly matters they were still children in spiritual matters and advises them accordingly.

The Apostle emphasizes the importance of purity in family life. He does not agree with the view that the gift of foreign tongues is superior to other gifts of the Holy Spirit. He confirms the resurrection of the dead in no unequivocal terms. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22). When he asked God to get rid of the thorn in the flesh, he got the reply "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. "He happily accepts this reply. ( 2 Corinthians 12: 7-9 ). He longed for the everlasting happiness in the coming world rather than the short life in this world and its little pleasures. (2Corinthians 5: 1-10 )

While closing his second Epistle, he bids farewell in the name of Holy Trinity, where as in other Epistles he bids farewell in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Questions :-**

- (1) What was the background behind writing the Epistle to Corinthians?
- (2) What were the major problems faced by the Church in Corinth?
- (3) Bidding farewell in the name of Holy Trinity is seen only in one Epistle. Where?

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**Lesson – 7**

**EPISTLE TO GALATIANS**

**Aim: To learn that Epistle to Galatians is also called the Gospel of Grace.**

Galatia is a large area located in the north–eastern side of Asia Minor (the present day Turkey). St. Paul had visited Dorba, Lustra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia which were in the southern side of Galatia during his three missionary journeys. It is clear that he had written this epistle to those people whom he had visited during his previous missionary journeys. "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus" (Gal 4:14). There is general consensus among the theologians that this Epistle was written by St. Paul in A.D. 58 from the city of Corinth.

This epistle is important on many accounts. The Apostle gives detailed autobiographical information regarding his early life and evangelical mission. (Gala 1:1-24). It can be presumed that this gospel is meant for those people who had questioned his position as an Apostle. At the commencement of the Epistle he retorts that he was the Apostle selected by the resurrected Jesus Christ and God the Father. He was born as a Jew and brought up as a Pharisee and it was while traveling to Damascus to persecute Christians that he was called to be an Apostle. But he claims that he was selected from birth by God (Gal 1-15) and selected to be an Apostle.

In the Galatian community the converted Jews were insisting that all the converts from gentiles should follow the practices as followed by Jews including circumcision. This was one of the disputes St. Paul refers to in his Epistle. He could not tolerate the heresies in the church he nurtured by his own blood. Remember the stoning he had to suffer in Lustra. St. Paul could not accept this argument even though he himself was a Jew. Hence he had emphatically refuted the arguments of the Jews and made it very clear to the congregation that even if an angel from heaven convey a message other than that was conveyed by him, he should not be heeded to and such one should be treated as a cursed one. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed". (Gal: 1:8) This message is conveyed during our Holy Qurbana in the song "Paulose Sleeha Dhanyan cholkattenithevum"

St. Paul rightfully claims that the Gospel he was preaching was not of human origin but straight from Jesus Christ when he had his revelation at the gates of Damascus. (Galatians 1:11-12) He had again and again categorically made it clear that salvation is attained through God's Grace alone and not by practicing the law of Moses. This is the reason why theologians call this Epistle "the Gospel of Grace". He reiterates that Abraham was justified by faith and not by practicing the Lord's Laws

Even though he had many worldly reasons to pride himself about, he says that "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Galatians 6:14)

**Questions:-**

1. What is the evidence that the epistle was meant for the southern region of Galatia?
2. St. Paul starts the epistle emphasizing his status as an Apostle. Why?
3. According to St. Paul, when did God select him?
4. What do we proclaim by singing the song "Paulose Sleeha Dhanyan" during the Holy Qurbana?.



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**Lesson - 8**

**EPISTLE TO EPHESIANS**

**Aim:- To emphasize the strong relationship between Christ and the Church.**

Ephesus was the biggest city in Asia Minor and was closely linked to the missionary work of St. Paul. The Apostle had visited Ephesus during his second and third missionary journeys. Moreover, during his second visit he stayed there for two years and did a magnificent work there. During this period he was able to perform many extra ordinary wonders there. His clothes were used to cure many people and to drive away evil spirits. (Acts 19:10-12) Themotheos, the dear disciple of St. Paul had been made the Bishop of Ephesus. In the book of Revelation, the first church mentioned by name among the churches in Asia Minor is the church of Ephesus. The Apostle had written this epistle from the prison in Rome in A.D. 62 and sent through Thihicose.

Many of the other epistles were written to rectify the bad practices of the Christian church with the intention of teaching the true principles of Christian teachings. In this epistle he had preached the necessity of keeping harmony between the converted Jews and gentiles as one body in Christ.

The major points covered in this epistle can be summarized as follows:

1. The Christian church is the product of Gods redemption plan. Christ is the head of the church and the believers are the body (1:2-3).
2. The church is the house of the Lord and Christ is the corner stone of it (2:21)
3. Christ is the husband and the church is the wife (5:23).
4. The sacrifice of Christ is valid not only in this world but in heaven also (1:10, 2:7, 3:10).
5. The work of Holy Spirit in the church 1:17, 2:18, 3:16, 4:30.
6. The importance of keeping harmony among the Church members. Members of church should be in complete harmony on the need three of (4:1-7, 25- 32).
7. The duties in Christian family life (5:22, 6:9).
8. The Christian is compared to a warrior and mentions the spiritual armory that he should keep with him 6:10-18).

The epistle to Ephesians and Colossian were composed during the same period. The epistle to Colossians was written first and thereafter, the ideas were more refined in the epistle to Ephesians.

**Questions :**

1. What were the miracles that happened in Ephesus through St. Paul?
2. What are the differences found in the epistle to Ephesus compared to other epistles?
3. Narrate the important advices in the epistle to Ephesians?

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**LESSON - 9**

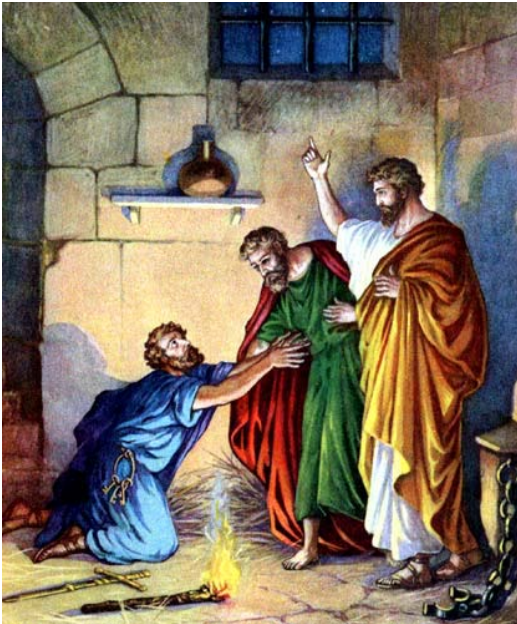
**EPISTLE TO PHILIPPIANS**

**Aim: We learn from the epistle to Philippians that Christians should keep their hope under any circumstances.**

King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great had built the city of Philippi. Naopoly was the port city of Philippi and it was here that Apostle Paul landed for the first time in Europe. After the death of Alexander the Great, Philippi was annexed to the Roman empire and they had extended all the rights of Roman Citizen to the inhabitants of Philippi.

When St. Paul landed at Philippi during his second missionary journey, he had with him Silas, Timothy and Luke (Phili 2:19) (Acts 16:16). St. Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed without trial and when the authorities came to know that they were Roman citizens, they begged for their pardon and set them free..

The first to embrace Christianity in Philippi were Ludia and her family and she belonged to Asia minor but was of Jewish origin. Next it was a Greek slave woman who embraced Christianity. When St. Paul and Silas were praising God and singing hymns in the prison, the prison locks opened and seeing this the chief of the jail wardens also embraced Christianity. So the initial converts were from various communities representing different groups of people. Although Paul had to suffer torture and hardships in Philippi, he was happy and satisfied as he could convert a number of people to the faith.



Unlike other Epistles to various churches he had not criticized the Philippians but had made several positive remarks about them. Therefore, the church in Philippi was supposed to be honourable and well behaved. They were firm in their faith during their persecution (1-29-30), were obedient to St. Paul (2-12), were generous and helpful towards other churches and never became victims of heresy.(4.15). They were also not influenced by the conflicting Jewish ideology. As the Jewish community was strong and influential, it would be possible that they may try to create unnecessary problems and hence St. Paul has warned two women Euodias and Syntyche to carefully follow the Gospel.

This epistle was one of the Prison Epistles written in AD 63 while in Rome and dispatched through Epaphroditus who was "companion in labour, and fellow soldier" of St. Paul (2-25). This man had taken the financial help of Philippians to Paul and served him in the prison and became sick in Rome. When he had recovered, the epistle was sent through him.

St. Paul has mentioned that his confinement in prison was not a waste to his ministry as he could write a few valuable Epistles from there and he had encouraged the people who are free to be more fruitful and put in more effort to spread the Gospel. He had also thanked them for the pecuniary help and congratulated them for coming forward to spread the Gospel. He implores them to leave aside the false prestige of Jewish traditions and to come to the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul had also brought out many of his scholastic thoughts in this Epistle. They are

- For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain (1:21)
- For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (1:23)
- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (3:14)
- And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (4:7)

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During his first visit to Philippi, St. Paul was imprisoned and tortured. While in the prison, in the nights he praised the Lord singing songs. (Acts 16:25) While in prison in Rome also, when writing to the Philippians, he repeatedly asks them to rejoice. (Phili 2:17-18,3:1,4:4)

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Phili 1:14). All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. (Phili 4:22) These verses confirm that this epistle was written from a prison in Rome.

**Questions :-**

1. Who were with St. Paul when he reached the Philippi for the first time ?
2. The first Christian converts in Philippi were the representatives of three different communities. Explain.
3. Narrate the circumstances in which St. Paul wrote the epistle to Philippians.
4. What were the virtues St. Paul noticed in the church of Philippi ?

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**LESSON - 10**

**EPISTLE TO COLOSSIANS**

**Aim: -: To understand the uniqueness of Christ, the Son of God.**

Colossia was a small town near Laodicia in the Phrygia province in Asia Minor. St. Paul had not visited this place at the time of his writing as evident from verse 2:1 and it was his dear disciple Epuphras who belonged to Colossia had preached the Gospel in Colossia. (Verse 4:12) It is generally accepted that St. Paul had written this Epistle from the prison in AD 62 along with the epistle to Ephesians. The elegant usage of words, the theology and ideology etc have many comparisons. It seems that this was written first and the epistle to Ephesians followed. Philomon to whom St.Paul had written an epistle was a native of Colossia.

St. Paul came to know about some false teachings in the church of Colossia. Some people there had given more importance to the Angels than to the Son of God. In order to dismiss this revision, and to enlighten the incomparability of Christ with any others, he had written this Epistle. It has been reiterated in the epistle that Christ is the visible image of invisible God, redeemer of sins, the creator of all, consists in all things, the head of the church, the reconciliator to God of every thing present, past and future. He made it clear that he is beyond comparison. (1-14-20).

Some Colossians were teaching that living the life of a hermit forsaking all worldly pleasures is the most acceptable way of life to God. St. Paul also repudiated this school of thought. (2:21-23) He had also laid down the model relationship between various members in a family, in a society, amongst the rulers and ruled, masters and slaves. (3-18, 4-1).

"The gospel keeps bringing blessings and is spreading throughout the world just as it has among you ever since the day you first heard about the grace of God and came to know it as it really is."(1-6) This information about Colossians prompted the Apostle to write to them.. St. Paul is appreciating the Colossians as they were "rooted deeply in Christ Jesus, established in faith and were growing abundantly" (2-7).

**Questions**

1. What were the major heresies spread among the Colossians?
2. What was the reason for writing this epistle to the church, which he had not seen?
3. Which is the other epistle written in the same circumstances?

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**Lesson - 11**

**EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**

**Aim: To learn about the good advises of St. Paul like, 'Live up to the God who has called you and don't get tired by doing good deeds'.**

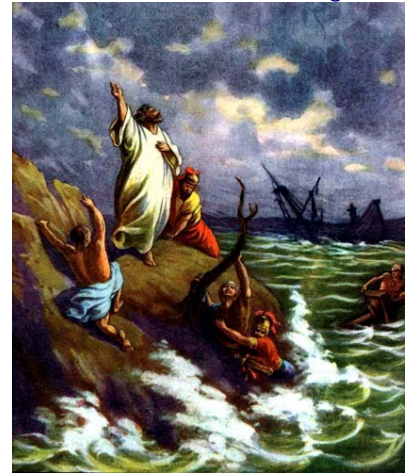
Thessalonica is a beautiful town in Macedonia. At present it is known as Salonica. There were many Jewish settlers in this town. When the Romans captured Macedonia from the Greeks, they made Thessalonica the center of administration of the Macedonia province.

St. Paul visited Thessalonica during his second missionary tour. He stayed there for few weeks, preaching the Gospel. Many Jews and Greeks became believers of Christ Jesus. However, some influential Jews revolted against the faith St. Paul was advocating and made commotion. This forced the rulers and law enforcement authorities to intervene and St. Paul along with Timothy and Silas went to Berea from Thessalonica. Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica for preaching the Gospel when St. Paul and party reached Athens. St. Paul went back to Corinth from Athens and stayed there for about 1½ years working and preaching the gospel. Timothy returned to Corinth from Thessalonica and explained in detail about the condition of the church in Thessalonica. It was in the light of these explanations that St. Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Thessalonians in 52 AD. Later in the same year the second Epistle was written. Both these Epistles come under the 'earlier Epistles of St. Paul'. Circumstances prevalent in the church were nearly the same while both the epistles were written. In the beginning of both these Epistles the names of Silas and Timothy have been mentioned as co-writers along with St. Paul.

Instead of explaining about morality like in his later epistles, in these two epistles, St. Paul gives instructions about godly living, in a cordial way, using loving words. .

**First Epistle**

He was happy about the growth of the church in Thessalonica within a short period of time and congratulates them on being a role model to other churches. He also remembers the problems and difficulties they have undergone for the church and wishes to see them again (1:7-9) (2:13-20). In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter he praises Timothy on being a mediator between St. Paul and the church in Thessalonica. Then he gives a set of code of conduct to be followed (4:1-12). He assures them that the dead ones will be resurrected along with Christ (4:13-18). It seems that St. Paul had some notions about the second coming of Jesus Christ when he was writing the epistles. It mentions that the second coming of Christ could be in the same generation (4:17) However, this thinking is not reflected in any of the other epistles but he advises the church to await for his second coming with alertness (5:1-11). The first Epistle ends with some useful guidance on the arrangements in the church and greetings.



**Second Epistle**

We have already seen that the second epistle was written without much delay after the first one. There was some misunderstanding in the church regarding his teachings about the second coming of Jesus Christ. So some people lived disorganized lives and others circulated letters falsely putting the Apostle's name on it. All these prompted the Apostle to write the second letter soon.

In the second epistle also he praises them for their steadfastness in faith and tells them that those who persecuted them will be punished soon (1:3-12). He also advises them to clear the confusion about the second coming of Jesus Christ caused by his first letter (2:1-12).

He requests the Thessalonians to pray for him (3:1-2). He also instructs them to work and earn a living (3:1-12) He ends the epistle with greetings and blessings.

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**Questions:**

1. In these Epistles who are the other co-writers mentioned by St. Paul?
2. Who was the mediator between the Thessalonian church and the Apostle?
3. St. Paul wrote the first epistle, soon followed by the second one. Why?

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**Lesson - 12**

**EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY**

**Aim: To stand steadfast in the holy and truthful beliefs and practices of the church**

Timothy was born in Lystra (in modern Turkey) as the son of a Greek citizen and a Jewish Christian woman. In his first Missionary Tour, St. Paul converted many Jews and gentiles into Christianity including the whole family of Timothy. His mother Eunice and his grand mother Lois were having sincere faith, a fact stated by the Apostle (2 Timothy 1:5). St. Paul describes Timothy as 'My true son in the faith' (1 Timothy 1: 2), 'Man of God' (1 Timothy 6:11), 'My dear son' (2 Timothy 1: 2), and 'My own dear and faithful son in the Christian life' (1 Corinthians 4:17). When he was entrusted with the church responsibilities, he was very young (1 Timothy 4:12) and in poor health (1 Timothy 5:23) but St. Paul had the full confidence that he was capable of leading the believers in the church.

Timothy was with St. Paul for long time helping him in his ministry. He served his teacher faithfully during good times and in difficulties too. He was imprisoned along with St. Paul in Rome and after his release, continued to stay with him as a good disciple and helper. As an Episcopa, he led the believers in Ephesus for long time and established many regulations in the church as instructed by St. Paul. He became a martyr when the Roman Emperor Domitius prosecuted the Christians in Rome.

These epistles are most important ones in the church as these have pastoral instructions on the practices, rules and regulations to be followed in the church, and the principle of faith. These are actually the first models of pastoral letters from the head of the church to his juniors.

The two epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus are known as the pastoral writings. Thomas Aquinas who lived in 13th Century called these as "Pastoral letters" and all the theological scholars accepted the name in the later years. These epistles were written to the two bishops of the churches, giving instructions, rules and regulations applicable to the churches all over. So the name 'pastoral letters' really suits these epistles.

In the first epistle there is warning against false teaching in the church and the necessity to keep the people of Ephesus in real faith. St. Paul makes it clear that Jesus Christ came to this world to save the sinners and that he is the only mediator between man and God. This fact is more important than the laws. (1 Timothy 2: 5). Later there is description about the kind of character that church leaders and helpers should have. (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

In the second epistle he states the synopsis of all his teachings in one sentence, "Remember Jesus Christ, who was raised from death, who was a descendant of David, as is taught in the Good News I preach"(2 Timothy 2:8).

Those who spread the Gospel will have to suffer and face oppositions but in the end they will live with Jesus in eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:9-11).

While writing these Gospel, the Apostle was aware of his last days and courageously confirms his faith as he writes, "As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day". (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Towards the end of the epistle, apart from the usual greetings St. Paul requests Timothy to come and stay with him during his final days in the world.

The first Epistle was written in AD 64 from Macedonia and the second in AD 65 from Rome.

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**Questions: -**

1. What are the adjectives used by St. Paul to describe Timothy?
2. Who was the ruler when Timothy became a Martyr?
3. Who named the epistles to Timothy and Titus as pastoral letters?
4. The second epistle to Timothy is the last of St. Paul's epistles. What are the proofs for this from the epistle?



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**Lesson - 13**

**EPISTLE TO TITUS**

**Aim: To learn about the general principles to keep the purity of family life.**

Titus, who is well known through the Acts of Apostles and the epistles of St. Paul, was a Greek citizen. He accompanied St. Paul while he toured Corinth. He collected money from the Macedonian churches for the poor Christians in Judea (2 Corinthians 8:4-5). When they returned to Rome, Titus went to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10). It is believed that Titus was appointed as the Episcopa of Crete and continued there until his death.

Titus was sent to Crete to regularize the matters that St. Paul could not complete during his visit, and to appoint elders in different towns where the believers required their services. The Apostle salutes him as 'my brother' and 'my true son in the common faith' (Titus 1: 4). Titus was zealous in the matter of preaching the Gospel (2 Corinthians 8:17-18).

The epistle to Titus is one of the pastoral letters. The kind of character and qualities necessary for church leaders is elaborated in this epistle. There were quite a number of Jewish settlers in Crete and many of them had become Christians.

The Apostle advises Titus how to teach the various groups in the church, the older men, the older women (who are, in turn, to teach the younger women), the young men and the slaves.

The Apostle also instructs Titus to be cautious in his dealings with people of Crete as majority of the Christians were from the Jews and he himself was a gentile. To be gentle, kind, lovable, friendly and righteous, Titus should set an example for the believers and not to give any chance for criticism.

This epistle was probably written from Corinth between AD 63-65.

**Questions**

1. What were the intentions of the Apostle when he wrote the epistle to Titus?
2. Besides being the Episcopa of Crete, what were the other activities of Titus?

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**Lesson - 14**

**EPISTLE TO PHILEMON**

**Aim: To understand how to deal with a co-believer.**

The Epistle was written from the prison of Rome during AD 62. Actually this is a personal letter of the Apostle to Philemon and is the smallest of the epistles. Though there are no theological or moral thoughts in this, since the Apostle wrote it it is included in the Bible.

Philemon was a Colossian who became a believer because of St. Paul and raised to the position of Episcopa of Colossia .It is believed that later he became a martyr. St. Paul considers him as a friend and co-worker (Philemon1: 1) and calls himself an ambassador of Christ and a prisoner for his sake (Philemon1: 9). Philemon was a young man when St. Paul converted him into Christianity.

A slave of Philemon, called Onesimus had run away from his master. He came into contact with St. Paul in prison and became a Christian. Paul's letter to Philemon is an appeal to Philemon to be reconciled to his slave, whom Paul is sending back to him, and to welcome him not only as a forgiven slave but also as a Christian brother.

**Questions**

1. What is the main content of this epistle?
2. What are the adjectives used by the apostle to describe Philemon?
3. Who is Onesimus?

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**Lesson - 15**

**EPISTLE TO HEBREWS**

**Aim: To learn about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the High Priest, the result and what each Christian should do.**

The epistle to the Hebrews is different in many aspects from the other epistles of the New Testament. There is no mention of the name of the writer and the congregation to which it is addressed. The initial greetings are also missing. However, at the end of the epistle, it refers to certain individuals and gives the usual blessings and greetings. Hence many call it a speech, which ends like an epistle.

There are different opinions amongst the theologians about the author of this epistle. However, the Syrian Christian tradition is to believe that St. Paul also wrote this epistle during AD 62 from Rome.

It is difficult to say to whom this epistle was written for. In the Bible names such as Israelites, Jews and Hebrews mean the same group of people. It is believed that this epistle is meant for the Christians who were converted from the Jews. Many references and ideas from the Old Testament, describing Jesus as greater than angels and Moses, and emphasizing Jesus as the High Priest, prove this argument.

The epistle was not meant for all the Jewish Christians settled in various parts of the world but to a certain congregation whose name is not mentioned anywhere in the epistle. They have not seen Jesus Christ in person but had heard about him and his teachings (5:12) they also faced persecution after their conversion (10:32). However, none of them were martyrs for their faith (12:4) and with passage of time their faith decreased. (6:5).

In the beginning of the epistle there is a comparison between Jesus Christ and those prophets in the Old Testament to whom God had revealed himself. Some people considered Moses more important than Jesus since God revealed himself to Moses at Mount Sinai. The writer refutes this contention and projects Moses as a servant of God and stresses that Jesus is the Son of God who has inherited all rights and powers of the Almighty (3:1-6). Besides, Moses, God had anointed Aaron also as High Priest. To those who argued that the High Priest was authorized to conduct sacrifice for the sinners, the composer writes that Jesus himself is the High Priest anointed by God, and he sacrificed himself knowing all the weaknesses in the human beings (4:14-15).

In the second part, the author proves that Jesus sacrificed himself, died, was resurrected and became High Priest. Jesus is the High Priest comparable to Melchizedek, the King of Salem and as such is greater than Aaron. Abraham respected Melchizedek and gave him one tenth of his wealth. (7:1-10) Jesus was made a priest, not by human rules and regulations but through the power of a life, which has no end. The priests of Old Testaments had to repeat the sacrifices several times but Christ offered himself once and that is effective forever (10:11-12) and is complete in all respects (10:18).

"To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see"(11:1). With the above definition of faith, the author utilizes the rest of chapter to stress on faith in spiritual life. Naming Old Testament faithful he writes, "As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us"(12:1). So let us also say with courage, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"(13:6)

In the end the composer writes about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the result and what a Christian should do. He gives advice as to how to be steadfast in faith. . He praises their earlier faith and talks about the punishment for those who ignore. He continues to write about the godly love which shines in the midst of difficulties, how to fight against sin and about the eternal life and happiness which awaits the truthful ones (13:1-25)

**Questions:**

1. What are the major differences between the epistle to Hebrews and other Epistles?

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2. Jesus is greater than many prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. Who are they?
3. What is faith?

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**LESSON - 16**

**CHURCH HISTORY**

**PATRIARCH H. H. MORAN MAR IGNATIUS PETER – III**



**Aim – To learn about the memorable services rendered by H.H.the Patriarch Ignatius Peter-III to make Malankara church a strong and steadfast one.**

H.H. Patriarch Ignatius of blessed memory was on the throne of Antioch for 25 years from AD 1872 to 1894. The details of his mission in Malankara during the most crucial period in the church history and how he sustained the church are to be recorded in golden letters. H.G.Mathews Mar Athanasius, after being consecrated by H.H. Patriarch Ignatius Elias-II took over the church administration on the strength of the royal proclamations. His grace Dionysus-IV who administered the church before the arrival of H.G.Mathews Mar Athanasius and H.G Euachim could not succeed in their mission. Even H.G.Stephen Mar Athanasius, who was sent by H.H. the Patriarch had to leave the country in a short time. Though H.G.Joseph Mar Dionysus-V returned to Malankara duly consecrated by H.H the Patriarch, his attempts to get recognition as Malankara metropolitan was also not successful owing to the influence of Mar Athanasius. The condition has come to such a pitch that the Diwan could do no justice without the permission of the British Resident and by the court because of the strength of the royal proclamations. Because of the above circumstances H.H Dionysus-V approached the Patriarch of Antioch Moran Mar Ignatius Peter-III for help.

The Patriarch who was consecrated just 2 years ago decided to do all that is possible for the sustenance of the Malankara church. H.H. went directly to London in 1874 and met the secretary of state for Indian affairs and explained all that is being done by the British Resident and the C.M.S. missionaries against the church and its present condition. The Patriarch went to see her majesty the Queen Victoria and explained to her the difficulties and tortures faced by the church due to the unjust interferences of the British Resident. H.H was able to get the help of the queen, even against the objections raised by the Arch Bishop of Canterbury. The Patriarch returned from London to Madras with a recommendation letter to the Madras governor and from there traveled to Malankara. Consequently, the royal court proclamation issued in favor of H.G Mathews Mar Athanasius became invalid and a new proclamation was issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1876. It is clearly stated in the above proclamation that Travancore government has no authority either to appoint or to dismiss any Metropolitan of the Syrian church, and if any such disputes arise, it should be decided by a court of law. Thus by this proclamation, the patriarch fulfilled his first mission regarding the Malankara church.

After reinstating the authority of the Patriarch over the Malankara church, H.H. took strong steps to consolidate the church administration in a democratic setup. A synod was convened at Mulanthurithy with the

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representations of all the Syrian churches (parishes). The details of the said synod are mentioned in the next lesson.

In the same year the Patriarch also conducted the Mooron Koodasa. H.H. felt that the spiritual needs of the Christian community, which exceeded 3 lakhs, now scattered in Travancore and Cochin states cannot be served by a single Metropolitan, especially at a time when traveling facilities were inadequate. Accordingly the Patriarch established 7 Dioceses including Kottayam, the seat of Malankara Metropolitan, 3 on the north of Kottayam and 3 on the south of Kottayam. The Dioceses are Angamaly, Cochin and Kandanad on the north and Quilon, Niranam and Thumpamon on the south. H.H. the Patriarch also consecrated 6 more Metropolitans for these Dioceses.

The following were the new dioceses and the Metropolitans in charge.

- 1) Angamaly -H.G.Gheeverghese Mar Koorilose, Ambattu
- 2) Kochi -H.G.Simon Mar Dionysus, Karottu Veetil
- 3) Kandanadu -H.G.Paulose Mar Ivanios, Murimattom
- 4) Quilon -H.G.Paulose Mar Athanasius, Kadavil
- 5) Niranam -H.G.Gheeverghese Mar Gregorios,Chathuruthil
- 6) Thumbamon - H.G.Gheevarghese Mar Julius, Konattu

The administration of the Kottayam Diocese was given to the Malankara Metropolitan H.G. Joseph Mar Dionysus. Later considering the heavy schedule of the Malankara Metropolitan, the Patriarch gave the administration of Kottayam Diocese to H.G. Paulose-Mar Athanasius of Kadavil and that of Quilon and to H.G.Joseph Mar Dionysus of Pulikkottil.

The Malankara Association was formed giving representations to all churches in Malankara and managing committee was constituted with 24 members (8 priests and 16 laymen). It was the firm determination of the Patriarch to save the church from the reformed movements and the Malankara church will always remember H.H for this. After organizing the church matters, H.H returned to the Holy throne in 1877.

**Questions: -**

1. What were the actions taken by the H.H. the Patriarch before his arrival in Malankara to get his mission successful?
2. What was the first action that got sanctioned by the H.H. the Patriarch?
3. Write a short note of all the achievements by the Patriarch during his visit to the Malankara.

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**LESSON - 17**

**THE MULAMTHURITHY SYNOD**

**AIM - To learn how the church became strong and established as per the plan of the Holy Spirit.**

H.H the Patriarch Peter-III of Antioch, while he was in Malankara, sent notice and convened a meeting of the representatives of the church at Mulanthurithy Marthoman church to take appropriate decisions regarding the spiritual and administrative issues of the Malankara church. This was a very important event in the history of modern church and is known as the Mulanthurithy Synod. The Synod was conducted on 15, 16, 17 of Mithunam 1501 M.E. (AD 1876). H.H. the Patriarch presided over the meetings. H.G. Joseph Mar Dionysus Metropolitan, H.G. Abdullah Mar Gregorios Metropolitan (who came with the Patriarch), 130 priests and 144 laymen representing 103 churches, were the other participants of the synod. The Mulanthurithy synod took place before the division of the Malankara church into seven dioceses. Rev.Gheevarghese Ramban (later known as Parumala Thirumeni) who was the secretary of the Patriarch while the Holy Father was in Malankara was the chief organizer of the synod. As the synod was convened in a very peaceful and cordial atmosphere, it was possible to take very important and far reaching decisions regarding the church administration.



The following are the important decisions taken at the Synod.

The members of the Malankara Church should stand together under the Throne of Antioch Church accepting the approved faith and creed. (As per this all persons who disobey ancient faith and creed – will not have any place in the church as a member. In the light of this declaration reformists are no more members of the church)

It was decided to print the CANON rules and regulations of the church and send them to all churches.

Every priest should maintain separate registers for the baptism, marriage, burial etc. conducted by them in the church.

A special fund should be constituted and maintained for the common needs of the church.

It was decided to elect a committee of priests as well as laymen under the chairmanship of the Metropolitan. Thus a committee on democratic administrative setup was established.

It was also decided that all the decisions taken at the synod, be written and submitted to the Patriarch, duly signed and registered by the members present and that a copy should be kept in the office of the Malankara Metropolitan. Accordingly a consent letter recording all the above decisions in detail was submitted to H.H the Patriarch. This is known as 'THE MULAMTHURUTHY PADIYOLA'.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. When was the Mulanthurithy Synod convened?
2. Who presided over the Synod?
3. Name the other people present at the synod.
4. What is meant by 'Mulanthurithy padiyola'?

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**LESSON - 18**

**THE TRUE FAITH OF THE HOLY CHURCH**

**THE HOLY SACRAMENTS I**

To save the human race God has set apart certain invisible rites. The Holy Sacraments are the visible form of these rites. Sacraments are also called 'secrets'. Sacrament means 'which purifies'.

Only the sacraments carried out by the ordained priests in the rightful way as instructed by the holy church gives the blessings. There are seven sacraments in the holy church. Our lord Jesus established all these. All the sacraments were either done by our Lord Jesus Christ, or he made the disciples do it or entrusted it with them. Jesus Christ asked the apostles to carry out **Baptism**. (John 4:1-2, Matthew 28:19). He established the **Holy Qurbana** and asked the disciples to continue the tradition (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23). The Lord gave the Apostles the right to forgive sins (John 20:23) (**Holy Confession**). He appointed them as his Ambassadors (John 20,21,22) (**Priesthood**). When they were sent to spread the gospel, the Apostles used to anoint with the **Holy Mooron**. Marriage is a sacrament established by God.

There are four components in the sacraments namely celebrant, sacramental items, Holy Liturgy and the recipient. The person authorized to carry out the sacrament is the celebrant. It can be a priest or a bishop. Only properly and canonically ordained clergy are authorized to conduct the holy sacraments. God is the actual celebrant and the priests act as his ambassadors.

Sacramental articles are the items used for the sacrament. For the baptism water, saith and Mooron are used. For the Qurbana sour wheat bread (Ammera) and lightly mixed wine are the articles. For mooron koodasha saith and varieties of perfumes are used. When the priest does the anointing mooron is used. When sick people are anointed purified saith is used. There is nothing used as an article in confession. In the sacrament of marriage ring and chain can be considered as the articles.

To carry out the sacraments the church has decided on special prayers and rituals. This is known as liturgy. There are liturgies for each sacrament. The one for the holy Qurbana is known as the Qurbana Taksa (Anaphora). Different Taksas are known by the name of the holy fathers who organized it.

**Examples**

1-Taksa of St. James

2-Taksa of Dionysus Mor Sleebi

3-Taksa of Ivanios with the golden tongue.

The church has many such Taksas and they are considered as precious and invaluable assets of the church, especially the Taksa of St. James. His is the most ancient most beautiful and is a model for other Taksas. The faithful who receives the sacraments with full physical and mental preparation and devotion is the recipient. The faithful who receive the sacraments get divine grace. It is God who gives the heavenly grace, not the human celebrant. It is the wish of God that through a human celebrant the sacraments are done (1 Corinthians 4:1). The celebrant who is the priest is a servant of Jesus Christ and is appointed as keeper of God's secrets. We, the recipients receive the grace not because of our greatness or superiority, but because of His mercy.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, resurrection and his continued mediation for humanity has enabled us to receive the abundant grace. When the faithful receive the sacraments God is not bound to bless him with his grace, but he becomes eligible for the grace through Jesus Christ. Thus with each sacrament we receive the good blessings which are divine and not confined to any earthly dimensions. The attitude of the recipient does not alter the blessings of the sacraments. Whether the recipient believes or not sacraments give blessings but the recipient should have faith and do the necessary preparations. Disbelief and poor mental and physical preparations are hindrances to receive blessings and prevent contact with God who gives the blessings. The personal purity and qualifications of the priest does not affect the quality of the sacraments. As long as the



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priest is not disqualified by the Metropolitan or synod his personal life will not affect the result of the sacraments. Since a priest is rightly ordained and the sacraments are done in the name of Jesus Christ, and since the result of the sacrament does not depend on the personality of the priest, the one who participates in it with good intentions and true faith will get good result and if the priest has not done it with purity he will get the due punishment from the Lord (Matthew 7:22-23). A disqualified priest is not authorized to do any sacrament and if he does, a true faithful should not participate in it. With baptism one is born again, accepts Jesus, and gets justification. Anointing with Oil gives the gift and strength of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Communion we become one with the blood and body of Christ. Since Christ will live in us and we in Him we will get the gift of eternal life. In priesthood the authority to carry out the sacraments are vested on the priest. In holy matrimony the consent and blessing to lead a family life based on Christian love, purity and co-operation is given. Anointing the sick helps in recovery, forgiveness of sins and mental strength. Confession gives forgiveness of sins and the ability to resist sins.

**Questions**

- 1) What is the meaning of sacrament? How many sacraments are there in the church? What are they?
- 2) Prove that the sacraments of the church were either established by Jesus Christ or entrusted to the Apostles by Him.
- 3) What are the four components of the sacraments? Explain them.
- 4) Qualifications of the priest or the attitude of the recipient does not alter the result of the sacrament. Why?
- 5) What are the blessings received due to the different sacraments?

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**Lesson 19**

**THE HOLY SACRAMENTS**

The Holy Qurbana is the sacrament which gives completeness to all other sacraments. So the Holy Qurbana is called 'The Queen of all Sacraments'. Through the Holy Qurbana we receive not only grace but also Jesus Christ, who gives the blessings.

The invisible but powerful presence of God is felt in all the sacraments. Different sacraments have different purposes. For salvation one has to take five sacraments. They are (1) Holy Baptism (2) Holy Qurbana (3) Holy Mooron (4) Holy Confession and (5) Anointing of the Sick. The sacrament of priesthood is only for those who are dedicated for it and the sacrament of matrimony is only for those who decide to go for a family life. For a man and woman to live together without getting married is sin. Except baptism, only the faithful should take all the other sacraments.

Baptism, Holy Mooron and priesthood are taken only once in a lifetime and cannot be repeated. They put the permanent mark of spiritual blessing on the person taking it. It can never be erased. In the Nicene Creed we say, "There is baptism only once for the deliverance of sins". If a person who has received the baptism and Mooron breaks away from the church and later decides to come back, baptism is not repeated. If he repents and confesses, with the permission of the Bishop he is taken back to the church. Likewise if a person who is baptized from another church with the right ordination wants to join our church, he will have to denounce his heretic life, accept the true faith, and be anointed with Mooron. He will have to do the confession and take the Holy Communion. But a person baptized earlier by unordained persons is equal to a nonbeliever and so will have to be baptized, anointed with Mooron, do confession and have Qurbana, then only he can become member of the church.

Sacraments are divided into two types, one 'for the living', and another 'for the dead'. Here death does not refer to the physical death but to spiritual death. Any person born of human parents is born with sin and is dead spiritually at birth. When baptized, he is born again in Spirit and is filled with new life. Such a person can fall into sin in earthly life. When he commits sins he dies spiritually. He can live again spiritually by confession and having Holy Qurbana. So the sacraments that give life to the spiritually dead are called 'sacraments for the dead'. They are baptism and confession.

For those born again in Christ, everlasting life is given abundantly by the other sacraments namely Holy Mooron, Holy Qurbana, priesthood, marriage and anointing of the sick. So the above five sacraments are called 'sacraments of the living'. To have a steady relationship with Jesus Christ, one must receive Qurbana again and again. Also to lead a pure life, confession has to be repeated. Sick can be anointed repeatedly if needed. If husband or wife dies, the remaining person can have the sacrament of marriage again.

The sacraments are again divided into two kinds: 'Recipient Sacraments' and 'Dedication Sacraments'. All the seven sacraments are recipient sacraments. There has to be a recipient for these. Mooron koodasha and priesthood are dedication sacraments also. Dedication sacrament is done only by the Patriarch or the Metropolitan. When the Mooron is anointed on somebody, that becomes a recipient sacrament. When the Metropolitan ordains a priest it is a recipient sacrament as priest is the recipient and it is a dedication sacrament because the priest gets the permanent blessed authority to conduct the sacraments.

Apart from these, the sacraments done only by a bishop like consecration of a church, tabalitha (alter) koodasha, blessing of the saith for baptism and anointing the sick are dedication sacraments.

A sacrament will not give grace just because the proper liturgy was followed. There are conditions to be fulfilled to make it blessed. If the conditions are not met, a person receiving the sacraments will not be blessed and the sacraments will make no difference to his life.

The conditions are as follows:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ must have established the sacrament.

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2. The correct objects used and the liturgy established by the church followed.
3. Except baptism all the other sacraments are allowed only for the members of the church.
4. The celebrant should have the proper apostolic ordination.

**Questions.**

1. Which are the sacraments to be taken for salvation?
2. Which are the sacraments for the dead and which are the ones for the living? Why are they called so?
3. Which are the sacraments to be taken once only and why? Which are the ones to be taken repeatedly and why?
4. Which are the recipient sacraments and which are the dedication sacraments? What is the special feature of the dedication sacrament?
5. What are the conditions to be fulfilled so that a sacrament gives grace?

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**Lesson 20**

**THE HOLY CHURCH**

With Christ as the cornerstone and Apostles and Prophets as foundation, the growing spiritual society of people who believe in Jesus, baptized and have the new life, is called the holy church.

Living cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4) foundation (Ephesians 2:20), "you also, like living stones, are built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4, Ephesians 2:21). Those who died with faith and hope in Christ are also included in the church. Though the earthly body is not there, they continue to live in Christ (Philippians 1: 21; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 20:38). From Adam onwards those who were awaiting his arrival and those who believed in his redemption are included in the church. It is written in Hebrews 12:1, "Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses". The faithful and righteous described in Hebrews chapter 11 are these witnesses. They are alive in Christ and are around us. "In his spiritual existence he went and preached to the imprisoned Spirits" (1 Peter 3: 19). "That is why the Good News was preached also to the dead" (1 Peter 4:6). So we have to accept the biblical truth that Christ himself preached the Good News about hope and salvation to those who died before Him and gave them an opportunity to repent and that they have become part of the church and are in contact with us through Jesus Christ.

So the church of Christ constitutes the fellowship of the living visible people who are born again in Christ through baptism, got the new life through the holy communion and continue to grow stronger by the grace of the holy sacraments, who long for the eternal life, carrying out the mission of incarnation of Jesus Christ, and those of the invisible people who lived in faith, waited for the arrival of Christ since the beginning of the world and departed with hope (John 8:56).

The holy church can be divided into Old Testament church and New Testament church. The church in Israel, which followed the laws of Moses, was just a shadow of the real Christian church. The limited aim of the Old Testament church was completed with the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Old Testament church was to make the ground ready for incarnation. All the prophecies about incarnation were given to the Old Testament church. With the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the divine relationship of man with God, which was lost due to man's sins, was regained. The New Testament church, which includes all the generations from Adam, was thus established. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were in effect up to the time of John the Baptist" (Luke 16:16).

When Christ was crucified, the laws were fulfilled. His sacrifice was for all the generations of people. Till the end of the world we have to participate in this sacrifice. With the sacrament of the Holy Qurbana, according to the law of Jesus, His life giving blood and body is divided and given to people. As described in Revelations chapter 4, worship is carried out in the church. Like the angels, members of the church say, "The Lord God is holy holy holy". They continuously sing and praise the Lord saying 'Halleluiah' and kneel down and worship him. The gospel is glorified in the church. The holy sacraments are given to the church members so that they continue to grow in Spirit. So the church is the kingdom of God.

**Holy Church - The living Spiritual Monument**

"On this rock foundation I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). From these words of Jesus, St.Peter and St.Paul were encouraged to call the church a 'Spiritual monument'. St. Paul teaches that through Jesus Christ the living stone, we also will be living stones to build the living Spiritual monument. Holy church is the place where spiritual sacrifices are offered to the Lord. These sacrifices are through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5). This monument is not built with ordinary stones but with each believer being the stones of the monument. We have to become one with Jesus, attain life, become living stones and build the monument. This is possible only when we believe in him and take the holy communion of his blood and body (John 3:36, 6:47, and 6:53-54)

The rock on which Jesus wanted to build his church is the true faith, which Apostle Peter proclaimed. This truth was revealed to Simon whom Jesus calls him by the name Peter, meaning rock (Matthew 16:17). In Ephesians 2:20 St.Paul teaches that church has Jesus as the corner stone and Apostles and Prophets as the foundation.

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This monument continues to grow in Jesus. For God to live in us, we are also joined to this church spiritually (Ephesians 2:21, 22). So church is the living spiritual monument where God dwells.

From the above description the facts to remember are:

1. Jesus is the corner stone of the monument called church.
2. Apostles form the foundation.
3. This house continues to grow.
4. This house is one with Jesus.
5. Spiritual sacrifice that is pleasing to God takes place in this house.

Jesus and Apostles gave the above picturesque description of the church to us so that no doubt remains in our minds about the apostolic foundation of the church. Only the church with Jesus as the cornerstone and Apostles as foundation is the true church of Christ. Any person, however great he is, gathers a group of people according to his wishes and interpretations, it will not become the true church.

Jesus Christ teaches about the church as, "I am the vine and you are the branches", (John 15). We the branches have to join with Jesus the main vine. If we break away from Jesus we will lose life and will die like the branch that withers if cut off from the main tree. So the church is like a vine plant with Jesus as the main vine and we the branches, drawing life from him.

**Questions**

1. What are the definitions of the church?
2. Quote from the bible and prove that the faithful dead are also spiritually one with the church.
3. The church is the kingdom of God. Why?
4. Name the Apostles who described the church as a holy building. What can be understood from the description?

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**Lesson 21**

**THE HOLY CHURCH (cont.)**

**The holy church-Body of Jesus**

Apostle Paul repeatedly teaches in his epistles that the church is the body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 27, Ephesians 1: 23, 3:6, Colossians 1: 18, 24). Christ is the head and church is the body of Christ. Church, the body, fulfills the wish of the head, which is Christ.

The body has different organs. Different organs have different functions. Each part carries out its functions as instructed by the head. All the organs work in coordination. One organ cannot do the function of the other. All the organs together constitute the body. The body is totally submissive to the head. So church, the body should be totally submissive to Christ the head. Like the body having different parts, people in the church have different kinds of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 4-31). Each one has to work according to the gifts given to him (1 Corinthians 12: 27-30) and serves the same Lord (1 Corinthians 12: 5). Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished (Colossians 2:19). Like the body obeying the head, all the activities in the church should be according to the wishes of Christ.

**Holy church - Bride of Jesus**

The happiness that a bride and bridegroom share together cannot be compared to anything else. Fulfilment of life is seen in marriage. In the same way, completeness of church lies in the relationship of Christ as the groom and church as the bride. Christ the groom loves his bride, looks after her, and gave his life for her (Ephesians 5:29). Bride of the Lamb mentioned in Revelations 19: 7 is the church. The linen she wears is the good deeds of God's people. The groom mentioned in the parable of the ten young women in Matthew chapter 25 is Jesus himself. Coming of the groom is the second coming of Jesus. Some will be lazy thinking that his coming will be delayed. He will come at an unexpected moment and will feast with his bride, the holy church. The second coming of Jesus will be to take his bride, the church along with him to the heavenly kingdom.

**Promises and responsibilities given by Christ to the church**

Jesus Christ chose twelve disciples with special missions (Mark 3: 14-15; Luke 6:13) .He wanted them to be with him, preach the gospel and gave them the authority to drive out demons. To live in Jesus and carry out his mission is what the living church has to do. Fulfilling the Old Testament and starting the New Testament the Apostles who were with Jesus can be called the beginning of the church. The promises given to them and the missions entrusted to them are the same as to those given to the Church.

1. He promised them the gift of Holy Spirit (John 15:26, 16:7) Holy Spirit was given to the church when it prayed together with the Apostles (Acts 1: 4, 2:4). Through the sacraments, gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the church.
2. He gave them the hope that He will come again (John 14:18, Acts 1: 11). The church is waiting for his second coming.
3. He promised them that he would be with them till the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). It was to the church that he promised his everlasting presence.
4. Body and blood of Christ that are the symbols of ever lasting life, were entrusted to the church.
5. He gave the authority to baptize in the name of the Trinity and to take care of the growth of the church (Matthew 28:19)
6. Authority to forgive sins was given (John 20:23)

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7. The mission for which God the Father sent him, the same mission was handed over to the church (John 20:21). Incarnation took place to deliver humanity from sins and to make them God's children again (Colossians 1:14, Galatians 3:26). Forgiveness of sins and acceptance of the Son are done through the church.

8. They were ordered to witness for Jesus Christ (John 15:27).

The main goals of the church are (1) Spread the good news about Jesus to all nations of the world, (2) talk about repentance and forgiveness of sins and (3) become witnesses for Jesus Christ. The Gospel message should be spread and witnessing of Jesus should be done by the way we live. The holy church means each and every member of the church. Christian means one who follows Christ or one who witnesses Christ. It is not the name of a caste. On the other hand, it's a state of existence where one is made new in Jesus Christ and shows it to the whole world by the way he lives.

If the church has all good qualities but has no Gospel work and witnessing, even if it is the true church it will be equivalent to the fig tree, which is healthy but doesn't bear fruit (Matthew 21:18, 19).

**QUESTIONS:**

1. The church is compared to the body of Jesus. Why?
2. How does Christ care for his bride?
3. What are the promises and responsibilities given by Christ to the church?
4. What is the main mission of the church?

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**Lesson 22**

**THE HOLY CHURCH**

**SIGNS OF THE HOLY CHURCH**

We believe in 1) The one 2) Holy 3) Catholic 4) Apostolic church (Nicene creed). The above mentioned are the 4 fundamental characteristics of the church of Christ. If any character is missing it is not a true church.

**1. The One**

The Church of Christ is only one. "Because there is the one loaf of bread, all of us, though many are one body, for we all share the same loaf." (1 Corinthians 10:17)

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all people who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

So the church of Christ is only one. Though known by different names in different countries, the church with one hope and one faith and Christ as the head is the true church.

As agreed at the ecumenical councils, the one church that is spread all over the world was divided under the 4 Patriarch thrones for administrative purposes. They are Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople. But, with royal influence when some factions tried for full authority and control of the church, divisions occurred. Though names differ, if in tradition and faith there is unity, it is the same church. The Apostles never had different churches. Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation and no other foundation can be laid as written in 1 Corinthians 3:11. When different factions came up, we see St. Paul reprimanding them in 1 Corinthians 3:4-7. We have to stand steadfast behind the Patriarch decided by the councils.

"You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and must not allow yourselves to be shaken" (Colossians 1: 23).

With Christ as the head and H.H.Patriarch of Antioch as the visible leader, holding on to the true faith, surviving innumerable tortures, all spiritual gifts are available from the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. For reasons like wealth or greed or misunderstanding if anybody breaks away from the church he will become alien to the one true church.

Churches of Antioch, Alexandria, Armenia, Ethiopia and the branch churches, which come under them, follow the same tradition of sacraments and faith.

**2. Catholic**

H.H. Ignatius Noorono, Patriarch of Antioch (A.D.110) used the adjective 'catholic' for the church .He wrote that, "wherever Messiah is there, the catholic church is there". He explains that the word 'catholic' denotes the true church, which accepts the authority of the Episcopas and spreads the truth all over the world. The Greek meaning of catholic is 'complete' or 'including everything'. In practical terms it means universal.

The Holy church is catholic. The Catholic Church speaks the whole truth to the whole world. It does not delete or hide anything about incarnation. It does not misinterpret or twist facts. It does not add anything of its own. Catholic Church does not belong to any nation, community, society, colour, caste or group. Old Testament church was for the Hebrews only. The New Testament church of Christ includes people of all nations. All countries might not have the church in them but that does not make it less catholic. Though on the day of Pentecost the church was contained to Jerusalem only still it was completely catholic (H.H.Patriarch Aprem I)



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Mar Koorilose of Jerusalem writes five points describing catholic. They are (1) It is universal (2) Teaches the whole truth (3) It is for all the races of the world (4) Through the holy sacraments it gives grace and body and spiritual well being (5) It is the source of goodness and blessings.

'Catholic' is the fundamental nature of the church founded by Christ. For administrative purposes even if the churches are under different visible heads, all the churches are catholic. All those who are excommunicated from the church lose their unity with the church and lose their status of being catholic. Those who alter the faith or become heretic or deject the true faith also lose their nature of being catholic.

The Syrian orthodox (Jacobite) church has so far stood steadfast in the true faith without altering or adulterating it. In good times and bad times our church has stood loyal behind H.H.Patriarch of Antioch who is the visible head of the church and who is ruling from the throne of St. Peter. It was at the council of Nicea, our church was entrusted to the care of the throne at Antioch. This council was Holy Spirit guided. So the relationship between Antioch and all the East to the throne of Antioch is catholic and our church is exemplarily catholic. Those who break away from this relationship lose their catholic nature.

### **3. Apostolic**

Apostolic inheritance, faith and rightful ordination make the word apostolic suitable for the true church.

Jesus had many followers but he chose twelve Apostles as the builders of the church. It was through the Apostles that the authority for the ordination of priests was given to the church. If we look at the history of our church we can trace the rightful ordination to the Apostles. Even if apostolic inheritance and right ordination are there, if the church doesn't follow the apostolic faith, it will not be an apostolic church. In the same way even if apostolic faith is there but rightful ordination is lost, that church is not apostolic.

The Syrian Orthodox Jacobite church under the throne of St. Peter in Antioch has carried on the right ordination. It has kept the faith pure, follows and spreads the message, which Jesus Christ gave his Apostles, carries out the sacraments and ordains priests. So our church is apostolic. If anybody breaks away from the throne, which is the apostolic source for ordination, they lose their identity of being apostolic. For apostolic nature to be complete apostolic ordination is necessary. Only apostolic nature can bring heavenly grace.

### **4. Holy**

Since the church is the body of Christ, it is holy. Church is the bride of Christ. "He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty – pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection" (Ephesians 5: 26-27) Salvation was achieved through the sinless Christ and working of the holy Spirit is in the church and sacraments are given through the church. So our church is holy.

The church is holy but that does not mean all the church members are holy. Of the twelve disciples Jesus had, one was greedy and a traitor. Understand the parable of the field, which is God's kingdom as written in Matthew 13:24-30. Though good seeds were sown, weeds sown by the enemy also grew along. He did not allow the weeds to be pulled out early, as he was scared that some good plants could be pulled out along with the weeds. So he wanted the wheat and the weeds both to grow together until harvest and then the weeds will be burnt. This does not mean that bad people can be in the church, but conveys the message that on judgement day they will be punished and thrown into the burning eternal fire.

The word 'holy church' urges us to lead a holy life and grow up every way in Christ who is the head (Ephesians 4: 15).

### **Facts to understand**

Being a member of the church and receiving the sacraments will not make anybody eligible for heavenly kingdom. Remember that the weeds also grew along with the wheat plants taking nourishment from the same soil. Pure life, pure thoughts and good deeds should be there. Still leading a pure life alone will not lead anybody to heaven. Nobody is justified by his or her own deeds. A person is put right with God only through faith, not by

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doing what the Law commands as written in Romans 3:28. The believers should join the church (Acts 2:47). The grace of God is in the church. So a person leading a pure life should be member of the church and should receive the sacraments. Then only he will have eternal life. In other words, a person leading a holy life has to be a church member and should be aware that the sacraments give grace, which is necessary for an eternal life.

**QUESTIONS:-**

1. What are the 4 features of the church? Describe each in short paragraphs.
2. Our church is catholic. What was the explanation of Patriarch Mar Aprem I about this?
3. What does the nature apostolic show? Prove that the Syrian Orthodox Jacobite Church is apostolic.

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**Lesson 23**

**FASTING**

In Syriac language, the word for fasting is 'saum'. Restricting food intake or not taking food at all, during lent period one has to live in purity, giving importance to prayer.

God put restrictions on food for Adam (Genesis 2:17). So for spiritual growth, God himself imposed fasting. Great importance is given to fasting in both New and Old Testaments. Moses fasted for 40 days and forty nights (Exodus 34:28) David fasted for his child (2 Samuel 12:16) Prophet Elijah fasted for 40 days (1 Kings 19:8) In the Old Testament there are examples when people were fasting to avert God's wrath and also as penance. We have learnt about the story of people of Nineveh-about the judgement passed on them and how God forgave them when they regretted and fasted. Our Lord fasted for forty days (Matthew 4:2) Jesus taught us that only with fasting and prayer we can overcome Satan. Apostles also used to fast and pray. (Acts13: 2). Fasting is a practice which Jesus himself followed and entrusted to us. The church has been following it from early days.

The church has decided on five types of fasting. (1) Nineveh lent or 3 days lent (2) Big lent or 40 days lent (3) Sleeha lent for 3 days (4) Shunoyo lent for 5 days (5) Eldo lent for 10 days.

Nineveh lent is in remembrance of how the people in Nineveh were saved from God's wrath by feasting and penance. When the whale swallowed prophet Jonah he was fasting and praying for three days inside the whale. Jonah had committed sin by disobeying God's order and running away, but his sins were forgiven by his fasting and prayer. In the same way, the people of Nineveh listened to Jonah, regretted their sins and sitting in ashes fasted and prayed to God. God forgave them. This shows that a sinner is not without hope and God will forgive those who truly regret their sins, fast and pray. This 3 days lent teaches us the greatness of regretting sins and fasting.

40 days lent is in remembrance of the incident where our Lord Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days and had victory over Satan. Fasting is the weapon to fight Satan, the tempter. The desire for wealth, good food, power and position, all lead us into sins. We have learnt how our Lord overcame all these temptations. It is through fasting and prayer that we can overcome these bodily desires and attain purity. Like our Lord did, we also gain strength by fasting for forty days. The Passion Week following the forty days is also for fasting. So the forty days of fasting is really completed in 48 days and is commonly known as the fifty days lent.

Sleeha lent is in memory of the Apostles who built the church. It is for three days and finishes on June 29<sup>th</sup> with celebrations for the feast of Apostles Peter and Paul.

Shunoyo lent is to show respect for St.Mary. It is for five days and finishes on August15<sup>th</sup> to coincide with Shunoyo perunnal (Day when St.Mary completed life on earth and was taken into heaven).

Eldo lent is in preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is for 10 days. All the five Lents are to be carried with restrictions on food and with prayer. The foods forbidden during lent period by the church should not be consumed. During 3 days lent, big lent and passion week there are special prayers seven times a day. They are prayers of penance.

These prayers should be said with real regret for sins. Confession should be done. When the lent finishes we will find ourselves stronger in Spirit.

Apart from these, all Wednesdays and Fridays are also fasting days. But the church has exempted Wednesdays and Fridays which come between resurrection and Pentecost from fasting. Lent is according to the bible and is a rule of the church. One who does not observe lent is committing sin. Excess desire for food and no control over bodily desires are sins. They will make us physically sick also. So lent is meant for the physical and mental well being of the church members.

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Of the seven rules of the church three are about lent. Following are the rules of the church.

1. Must participate in Qurbana on Sundays and other Maranaya days.
2. All the Lents decided by the church should be followed.
3. Wednesdays and Fridays are lent days.
4. Confess sins before the priest.
5. Have Holy Communion regularly.
6. During lent and on Sundays married people should refrain from contact.
7. Offerings, risisas and one tenth of income should be given to the church.

**Questions**

1. Prove that observing lent is biblical.
2. Which are the Lents of the church? Include Wednesdays and Fridays also.
3. Three days lent is that of penance. Why?
4. Forty days lent is for gaining strength and victory. Why?
5. What are the common things to be followed in lent?
6. What are the seven rules of the church?

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**Lesson 24**

**MARANAYA FEASTS-Continuation**

A. Though not directly related to the public ministry of Jesus Christ, church has decided that the following Lents should be carried out as equal to maranaya feasts.

**1. Shunoyo- feast of the Mother Mary on August 15.**



The memory of Mother Mary's end of earthly life is Shunoyo feast. Son, who is in essence one with the Father, came down from heaven. He took human form inside her and was born as a baby. Mary who was the humblest of all was raised to the position of God's Mother

When Mother Mary died, the news reached all the Apostles in various parts of the world by the working of the Holy Spirit. They all gathered together in Jerusalem. Jesus Christ came with his angels and carried her body to heaven as witnessed by the holy fathers.

Feast of mother Mary starts with the lent for five days. This lent is known as Shunoyo lent. The day lent finishes is the feast. That day one should participate in the Qurbana, stay away from ordinary activities and spend time in good deeds.

**2. Memory of Apostles Peter and Paul on June 29.**

St. Peter is the head of the Apostles. St. Paul worked hard to spread the gospel. June 29<sup>th</sup> is to remember their martyrdom. The next day June 30<sup>th</sup> is the remembrance day of all the 12 Apostles. In respect of the Apostles who are the architects of the church, sleeha lent is carried out and the feast is on June 29. Jesus Christ chose them, called them Apostles and gave them the authority to permit and prohibit on earth and heaven. He sent them to spread the gospel all over the world. He gave them the gift of healing and the authority to cast out demons. During His public ministry, Peter was one of the three Apostles chosen by Jesus to stand beside him on special occasions. He gave the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to Peter and asked him to look after his sheep and to keep them in the true faith (Matthew 16: 18-19, Luke 22: 32, John 21: 15-17). St. Peter established his throne in Antioch in AD 37 and ordained his successor. Then he went to Rome and during the rule of Emperor Nero was crucified and martyred. As wished by him he was crucified upside down as he wanted to die kissing the feet of Jesus.

Saul, later known as St. Paul was in the forefront to torture the Christians in the beginning. On his way to Damascus to torture Christians, Jesus Christ revealed himself to him at the gate of Damascus. He repented and later nurtured the church. He worked hard and underwent lot of hardships to spread the gospel. He was imprisoned in Jerusalem, taken to Rome, and was beheaded during the time of Emperor Nero. Known as the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul is given equal importance as St. Peter. It is believed that Peter and Paul were martyred on the same day.

**3. Dukrono-Remembrance day of Apostle Thomas on July 3.**

It was St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus who came to India and spread the gospel here. In India, the memory of St. Thomas, who told us the message of new life, martyred and buried here is equal to Maranaya feasts. He is our patron saint.

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St. Thomas reached Kerala in AD 52, preached the gospel and made many families Christians. While preaching in Madras, enemies attacked him, pierced and injured him on 18<sup>th</sup> December and he died a martyr on 21<sup>st</sup> December. He was buried in Mylapore. In AD 396 his grave was opened and the blessed mortal remains were taken to a town called Ureha (Edessa) in Syria and buried in the church built in his name. Remembrance of this is Dukrona feast. Memory of his being pierced with spear and death is held from December 18-21.

**B Feasts celebrated like Maranaya feasts**

**1. 40<sup>th</sup> Friday**

During the big lent, the Friday which comes after 40 days of lent is known as the 40<sup>th</sup> Friday. It makes us remember how our Lord was fasting for 40 days and defeated the temptations of Satan. Equal to man in everything except sin, Jesus Christ showed us how to fight and win over human temptations with weapons like bible verses, fasting and prayer. We are indebted to participate in the Holy Qurbana that day.

**2. Holy Saturday**

This is the Saturday that follows Good Friday. We believe that on this day Jesus went to hell and spread the gospel to all the dead and buried since Adam (1 Peter 3: 18-19, 4:5). So it is known as Holy Saturday. Since it is a day of fasting, our tradition is to conduct Qurbana at the noontime. Since it is the remembrance of the Lords preaching to the dead, we also remember our beloved dead in Qurbana that day.

**4. Half lent**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday that comes after the big lent starts is the day of half lent. That day there will be Qurbana and liturgy for celebration of the cross in the middle of the Qurbana. The cross will be placed in the middle of the church in the stand called 'Mnortho'. This is to remind us that like Moses kept the brass snake high up on a pole in the middle of the camp, God's son also will be crucified on a raised pole. This same sleeba is used in all the celebrations till the resurrection of Christ. To save us from death due to sin, we have to look up to Jesus. It is to remind us this fact, that the sleeba is kept in the middle of the church on half lent day.

**C. Other feasts**

The church has instructed that the faithful have to celebrate other feasts. Most of them are in memory of saints. Since these are blessed days, one should participate in the Holy Qurbana that day.

**1. Feast to remember the beheading of John the Baptist- (Pukazchaperunnal)**

Remembrance Day of the beheading of John the Baptist is on August 29. January 7<sup>th</sup> is his 'Pukazchaperunnal'. Both are celebrated together on January 7<sup>th</sup>. John the Baptist is the messenger of Jesus. He came with the Spirit of Elijah to open the way for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ witnesses about the Baptist, as "John is greater than anybody who has ever lived". John baptized Jesus and heard the witnessing of God the father about his Son. The mystery of Trinity was also revealed in front of John the Baptist. In Galilee John was put in jail for criticizing Herod Antipas who married his brother's wife. He was beheaded later (Matthew 1: 21-12)

**2. Feasts of Mother Mary**

Apart from Shunoyo feast, January 15<sup>th</sup> is feast of intercession by Mother Mary for seeds and May 15<sup>th</sup> for sheaves. After fasting for 8 days, September 8 is celebrated in many churches as the birthday feast of Mother Mary. December 26 is her pukazchaperunnal.

**3. The Wednesday when the 'three days lent' finishes is celebrated in memory of Prophet Jonah.**

**4. 'Koodash-eitho'** Sunday is the starting of the year for the church. If Sunday comes on October 30 or 31, or the first Sunday in November is celebrated as Koodash-eitho" and the following Sunday as 'Hudas-eitho'. Koodash-eitho" means purification in church and Hudash-eitho' means re-consecration of the church. We are the

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church. So these are the days we have to make ourselves pure for Christ and reconfirm our affinity towards him. The following Sundays are for the preparation to celebrate the feast of his birth.

Of the two Sundays in between 'three day lent' and the 'big lent', the first one is known as 'Kohneh Sunday' and the next one "Anide Sunday'. On Kohneh Sunday all the priests who served at the madbaha and later died in Jesus are remembered and on Anide Sunday all the faithful who died in Jesus are remembered and special prayers said for them.

On April 23 or on the days preceding or following, the memory of St.George is celebrated in many churches with great reverence. The Saturday before Palm Sunday is known as Lazarus Saturday. That day we remember how Lazarus of Bethany was dead and buried for four days and Jesus brought him back to life.

February 22nd is to remember that St.Peter, head of the Apostles, established his throne in Antioch in AD 37. This is the 'throne of Antioch' day. June 19<sup>th</sup> is the memorial day of James, called brother of Jesus and first Episcopa of Jerusalem He celebrated the first Holy Qurbana and the first Qurbana liturgy is known as 'St. James' Taksa'. ( Mar Yacob in Malayalam)

July 18<sup>th</sup> is for the memory of Mar Kuriakose Sahada who was martyred in childhood and of his mother morth ulithi who was also martyred.

**Questions**

1. What do the holy fathers teach us about the death of Mother Mary?
2. What are the special things about St. Peter and St. Paul?
3. To which incident is the Dukrono feast of St. Thomas related to? Why is Dukrono feast maranaya for India?
4. What are the feasts celebrated as Maranaya? Write the importance of each.

