

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
CLASS 9**

Lesson - 2

EZEKIEL

Aim: - To understand clearly that God is the source of life.

Prophet Ezekiel lived and worked among the captives during the Babylonian captivity period in the sixth century. B.C. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and took the people as slaves to Babylon in 597. B.C.; Ezekiel was one among them. When Babylon again invaded Judah and destroyed it the slavery was complete there. Jeremiah had foretold the people that the captivity would extend to seventy years and they should be prepared for it. (Jer 29.01.14) Some Jews considered the fall of Jerusalem as Yahweh's weakness and defeat. They were drawn to the Babylonian religious rites and ceremonies. But other sets of Jews, being steadfast in Yahweh, began to return to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices. The Jewish elders were worshipping Yahweh under the leadership of Ezekiel. It was urgent to bring back to the right faith those captives who parted from their native original faith and were immersed in other religious rites, worshipping idols and going the wrong way heeding the advice of false prophets. It is in this background we have to understand the message of prophet Ezekiel. During the long period of captivity the prophet prepared the people and encouraged them to be faithful to Yahweh.

Ezekiel the son of Buzi in the lineage of priest Sadok was a priest and a prophet. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and had the prophetic call while living in Babylon. As priest, prophet (1.3), shepherd, guard (3.17), philosopher, visionary, he shined among the captives. The word Ezekiel means 'God's strength, God be powerful'. In his book he pictures visions, experiences and details worship with emphasis. The 22 years from 593 to 571 B.C is considered as the period of his prophecy. He prophesied during the time of King Jehojachin. It is said he was sitting on the banks of river Chebar in Babylon (1.1). The prophets gave more importance to righteousness and morality than worship in their prophecy. They protested against the hollowness of worshipful life neglecting righteousness. What makes him different from other prophets is that Ezekiel combines in his message the two traditions - that of priest and that of prophet.

In the rebelling Israel (17.12) he prophesied about their destruction and to those who repented (18.30) and obeyed the hope of salvation. He informed them of the reconstruction of Jerusalem, Yahweh's city and the Temple, His house and about the importance of worship and the Law. (41.45). He informed the people that God resists and hates sins like infidelity, uncleanness, immorality, idol worship shedding of blood and that the sinning soul shall die (18.4). He declared that the righteous who hate sin will certainly live (18.9) God anticipates the cleansing of his children who had to suffer captivity caused by their sins. On the completion of the cleansing period the Lord gives them a new heart and soul, renews his covenant, redeems them for atonement and will take them to the right place.

God, the Lord of history, used this chosen people to promote His will. We have to know God through the historical happening that the Lord chose Babylon to punish Israel.

The prophet's message gave stress to the individual. The importance of personal living and personal religious commitment was stressed. Like Jeremiah Ezekiel too opposed the saying 'the fathers eating green grapes, the children had sour teeth (18.2, Jer. 31.29). Each one is responsible for his own iniquity and must bear the punishment, he prophesied. Over and above social sins and responsibility, his teaching emphasized on personal righteous living, thereby anchoring people's faith in God's justice. The prophet gave importance to the relationship between God and man. Those who rebel against God deserve punishment. No use of intercession for them. Through repentance alone shall God receive them. The prophet exhorted the people to be prepared to live receiving a new heart and soul.

He had the right conviction that God is the creator and man a creation. That is why the term 'Son of man' is often seen in his message. This indicates Lord Jesus Christ. It is mentioned 87 times. He taught that the source of life is God also. The lifeless matter, when God breathed into it, became a living soul (Gen: 2.7). The basis of life is God's relation. To show that God is the source of life, he describes three visions: - (1) dry bones coming to life (37. 1-14) (2) the river starting from the House of God (47. 1-12) (3) the city to be (48. 30-35). All this is to show that God is so powerful as to pour new life into those in captivity.

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The prophet expressed the hope for the reconstruction of Jerusalem city and the temple. The prophet taught that the temple and religious rites are necessary to maintain active relationship with God. Righteousness and morality are the fruits of that relationship. The prophet's instructions and teachings about the temple standing toward the East, (47.1) the importance of the East, the arrangements in it and the worship shows the priestly consciousness in the prophet. The prophet pointed out the authority of Law, the Dominance of purity and glory and the importance of righteousness and morality. He began the prophecy with a warning to the people about the punishment for being away from God. He ends with the description of a society that had a renewal with spirit and power of God and were saved; a people that submitted themselves to God and were living in happiness and joy.

The prophet had a high vision of God. He gave more importance to God's greatness (1.28), this power (1.4) and his purity; His love too is stated. He had a deep sense of God's creative power. The prophet saw a God that interfered with history and had control over it (18.14, 25-32) God demands worship and righteousness equally. He knew God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness, greatness, glory and lordship. Thus he realized the combined divine visions of a priest and a prophet. Ezekiel fulfilled his mission by doing full justice to the priestly and prophetic righteousness.

Memory Verse:

Ezekiel 34:16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Moral: The one who bears till the end will be saved.

Questions

1. What is the background of Ezekiel prophecy?
2. What are his main prophecies?
3. Which visions show that God is the source of life?
4. What term issued by Ezekiel to refer to Jesus Christ.

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LESSON 3

HAGGAI

Aim: - To create interest in matters regarding the Lord's House.

In the year 536 B.C. when Cyrus the King of Persia conquered Babylon, it became a part of the Persian Empire. Then Palestine too was merged in that empire. Then Palestine too was merged in that empire. Cyrus permitted the Jews in captivity to return to their native land. He entrusted Palestine to Zerubbabel. Under his leadership and that of Joshua, the priest, they lived. By their return, the diligence to build the temple of God and worship there disappeared. Instead their effort was to build good houses for themselves. But there was drought, famine, crop failure and economic depression in the land. Even by hard labour daily existence was difficult. In the circumstance people had to be encouraged to build the temple. This is the background of the prophecy.

Haggai was the one called for giving the message among those who came back from captivity. All the Minor Prophets depicted many parts of their prophecies in verse form. Haggai alone is different; his prophecy is entirely in prose. The essence of this prophecy can be condensed in one sentence 'But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you'. (Matt. 6.33) The prophet encouraged the people to rebuild the temple. He lived during the reign of the Persian King Darius. The period of his work was from 522 to 486 B.C. The word Haggai 'means' my festival. The book of Haggai contains mainly 4 prophecies.

(1) He informed that neglecting the temple was the cause of Israel's afflictions and miseries and that only by completing the reconstruction of the temple of God, they would get His blessings. The prophet's word was honoured. Zerubbabel, the priest Jeshua and the people were enlightened and they rose to the occasion and began the reconstruction of the House of the Lord. (Hagg 1; 1-15).

(2) Yahweh will give greater glory to the new temple than the old and all tribes will come into it (2.7-9) Haggai said to those who had doubts about the beauty of the construction and exhorted them to complete the work.

(3) The prophet said about the spread of uncleanness also. He revealed that the holy will become the unclean if the latter mix with the former. People thought that worship will make them holy. But the prophet told them that their iniquity will make them filthy and they will need work purification. The whole earth is unclean by the uncleanness of the priests so it does not produce fruit. God's blessings will be received from the day the work of the temple began (2. 10-19). The major wrong is they do not repent, he said.

(4) Another prophecy was a special message to Zerubbabel, "God will choose Zerubbabel and fulfill the redeeming works through him and his tribe (2.20 - 23) it is found as a concordance in the book of Revelation.

Four times it is said in this prophecy that the tribes will be stirred. In the present times we see national revolutions all over the globe. It is at that time all eyes rise to Messiah the lord of justice and peace. As we hope, the lord of peace will come. But we don't know the time. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of lords. It is the God who wants more importance to be given to the House of God, worship and service to God that the prophet has introduced in this book.

QUESTIONS:-

1. What is special about Haggai's prophecy among the small prophecies?
2. What is the essence of this prophecy?
3. What is the Chief instruction Haggai gave to people.
4. How many things are important in this prophecy? What are they?

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Memory Verse.

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

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Lesson - 4

ZECHARIAH

Aim: - To be with hope and courage

The book of Zechariah can be divided into two parts: Chap. 1 to 8 is by Zechariah I - a contemporary of Haggai. The author of Chap. 9 to 14 is called Zechariah II.

Zechariah Part I

Zechariah was a prophet after the captivity period. He and his coworkers were of the same view. He lived during the times of King Darius. The period of his activity was between 521 and 519 B.C. He was the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo. Like Ezekiel and Daniel he too introduced God's message through vision. The 8 visions the prophet had are presented in the form of revelation. They are (1) Soldiers of God (1. 7-17), (2) Workers of God (1. 18-21) (3) Men holding measuring line (2.1) (4) Joshua and Satan (5) Lamp and olive trees (6) flying roll (5.1-4) (7) Ephah (5.4-8) (8) Four chariots (6.1-8). Zechariah means 'God remembered God's remembrance'.

The work of reconstruction of the temple is the main theme. The reason for hurrying up this is that the 'Messianic Age' begins. "In those days God will redeem His people and renew the covenant" (8.8). The prophet informed the message of hope and courage. He said that the Lord will build the temple again and bring back the people from captivity (8.7-8), the temple will be a special place of the Lord's presence (2.10), Zerubbabel will be ordained King and Joshua as priest (6. 9-13) and that peace and plenty will soon there be. The Lord will protect Jerusalem, the true city (2.4 5-8). In 5 years the temple construction was completed - in 516 B.C.

He advised that men should be righteous and merciful, caring for widows, orphans and foreigners, not to think of doing evil to each other but love truth and peace. God is pleased by virtues like truth, peace, righteousness, kindness, justice and mercy. He wanted them to keep truth and morality through fasting (8.19). Reminding them of the punishment for the disobedience of their ancestors, he preached the message of repentance (1.4.6).

The prophet pointed out the necessity of holiness. God will destroy uncleanness and iniquity (5.1-4). He told them about the glory of God they would have through repentance and holiness (3.4-5). It is to remind the priest and people of their iniquity that he had the vision of the priest with filthy clothes (3.3). The prophet's understanding of messengers deserves special attention (1.9-11). He stated that the relation between God and people will last faithfully. All tribes will have their share in the Kingdom of God (8.20-23). The redemption and joy of all men is the aim of Messiah. Thus Zechariah's vision was one that gave great inspiration to the early Church.

Zechariah Part II (9-14)

This prophecy belongs to the time of Greek rule. Chap. 9 to 14 must have been written in the early 2nd century B.C. or the beginning of the 3rd century. The Jews hated the heathens and wished their ruin. People are disgusted with the worldly government and are waiting for the Messianic age (9.9-10). Some consider him 'prophet of Revelation' as the style of literature is similar to that of the Book of Revelation. He was one who had the hope of Messiah and Jewish religious fervour. In the light of history he tried to reveal the Lord's Day.

We see mainly the end of an age, the age of Messiah and his reign, loyalty and right worship. He taught that Yahweh comes to judge the world and destroy evil and save the good. He strongly asserted that He will destroy the shepherds and leaders who are irresponsible to their duties of caring the sheep. "Alas! for the shepherds who abandon their sheep," he cried. (11.15-17) He spoke of Jerusalem's victory as God's glory. The description of a servant of God who suffers beating at a friend's house is proof of the prophet's understanding about the importance of suffering.

The prophet had a clear insight of God. God is unique (14.9), creator (12.1), saviour (9.6), strength giver (13.8) purifier and hope-giver (18.9).

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This is a book that has very much influenced the early Christians. Many usages have been connected with Christ and added to the New Testament. Christ's entry into Jerusalem (9.9-10) (Matt 21.4), Judah's betrayal (11-12) (Matt 26:12-14). They shall look on him whom they have pierced (12:10) (John 19:37) (12-10) beaten at his friend's house (13.6, Luke 12.40); strike the shepherd to scatter the sheep (13.7). These are examples. The foot steps of Yahweh on Mount Olive, the splitting of Olive' Mount etc are things to happen at the glorious appearance of the Messiah as interpreted by some. This is a very valuable book for the Christian church.

Questions

1. Who is the contemporary prophet of Zechariah?
2. How many visions had Zechariah? Which are they?
3. What is the meaning of the word Zechariah?
4. It is the message of hope and courage that the prophet informed. Explain.
5. It is a very valuable book for the Christian church. Make clear with examples.

Memory Verse.

Zechariah 13: 1 "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

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Lesson - 5

Malachi

Aim: To learn that those who blasphemy God will be scorned.

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It contains prophecies after the captivity. Owing to the sufferings people faced after returning from captivity they became doubtful of God's love (3.14-15). The priests moved away from God and polluted the temple (1.7, 8-14), neglected worship, worshipped other gods, wickedness and disbelief increased (3.5); injustice, immorality, exploitations and persecutions grew. Divorce and mixed marriage were common. Malachi's message is against this background. The unity of Jewish tribe, their honour and national awareness are seen brightly in this prophecy.

Malachi is a Hebrew word meaning 'My messenger'. The prophet, with deep national spirit and religious fervour, he must have been a priest. The prophecy was written during the Persian rule. Scholars say it was written between 516 and 515 BC. The prophet adopted the question and answer method. 'You say is repeated seven times. He used this means in order to stress an idea. The prophet's message was about topics like priests, error, divorce, messenger, tithe and coming Messiah.

Raising his voice against blaspheming God and neglecting worship and polluting the temple, he informed that they who dishonour God will be scorned (1.6). When his own people dishonour, the heathens honour God (103). The priests who insulted God shall receive insult.

He censured those who doubted God's love and lose God's love and honour and he informed that God is full of love (1:1-5).

Another prophecy of his was against divorce mixed marriage and worshipping other Gods. People began to divorce their own wife and marry more beautiful women and worship their Gods. The prophet gave the message that it was disloyalty to God and they should pay the penalty for it.

The message about the day of Yahweh was informed 'Yahweh' Day - the Day of Judgment (2.17). Those who departed from God will have fear, despair and punishment. Those who fear God will have hope (4.2) there will be the right worship (3:3-4). He advised them to return to God, give tithe and offerings and receive blessings. (3.7-12) "You bring the whole tithe to the coffer to prepare food in My House" (3.10). The word about tithes deserve attention.

The righteous will be honoured, they will have their reward. Service to God will never be fruitless. They shall be deposits in God, their names will be entered in the book of remembrance; with these words he consoled the people. (3:13-18).

'Prophet Elijah will come from God as a forerunner of the end of this age, an opportunity to repent will be given. All should obey Moses' laws (4.4). God will save those who live in peace with one another (4.5-6), sin will cause downfall to man. God is ready to forgive. So approach God. This is the essence of the prophecy. The prophet has in him the necessary exhortation and quoting contained in the religious, moral, social and economical relations of modern times. Its echo resounds in the gospels. Christ has testified in Matt 11.14 that John is the Elijah according to Malachi's prophecy. Malachi gives the foreknowledge about the Messiah who comes four centuries after and his forerunner John the Baptist. It is considered that Malachi paved the way for the acts of Nehemiah and Ezra.

Malachi has a universal view of God. God is lord of all. God is the creator and father of all (2.10) God is love (1.2) God scorns those who blaspheme Him (2.19), does not accept the worship of those who are aloof (2.10) Gods sends messengers as forerunners to prepare the godly way. (3.1). God gives an opportunity for, repentance (4-, 6). God is judge; he destroys evil and saves the good (4.1-2).

Questions

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1. What is the background of Malachi's prophecy?
2. What is the essence of his prophecies?
3. 'Malachi has a universal view of God' Explain
4. Fill up:-
 1. 'Yahweh's.....day.
 2. Malachi is the Hebrew word for.....

Memory Verse:

Malachi 2.10."Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

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Lesson - 6

JOEL

Aim: God will guard those who rely on Him with all heart

This prophecy was written in the 4th century B.C. There is a hint about the Greek rule (3.6) many think that Joel, son of Pethuel was a priest and prophet. Joel means "Yahweh the God". The prophet took care to draw people to God's presence. The message 'Come back' is the essence of the prophecy.

Locusts, caterpillar, cankerworm work - these destroyed the land and there was severe drought. Poverty and economic depression was experienced. The prophet says about that terrible destruction, "that which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten, that which the locust hath left, hath the canker worm eaten (1.4). The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off for want of wheat and vine (1.9), faced the attack of enemies (1.6)" under the circumstance, this prophecy is to persuade everyone to turn to God.

In Joel's prophecy we can see three stages. People faced crop failure, drought and poverty due to their estrangement from God. Therefore, if all repent and turn to God, He will favour. This was the first message (1.8). He compelled them to repent because Yahweh is great and fearful and the terrible day (2:11) was nearing. The call was responded by all, young and old. The prophet had the notion that priests are bound to offer intercession for the people and for themselves. Such a message was heard by the priests. He informed that God will show mercy by people's repentance and the priests intercession (2:18-17).

Another important point in the prophet's message was the thought about age - ending. He says about Yahweh great and fearful Day. It is hard to bear. It will be the Day of Judgment (2.2-14). God will pour out His spirit that day to all who ask (2.28-32). This happened on the Pentecost Day.

He promises cure, victory and forgiveness to God's people: Yahweh will dwell with those who are leading a holy life. (3.3-6). He will destroy the enemies (3.10). Those leading holy life will receive living water that cures. "A fountain will open from the house of the Lord. Zachariah has also testified about this fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness (Zach 13.1). Ezekiel has proclaimed (47-12) about the fountain from the temple. Isaiah prophesied about the thirst-relieving water (55.1). The fulfillment of (John 4.10-15) these prophecies we find in Christ. The prophet gave much messages and induced the people to forget their current sufferings and get relief.

The consoling words of Joel's prophecy are that God will visit His people and heal them. But along with giving the beautiful message of pouring the spirit, the prophet sees a Day of darkness and pillars of smoke (2.30-31). Mercy and judgment going together on either side, we understand. It was after the Pentecost that Jerusalem was ruined. God's spirit showered blessings on Jerusalem in 30 AD. Jerusalem crucified and killed Christ. Redemption was not experienced by the pouring of Holy spirit. Therefore, in 70 AD the dreadful and ruthless judgment occurred in that city.

Prophet Joel is the owner of a very wide noble and universal vision of God. God punishes evil (1.5), takes revenge (3.19). He shows the God who hears the cry (1:14) God judges (2:11) has fixed the faith in one God. God has mercy, long patience and great kindness.

The prophet saw God who gives His spirit to all, irrespective of sex, age, or position (3:18) - a God who guards the holy one, and forgives their sins (3:21).

Questions :

1. What is the meaning of the word Joel ?
2. What is the essence of Joel prophecy ?
3. We can see three stages in his prophecy. Which are they ?

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4. This happened on Pentecost day. What ?
5. The fulfillment of these prophecies we see in Christ. Of which prophecies ?
6. The prophet sees a day of Darkness and pillars of smoke. When did this verse take effect ? How ?

Memory Verse.

Joel 2:12 "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: "

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Lesson- 7

JONAH

Aim: Salvation is for all who hear the word of God, repent and live in God.

Jonah is a book written after captivity. He was born in the time of Jeroboam. II as the son of Amittai (2 Kings 14-25). He is a contemporary of Prophet Amos who lived in the 8th century BC. It is in this period that Nineveh is seen as the capital of Assyria. Although on the basis of tradition Jonah and Nineveh indicate the 8th century, scholars say the book was written between 400 and 300 B.C.

Wickedness increased in the big city of Nineveh. Yahweh ordered Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach repentance (1:1-2). Not obeying the order Jonah went to Yopa and boarded a ship to Tarsus, the sea was rough and the sailors threw him into the sea. The great fish, prepared by God, swallowed Jonah. Three nights and days he lay in its belly (1.17) and cried. The fish vomited him on the land. Again on God's order he reached Nineveh and preached repentance. Hearing the message that if they did not repent, within forty days Nineveh will be destroyed. The King, the people and the animals fasted and prayed for forty days. Yahweh heard the city repenting and saved it (4-10-11)

We can see the protesting prophet and the murmuring prophet in this book (4.3). He prayed, 'Lord take my life, better to die than live". The fourth chapter is funny and sweet and full of mercy. We see Jonah being childish. The word 'sympathy' is seen many times here. More than the doom of so many people, what caused sorrow to Jonah was the ruin of the castor. This sin is found in many Christian believers even today.

Lord Jesus mentions twice about Jonah. He compares his crucifixion and burial to Jonah's stay inside the fish as similar. The repentance of Ninevites is remembered elsewhere also (Matt. 12.39 - 42, Luk 11.29.38).

We can understand some other messages also from the book of Jonah (1) God will punish the people and the land when cruelty iniquity and immorality grow. (2) God will give time to all to repent; if that time is not wasted, they get salvation. (3) None can avoid the call of God and His hold, if they avoid, certainly there will be doom. Even if they try to avoid, they have to repent truly and return to God (4) If they repent with true and sincere prayer and fasting God's wrath will disappear and they will get eternal salvation (5) This story is to correct the conservative thinking that salvation is only for the Jews. The same objective is seen in the book of Ruth all people belong to God. He wishes to save all salvation; is not for a special section only. It is for all who hear the Lord's word, repent and live 'in' God. If we direct our course towards God, by the Lord's blessings, we shall attain salvation. This is one of the precious books of the vision of God in the Old Testament, written with an understanding of God's unequalled love and His will to save all creations. "I have other sheep not included in my house" said the Lord. Jonah's prophecy will give us the ardent spirit to seek those

Questions:

Name (1) Jonah's father (2) Jonah's contemporary prophet

How was Nineveh saved from Doom

What are the messages in the book of Jonah?

Memory Verse.

Jonah 2:9 "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. "

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Part 3

New Testament

Lesson 8

Epistle of St. James part I

Aim: To get a brief idea about the St. James epistle.

Author

St. James, our Lord's brother, Head of the Church of Jerusalem and author of "Kurbana Thaksa" (Anaphora of St. James) used by our church, wrote this epistle. The early church fathers St Jerome and Iranius, fully agree with this opinion. Although two others are seen with the name 'James' in the New Testament such as James son of Alphaeus and James son of Zebedee and brother of John, no one holds that they have written this epistle.

Anamias, the High priest tried St. James before the Sanhedrin and sentenced him to death. Like Stephen, St. James became a martyr, praying to God for his murderers. The people of his native place used to call him 'James the righteous'.

Epistle written to whom ?

The epistle was written for the Jews of the 12 tribes spread over the whole world (James 1.1). James wished that the Jews who accepted Christ as Saviour and the Jews who stood aloof, read his epistle.

Time when written

It is generally agreed that this epistle was written between 45 and 49 A.D. Some scholars say it was written in AD 60 or close to it.

Main thoughts in the epistle.

- 1) Indicts Jews of their sins like lust for wealth, oppression of the poor etc.
- 2) God of Israel is the only one God.
- 3) Faith without stress to perform good deeds is meaningless.
- 4) Kind deeds for the poor.
- 5) Christian character
- 6) The last sacrament (anointing the sick with oil)
- 7) God recognizes intercession prayer.

Chapter 1

Main teachings

1. Be glad when temptations come for it tests the strength of your faith. Pray to God with faith.
2. The rich should be humble. He who does not will wither away like the flowers and grass.

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3. Blessed is the man who endures temptation. When tempted, never say he is tempted by God. 'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is full grown bringeth forth death (1-15).
4. Sin is of two kinds. (a) temptations from inside (b) from outside
5. We must not only be hearers of the word of God but also doers of the word.
6. Put a rein to your tongue. Hypocrisy is useless. Reach out to the destitute and widows and help them. These must be the rules of behaviour of the Christians.

Chapter - 2

This Chapter contains many great teachings.

Main topics of thought in Chapter - 2.

1. The children of God should not give undue importance to wealth, position and honour. God makes the poor rich in faith and heirs of His promised land (1.7).
2. As God is one, God's law is one. If one of the laws is broken, it will be considered as having broken God's law.
3. 'Faith without works is dead'. This is the most important idea in Chapter - 2 in the Epistle of James. St. Paul in Heb.Ch.11 has dealt with in detail about the justification by faith. But accepting the importance of faith, St. James reveals to the world that 'faith without work is lifeless' (2-26)

Questions :

1. Which James wrote 'the epistle of James'?
2. How was the end of St. James ?
3. What was the name his natives called James ?
4. To whom was the epistle written ?
5. What is the special reference about God in the epistle?.
6. What are the main teachings in Chapter I of the Epistle?
7. Which are the main topics of thought in \chap.2?
8. Explain James idea 'faith without works is dead'.

Memory Verse:

James 2-26. 'So then, as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without actions is dead.'

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EPISTLE OF ST.JAMES PART II

CHAPTER- 3-

1. Not many should aspire to be teachers. Teachers have great responsibility. Wrong advice will cause condemnation.
2. Controlling the tongue is essential. Though a small organ, it is powerful enough to take man to good and evil. People praise God and curse men with the same tongue. This is not worthy. As in the horse by the bridle, and the ship by the rudder, the tongue is to be controlled.
3. True wisdom and false wisdom. True wisdom is obtained from above. Such people will be humble, pure, and doing kind and peaceful deeds. False wisdom is worldly. It will be sensual and devilish.
4. Those who make peace will sow in peace and reap the fruit of righteousness.

Chapter - 4

1. Warning to those immersed in lusts and worldly pleasures. Friends of the world will become enemies to God.
2. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit therefore to the Lord and resist the devil.
3. Draw near to the Lord and he will draw near to you. (4-8).
4. He that speaketh evil of his brother and judges him will be judged by God.
5. Warns those who are keen in making wealth without thinking of God. He does not know if he will live for the morrow. Boast not. It is 'son' to him that knoweth to do good and not do it.

Questions

1. What are the advices that St. James gives to teachers ?
2. What is the need to control the tongue ?
3. What advice does St. James give to the proud ?
4. What is warning James gives to him that speaks evil of his brother and those making wealth without minding God.

Memory Verse: James 3.10

"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing from oneself. My Brothers this ought not to be so."

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Lesson 10

THE EPISTLE OF ST JAMES-PART III

Chapter 5

1. Warns about the on-coming destruction to the wealthy who live and make money unrighteously (5: 1-6).

The riches of the wicked and the wealthy will rust. If the reapers wages are held back, they will cry before you. Their cries are heard by the Lord.

2. It is clearly stated about the second coming of the Lord (5:7-11) and to await the Lord's coming with patience and endurance. A reference is made about Job's endurance and the fortunes thereby.

3. Advises especially not to swear by any thing. It must be a Christian principle (5:12).

4. The elders must be called for those who are sick and prayers said for them, and they must be anointed with oil. Thereby it is evident that the last sacrament of the Church is in accordance with the Bible. By this their diseases are healed and sins are forgiven. (5: 13-18).

It is advised to confess sins and pray one another for getting cure of diseases. This affirms that God will accept intercession prayers.

The earnest prayer of the righteous has much effect. Elijah prayed that it might not rain. For 3 years and 6 months there was no rain. When he prayed again for rain, it rained.

6. If any one errs from truth, another should convert him and put him in the right path. By doing so he will be saving the other from death. It is a good deed and will hide a multitude of sins. This idea is seen in Dan 4.27 and 1 Peter 4.8.

Questions:

1. What happens to those who earn wealth by unjust means?
2. What is the consequence of keeping back the wages of reapers?
3. What should the elders do for the sick to cure them from diseases?
4. If, for the remission of one's sins, another one prays, there will be effect. What does the epistle say about this ?
5. Intercessional prayer is in accordance with the Bible. Prove.
6. What advantages do we have by good deeds?

Memory Verse:

James 5:14 "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord."

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Lesson 11

ST. PETER'S EPISTLES

Reference: 1 Peter, Chapter 1 to 3.

Author

It is stated in Chap 1-1 itself that it is written by Peter, the Apostle of Jesus Christ to the believers and the devoted scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. The Christian writers who lived in the times of the Apostles fully agreed with this. It is believed that he wrote the epistle while in Rome, in the Greek language, and sent it through Silvanos.

General topics in 1 Peter 1 - 5 chapters.

1. The glory of the Christian Church (Ch 1. 3-12)
2. Obey the Heavenly Father and live the Christian way (1:13 to 2:10).
3. Christians should be faultless in the eyes of others. Honour the judges, Christ saved the world from sin by his crucifixion.
4. Husband - wife relationship (3: 1-13)
5. Happy are you if you suffer for doing right, for Christ has suffered for the unrighteous.
6. Reference to the entry into the prison of spirits (3: 18- 19).
7. Suffering as a Christian.
8. The priests and others in the church must have devotion to God and right conduct. By being steadfast in faith, resist the devil. Have forbearance in troubles, diligence and hope.

Chapter 1

The epistle begins by saluting the people in the name of father, son and Holy Ghost. Those who oppose Trinity should read this well and understand the truth.

The devoted Christians are begotten for their inheritance in Heaven by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Though there are several kinds of persecutions now, as gold is tested in fire, their faith is being tested, the persecutions and afflictions will not affect them. The precious blood of Jesus Christ, the innocent and sinless lamb, saves men. Their faith and hope should be in God. This is the glory of the Christian Church.

Look at each other heartily. They are born again by the living word of God. For all flesh is like grass and will wither away but the word of the Lord endures. Walk the Christian way, obeying the heavenly father. The Apostle sees the Christian converts from the gentiles and the Jews alike. He has addressed the Christians by the words "those sprinkled by the blood of Christ, the devoted, and the born again".

Chapter 2

As babies drink the milk, so is the word of God for salvation. Come unto Christ, the living stone and you will be built up as living stones. As is said above, Christ is the noble and precious corner stone laid in Zion, and believers will be joined with it to build up the spiritual house, the Church (2. 2-5). You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God's own people (2.9).

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To be faultless before others, the Apostle gives some instructions. Submit to authority, obey the king and fear God - these are his moral instructions. Christ bore our sins in his own body on the cross so that we should live in righteousness. For the sins of the whole world, he was crucified, died and rose from the dead. Now, in heaven he is praying to God the father for mercy. This is the picture of Christ's crucifixion and the remission of the sins of the world.

Chapter -3

The Apostle deals in detail with husband - wife relationship. Wives should submit to their husbands. Wives by their devotion and temperance in behavior can bring their husbands to the right path. It is not by gold ornaments or attractive clothes or other external beauty aids that people be adorned but by the inner beauty that is in the heart. Husbands should respect their wives; consider them with regard and so on.

Chap 3-12 'The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil! ' It is clear that, if we pray through intercession of the righteous God will hear it. The verse is similar to James 5-16.

If you have to suffer for doing good in the name of Christ, consider it is a blessing. Noah and family got into the ark and were saved through water. That is the forerunner of baptism. We are saved by the resurrection of Christ. These ideas are stated in Ch.3.

Questions

1. To whom did Peter write this epistle?
2. In which language was it written?
3. What are the main points of thought in Epistle I?
4. The troubles and tribulations of the faithful will make them happy. Why?
5. How are the faithful redeemed?
6. What will stand forever?
7. By what names does the Apostle Peter address Christians?
8. Apostle Peter compares the Church to a house. How?
9. Explain how Christ's crucifixion gave remission of sins to the world.
10. What are Peter's instructions about husband-wife relationship?

What does Peter point out as the forerunner of baptism

Memory Verse.

1 Peter 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

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Lesson 12

ST. PETER'S EPISTLES PART II

Reference: 1 Peter chapters 4-5

Main thoughts

Christ suffered for us in the flesh. So Christians too should be partakers in sufferings. Doing good deeds and getting sufferings go together. Consider that you are doing God's will then.

Avoid Lust, bad desires, and excess of wine, reveling in idolatry and drinking liquor. Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. That's why Christ preached the gospel to the dead.

The end of all of us is near.

Be most loving, as love will reduce the multitude of sins. Be hospitable. Serve God with the talents you have got. Glorify God the father through Jesus Christ.

'Amen' is a Hebrew word. Christ used this word to stress some idea. It means 'truly'.

Apostle Peter reminds us not to feel ashamed of sufferings as Christians. Chapter 5 contains the appeal of Apostle Peter who was the witness of Messiah's sufferings and was his co-priest (Kaseesa), to the priests (Kaseesas) of the parishes (5. 1-5).

They should spiritually feed and look after the flock of God entrusted to them. Peter says, "Do your work, not for mere pay, but from a real desire to serve." They should set good examples to others. Then they will receive the crown of glory when the Chief shepherd appears.

The youth should submit to the elders. Be humble. God dislikes the proud but gives His grace to the meek. These and other rules of conduct are given to people.

Satan, the enemy, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Therefore rise against him and be steadfast in faith. God is the power forever, they are reminded.

The letter is written and sent through his faithful brother Silas. It is specially mentioned that the Babylon Church and Mark wish them peace. Mark is Peter's constant companion and author of the Gospel Mark.

Questions

1. What is the appeal of Peter the co-Kaseesa to the priests of the parishes?
2. What is Peter's advice to the youth and the proud?
3. How is Satan pictured by Apostle Peter?
4. Name the person through whom is the epistle sent.
5. Who is Mark referred to as in Peter 1 Chap. 5?

Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

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Lesson 13

2ND EPISTLE OF PETER

Chapters 1 to 3

Similarity between Peter's 2nd Epistle and Jude's epistle.

Both epistles have been written to help a certain church from the ruin of its faith. That, one epistle was based on the other, is not a true copy of the other. Some hold that II Peter was written basing on Jude's epistle.

II Peter can be divided into 3.

1. Introduction
2. Warning against those who give false advice.
3. Reply to those who do not believe in the Lord's second coming in glory.

Chapter 1

The epistle 'begins with saluting the readers and thanking them. Highlighting the glory and purity of Christian life, it is asserted that they will be worthy of valuable promise.

It teaches, to faith and courage, wisdom, fear of God and love and lead a progressive Christian life.

Apostle Peter has stated definitely that his death was near. In connection with Emperor Nero's persecutions the Apostle was killed in Rome by crucifying him with his head down.

Following Christ's transfiguration, the reference in Luk 8.35 continues, "This is my beloved son; hear him', God the father called out. This is mentioned in the epistle also. That the dead are living and the dead saints are quite alive is revealed in this part. (Moses and Elijah converse with Christ.)

Prophecies never came by man's will. Chosen men inspired by the Holy Ghost have spoken those, the Apostle is certain.

Chapter -2

The destruction to false teachers is the main point. False teachers will have judgment. As the angels who sinned against God were cast down into hell, as the undevoted people were destroyed by floods, as the sinful people of Sodom - Gomorrah were burned to ashes, the false teachers will have curse and damnation. But those who love God and live in Him will have miraculous salvation like Noah and family as also Loth had, the apostle informed.

The false teachers and their followers, the Apostle likens to wells without water and clouds driven by storm.

The wicked who are steeped in abominable deeds and sexual pleasures are likened to the dog that turns to its vomit and the pig that rolls in the mud after having washed.

Chapter - 3

Information about the Lord's second coming in glory is given in this chapter. In Ch. 3.2 it is stated, "By these two epistles I remind you and rouse your true mind'. From this it is clear that the Apostle has written both the epistles.

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About the second coming it is said that the day will come when the earth and the sky will be burned down. There is no delay for the Lord's coming. The Lord is extending it with long patience so that none will perish but all should come to repentance and be saved. This agrees with the idea in Matt 24-14. Again the apostle describes. The Lord's day comes like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also with the works therein shall be burnt up. Therefore lead a pure life and wait for the Lord's Day. After that the new heaven and new earth will there be. Await that. We see this idea in Is 65.D. The duty of the Church today is to prepare well the people who are waiting for the second coming of the Lord.

Aiming to grow in the grace and wisdom of our Lord, the epistle is closed. 'Grow' is the main aim of Christian life.

Questions

1. What is the similarity of the 2nd Epistle of Peter to Jude's epistle ?
2. How can we divide the second epistle ?
3. How should the believers regulate their life ?
4. How was the end of Peter's life ?
5. What is the damnation to false teachers ?
6. What is the false teacher compared to ?
7. Describe what Apostle Peter reminds about the second coming of the Lord.
8. What is the chief aim of Christian life ?

Memory Verse

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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Lesson- 14

EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN

Aim. A study of St. John's epistles.

Author :

St. John, the author of Gospel himself wrote the epistles also; it is generally accepted. The early writers Polycarpus, Tertulian. Iranius and Origen are of the same opinion.

Time of writing

It is believed that the epistles were written close to the time of writing the gospels; between 80 and 90 AD, at Ephesus.

Written to whom

He is not addressing any particular Church in writing it. Children, fathers, young men, by these words he addresses the readers. It is to be considered he wrote it to the different churches of Asia Minor, so as to be read by all.

Topics of thought in Epistle I

The main thought is Fellowship with God, fellowship with Father and Son.

God is light, God is righteous, God is love. Basing these three points the epistle is written. The one who is born of God cannot sin. Love one another, he informs this as a commandment. (4.11-12) ? Warning is given against unbelievers. Advises to keep away from, unbelievers who deny the person of Messiah. Those who believe that Jesus himself is the Messiah are all born of God. Obedience is based on faith. He who has obedience and faith is born of God.

An explanation of sin is given in I John Chap. 16-17. There are two kinds of sin, a sin unto death and sin not unto death. Do not think it will be useful to pray for a brother who has committed a sin unto death. But if a man prays for a brother who has committed a sin that is not unto death, God will hear it and deliver him from the sin.

Epistle I ends with an exhortation to keep away from idolatry.

The Second Epistle of John

Wrote to whom

We see in John II Chap. 1. 1-2 of the Holy book "unto the elect lady 'Kuria' and her children, I, the elder (Kassissa) write. So we can consider this epistle was written to Kuria and to all the believers with her that formed a Church.

This epistle contains only one chapter with only 13 verses. In the second epistle also he affirms the idea that we should remain in fellowship with Lord Messiah the Son and through him with God the Father. The importance of truth and love is highlighted. Apostle John is very happy to know the children of that church walk in truth.

Believing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is the truth. But there are deceivers who do not confess it is true. They are 'anti-christ', it is stated.

Do not receive the false teachers in your homes nor welcome them, it is advised (1-10).

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Though there are many things to write, he wishes to see face to face the church and the elect lady. Informing this, the epistle ends.

The Third epistle of St. John

To whom written

Disciple John wrote this epistle to Gaius whom he truly loves. Gaius was very hospitable. Hospitality to pilgrims was considered as a Christian service. So John prays for Gaius, his well-being and happiness. The name Gaius is mentioned 4 times in the New Testament: Acts.19:29, 20:4. Rom 16:23, 1 Cori. 1:15.

One Diotrophes tried to have pre eminence in the church of which Gaius was a member. Not only did he refuse to receive Disciple John and those brethren sent by him but also opposed them and forbade them, it is said in the epistle. Such evil doers have not seen God.

In verse 12 there is mention about one Demetrius. The Disciple gives true testimony about him. Nothing more about Demetrius is known. The church workers of those days received no help from non-christians.

As in the second epistle, informing that he wishes to see them shortly and speak face to face, he closes the epistle which contains only one chapter with fifteen verses .

Questions

1. Who is the author of this epistle.
2. To whom was the first epistle written ?
3. What are the main topics of thought in the first epistle of John.
4. What is the instruction about behaviour towards unbelievers.
5. To whom was the second epistle of John written ?
6. Who is anti-Christ ?
7. To whom was the third epistle of John written ?
8. Who is Diotrophes ? What is John's opinion about him.

Memory Verse.

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

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Lesson -15

EPISTLE OF JUDE

Aim - A detailed study of Jude's epistle.

Author

Jude, servant of Jesus and brother of James, has written this epistle. We can see 5 persons by name Jude in the Bible. (1) Judas Iscariot, (2) Jude son of Jacob, (3) Judas of Galilee (Acts 5.37) (4) Judas of Damascus (Acts 9.11) (5) Jude who wrote the epistle - brother of James who is the brother of the Lord. An account is given before about the relation between St. Jude's epistle and the second epistle of St. Peter.

Topics

(1) Salutation (verse 1, 2), (2) reference about ungodly men (V, 3, 4) (3) the punishment to the angels and the Israelites (V. 5,7) (4) iniquity, teachings and blasphemy of false teachers and the punishment (V. 8-16) (5). Do not be confused by the working of false teachers. Christians should keep themselves in devotion, prayer and thinking of the Lord's coming. (6) pray specially for those falling into sin (V. 24, 25).

The epistle contains only one chapter with 25 verses. It is based on the fall of faith in a certain church due to their immoral life. The epistle is written to make people conscious against it. The disciple reminds them to contend for the faith which was once delivered into the saints. 'Some ungodly men who deny our Lord Jesus, the Messiah have crept into this church and they will have the condemnation, the epistle warns.

The doom of these men is described later. God saved the Israelites from Egypt but destroyed them that disbelieved. The angels that rebelled were pushed down into the darkness. Likewise Sodom and Gomorrah that abandoned God and lived a very immoral life were punished and destroyed by eternal fire. The same punishment will there be to these people who defile their body and defy the Lord, the writer warns.

The Disciple has likened these people to Cain who murdered his brother and to the treacherous, greedy Balaam. He calls, these people who pollute their body and defile the Lord's name, clouds without water, trees without fruits and the roots plucked up, raging waves of the sea and wandering stars.

The writer addresses the ungodly teachers who are murmuring, complaining and walking after their own lusts, ungodly sinners'. But he advises the believers to obey the words of the disciples and live accordingly. He exhorts the people not to create split like brutes but, like true believers, keep praying, progressing in the Holy Ghost and looking for the mercy of Lord Jesus. Besides, he advises them to be looking forward to the second coming of the Lord.

In the end of the epistle the Apostle wants them to pray especially for those falling into sin. Thereby some of them will be saved from the punishment of sin - eternal fire.

The epistle ends by wishing glory, honour and majesty through our Lord Jesus, to those who walk in truth, for ever and ever.

Questions

1. Who is the author of this epistle ?
2. Who are the others with the name Jude, besides the brother of the Lord, mentioned in the Bible ?
3. What are the main topics of Jude's epistle.

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4. What are the punishments to the false teachers who denies Jesus, the Messiah ?
5. What are those who pollute the body and defy the name of the Lord, likened to ?
6. What should the believers do for those who have fallen into sin.

Memory Verse

Jude 1:17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

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Lesson - 16

BOOK OF REVELATION

Aim: To learn about the Revelation Apostle John had from Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Revelation is a philosophical book. It is equally a prophecy too. Revelation to John from Christ, written to seven churches of Asia that were being subjected to persecution. But it is to be considered that the epistle was written for all churches that came and are coming into existence in the world till the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The book is a prophecy about the plan of redemption centered on Christ, given by God through Christ and will be completed by the second coming of the Lord.

"Here, I am coming again" this is the most hope-giving promise in the book. The book, having 22 chapters ends with a beautiful and consoling picture of humanity regaining the eternal paradise and the tree of Life which was lost to man as said in the book of Genesis.

In chap 1:3 it is stated, he that reads out and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things are blessed. So no one should go back from reading and understanding this prophecy even though it is difficult to interpret it or different interpretations are there.

Who wrote, where and when ?

Apostle John, the author of Gospel and the three epistles, was exiled to Patmos island. When he was living there alone, Jesus showed him this revelation from heaven. The Apostle then and there wrote down in book form all that he saw. The early Bible Scholars are of the opinion that it happened during the period 95-96 AD. In AD 96 he was released from Patmos and he reached Ephesus from where it was sent to the seven churches of Asia including that church.

The book had been canonically approved as a part of the New Testament since the second century.

Language of the Book

Language is of two kinds language of letters and symbolic language. The former is understanding the literal sense of what is written. The latter means picturing one as the symbol of another. The book of Revelation is written mostly in symbolic language.

The New Testament Revelation is very much related to the prophecy books Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah.

In Joel 3.18 we read, "the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk" This usage is as a symbol of prosperity and wealth. Like this we have to understand the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is rooted in other Holy writings. It is in concordance with many books beginning with Genesis. All things that were meant to be revealed to man have been completed by the book of Revelation.

Four examples from the Bible having ideas paralleled to Revelation are given below:

Topic Revelation Old Testament

1. Tree of Life 2:7, 22:2 Gen 2:9, 22
2. Throne of God 1:4, 4:2 Is 6.1

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3. Lamb 5:6 Ez chap 1:26, 10:1

4. Woman, child and 12: 1-5 Gene 33: 15

the great dragon

Therefore, interpreting the book of Revelation should be mostly in the symbolic style relating it to the interpretations of parallel Biblical parts.

There is reference to the church in the first. Three chapters and the last three chapters and the last three chapters of the book of Revelation that contains 22 chapters.

16 chapters are general prophecies. Daniels prophecy is called Old Testament Revelation.

Questions

1. Who wrote the book of Revelation and where ?
2. For whom was Revelation written ?
3. How is the language style of the book of Revelation ?
4. Give examples to show the concordance of the book of Revelation with other holy writings.
5. What is the most hope giving promise in this book.
6. Which are the Old Testament books that are very similar to this book?

Memory Verse

Revelation 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

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Lesson 17

BOOK OF REVELATION I

The division of the book of Revelation and the unity of diverse topics

John's Revelation is a book of seven main topics inseparably linked together. If only we read it from beginning to end can we get a clear picture of its contents.

In Chapter 1 a brilliant picture of the Lord is shown in the midst of seven churches symbolized by seven golden candle lights. In the last chapters (Ch 20-22) Satan who appeared in Eden being pushed into eternal fire and death being removed for ever, are described. The book ends with the beautiful picture of man who was pushed out from Eden to avoid eating the fruit of the tree of Life being taken into the new heaven and earth and given that fruit to eat.

Division of the book

1. Seeing one like the son of Man in the midst of seven golden candle sticks (seven churches) and his words to the churches (Ch. 1 to 3).
2. The Lamb receiving the book sealed with seven seals from the one sitting on the throne of Heaven and then the opening of seals (Ch. 4 to 7)
3. Sounding of the 7 trumpets (Ch. 8-11)
4. The Great dragon persecuting the woman and her son and the remnants of her seed (Ch 12-14)
5. Pouring out the vials of the wrath of God (Ch 15-16).
6. The destruction of the great Babylon, Mother of Harlots and the two beasts (Ch. 17 to 19).
7. Defeat of Satan, the victory of God's people and new creation (Ch 20-22).

Daniel's prophecy too can be divided into 7 parts. No: 7 has great significance among the Israelites. They recognize 7 as a complete number. In the book of Revelation No. 7 is mentioned 54 times.

Special: These 7 parts begin with a mention of Christ's birth the first coming and then Describes how man is saved from Satan and Satan is imprisoned for ever at His second coming in glory.

Questions

1. How can we divide the book of Revelation.
2. Which are the seven parts of the book Revelation which are the chapters of each part ?
3. What is the beautiful picture at the end of the book.

Memory Verse

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

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Lesson - 18

BOOK OF REVELATION II

Our Lord's first coming - the time of churches. Second coming judgment, the great blessing of the redeemed.

Aim: To understand that God's redeemed people will live with the lamb.

Part 1

Things that the one like the son of Man in the midst of the churches symbolized by golden candle lights, showed John, which he wrote down in book form and sent to the seven churches of Asia as a message.

I am with you always even unto the end of the world ' Matt 28:20. We are reminded of this verse when we see the golden candle lights as the churches that give spiritual light to the world in darkness. The seven churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Each church has a special messenger. It is instructed to send the epistles through these messengers who are symbolized as 7 stars.

Lord Jesus Christ, by his blood, has washed away our sins and made us as in the line of Kings and priests. As a result man got entry into the New Heaven and earth. There he is given the right to eat the fruit of the tree of Life. The new city of Jerusalem coming down from Heaven, the many rewards to the victors and things up to what will happen after the end of the world, are described in part 1. Chapters 1 to 3 come under Part 1.

In short, Jesus Christ's' first coming, shedding of His blood to save the world and many things during the period of the churches, His second coming, things after the end of - all these are included in Part I.

Part II

The book with seven seals in the hands of He who sits on the throne and the Lamb. This is the main subject in this part, Chap. 4 to 7 are in this.

The door of heaven is opened and John is allowed to go up there.

He sees God the father seated on the throne the slain Lamb that is Jesus Christ, the 7 dazzling lamps which are the 7 spirits of God, and all round the throne 24 other thrones with 24 elders wearing gold crowns seated on them. Besides, four beasts having six wings each were seen there. These beasts were praising God day and night "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord which was, which is and which is to come, the Almighty". While these were glorifying God, the 24 elders prostrated before the throne and worshipped Him. They were laying their gold crowns before the throne also (4: 10-11).

In the right hand of God sitting on the throne he saw a book sealed with 7 seals. A voice was heard asking "who is worthy to open the book, break the seals and read it ?"

No one came. But the slain Lamb that is Christ came forward and broke the seals one by one and opened the book. Then all the elders fell before the Lamb and prayed. Tens of thousands and thousands of angels said with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing."

When each seal was opened, one of the beasts said to John in a voice like thunder "come and see". Every time a horse of one colour white or red, black or green, appeared and each rider on the horse was given separate powers. When the 5th seal was opened, he saw under the altar, the souls of the saints who were slain for the Lamb.

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When the 6th seal was broken, there was a great earthquake. The sun darkened, the moon was blood-red, a tempest blew, stars fell down to earth and the Kings of the earth cried out to the mountains and rocks, "fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the great wrath of the Lamb. The complete destruction of the universe and the Day of great wrath is pictured here. God's angel came with the seal of the living God and put the seal on the foreheads of God's servants.

In the 7th chap, we see that before the destruction of the universe, the angel put the seal of the living God on the forehead of God's servants. God will redeem them from the wrath. Thus the number of people that were revealed is 12000 from each tribe. The total number is 144 thousands in 12 tribes.

The great community mentioned, comprises the great and vast community of redeemed Christians including the Jewish Christians from outside the 12 tribes of Israel and the Christians converted and purified through the blood of Christ that is from the gentiles of various castes, races and languages. Everyone of us must be able to partake of this happiness. This great multitude were saying in loud voice, "Salvation is the blessing of our God who sits on the throne. And they prostrated themselves before the throne saying "Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks giving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen."

These are saints that suffered tribulations and washed their robes in the Lamb's blood and were purified. So they will sit in the House of God and pray to Him day and night. No more will they hunger or thirst. The Lamb on the throne will feed them lead them to the living fountains of water. Their tears will be wiped off their eyes.

Here is shown the Lord's first coming and the Lamb being slain (crucifixion) for the salvation of the world. Likewise, the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world are described. The eternal happiness thereafter is also stated in detail. Thus the second part closes in completion.

Part III

Chapters 8 to 11 are of this part. Blowing the seven trumpets is the main subject.

Breaks the 7th seal, here. Saw 7 angels standing in the presence of God. They received 7 trumpets. Another angel appears with a golden censer and incense and he offered incense at the golden altar before the throne. Along with the saints' prayers the smoke of incense ascended up before God. Those Christian sections that criticize the use of censer have to read this and understand. The angel filled the censer with fire from the altar and cast to earth. At once there was thunder and lightning and earth quake.

The angels blew the trumpet. When the first trumpet sounded, hail and fire mingled with blood. Were cast upon the earth one third of the earth was burned up. When the second trumpet sounded, one like a great burning mountain was cast into the sea and one third of the sea became blood. One third of the creatures of the sea died. When the 3rd trumpet blew a great star like a burning lamp fell to earth. one third of the water in the rivers and fountains became wormwood. Many people died of bitterness. When the 4th trumpet blew, one third of the sun, moon and stars were smitten so one third of them was darkened. A vulture flew up. When the next trumpet sounded, a voice shouted, "Woe, woe, woe unto all inhabitants of earth".

Then the 5th trumpet sounded. The tribulations to those who do not have God's seal on their forehead are revealed. Locusts as strong as scorpions come up from bottomless pit and torment those who are not God's people. Bottomless pit means the dark dungeons where Satan and his messengers are imprisoned. The beast ascending out of the floorless pit mentioned in Rev. 11.7 is from the same bottomless pit.

When the 6th trumpet sounded, there was a voice from the 4 horns of the golden altar, it is stated understand that it is the saints prayers. And the 4 angels which were bound in the river Euphrates were loosed and these angels destroy all the wicked people that fight against the Christian world. A war using all kinds of modern weapons is described here. A great number of people will be destroyed by this. By the sounding of the 6th trumpet God destroys the wicked. Seeing this, the rest of the people should repent and become God's people. This is God's will. The river Euphrates that flows through today's Iraq is referred to here. These things are described in Rev. Ch. 9.

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Continuing, John sees a powerful angel standing with his right leg on the sea and left leg on the earth. In his hand was a small open book. This book was given the Apostle to eat. The book can rightly be considered as the word of God. when the 7th trumpet blows, God's mystery will be finished - it was declared. The Lord's second coming and the end of the world and the last judgment and other mysteries of God will take place along with the blowing of the 7th trumpet - this is definitely revealed here.

Before the 7th trumpet blows, the word of God I again preached to the wicked people of the world. The Apostle being a prophet is authorized to inform them the word of God and give them time to repent and attain salvation. It is to be understood that this is a duty to be fulfilled by the church today.

At the end of part 3 in chap. 11 it is said, a rod is given to John. God wanted him to measure the Temple of God and the altar leaving out the court outside the temple. That which was measured was to God. That is the church of Israel, the lamb's bride known as New Jerusalem which is a symbolic picture of God specially protecting the children of God that rely on God.

In chap. 11. two witnesses of God are mentioned, who are clothed in sack-clothes and will prophesy. Various interpretations have been there about these witnesses. As they prophecy in sack clothes, they will preach about repentance and redemption from sin - it is to be understood.

These two witnesses are Enoch and Elijah, some day others hold it is Moses and Elijah. Yet others say it is Joshua and Zerrubbabel who are compared to Olive tree in Zech. Ch. 4 from and detailed study we can understand that they are the church representatives informing about repentance and redemption through combined missionary works. Their corpses will be on the city roads for 3½ days to be seen by all. Later they will get up and then ascend to heaven, it is said. God's gospel will be preached all over the world. For some time (3½ days) close to the Lords second coming, there will be persecution and death to God's people and missionaries by Satan but at the Lords second coming the dead saints will rise up first and then the living will

ascend with them to meet the Lord in the air 'They will be taken up on the clouds (1 Thessal 4. 16-17).

Thus part 3 describes important matters from the Lords first coming up to second coming and also the eternal life that follows.

Part IV

The great dragon and his helpers tormenting the woman and her child and remnant of her seed, is the subject Ch. 12 and 14 come under this part. The birth of Christ and the woman (virgin Mary, mother of God) whose child (Jesus Christ) crushes the head of Satan, being tormented by Satan are described. In 12.1 mention is made of a woman adorned with sun. In a wider sense we can understand it is the Israel. Israel is mentioned as a virgin in Jerem. 31. 4-21. From Israel their saviour was born. Satan tried to prevent it. All the male children were killed and such, other things happened (Matt 2.16). The devil being unable to eat up the son born of the woman, tempted Jesus Christ. The Jewish people, and particularly the pharases worked against Christ. The priests and people conspired against Jesus Christ and crucified him. But Jesus rose on the 3rd day. The risen Christ ascended to heaven and is sitting on the right side of God. Here Satan is defeated.

Satan sending some agents (beasts) to destroy God's people and facing Satan's temptations at all times till the end of the world, are described here.

Continuing, we see the Son of Man seated on the clouds and getting ready for the harvest. The sickle is for reaping and another sharp sickle for cutting the bunches of grapes. (Rev. 14. 14-16). Another picture of treading in the winepress symbolized for the anger of God, wherefrom blood flowed 200 miles away.

The first harvest shows the Lord's second coming in the clouds and the faithful among the dead and living being redeemed and taken to the clouds in the sky. Then the bunches of grapes are put in the winepress and crushed. Likewise the wicked people will be subjected to God's wrath and be judged to be thrown into the fiery hell.

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In part 4 also the Lord's 1st coming, Satan's temptations and persecution to God's people are described. 'The believers who die for Christ are blessed', a voice said from Heaven'. Those who put a seal on the forehead or hand of Geth or his statue are cursed and will have to drink of the anger of God' - the angel said.

In the beginning of Ch: 14 the picture of God's redeemed people, chosen saints sealed with God's seal on the foreheads living on Mount Zion with the Lamb is shown.

Thus Part 4 also seals with Christ's first coming the church period and second coming and the Judgment and the great blessing to the redeemed people.

The inner meaning of the symbolized usage in this part are given below: -

The beast from the sea - Emperor Domnican the beast with the form of the Lamb:- false prophet. 10 horns of the beast:- 10 Roman emperors from Augustus to Titus. The angel flying in the sky chap, 14. 6-7. Just before the second coming when God's people are persecuted, preaching of the gospel will be going on - this is shown here.

Memory Verse.

Rev. 7.17 : The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them to the living fountains of waters and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Questions

1. Which chapters are included in Part I. What are the main subjects described in it (About the 7 parts this question can be asked).
2. Who is worthy to break the seals of the book in God's hand.
3. Who was seen under the altar when the 5th seal was broken.
4. What happened when the 6th seal was broken.
5. What did God's angel do before the complete destruction of the Universe.
6. What is salvation ?
7. Who are those in pure white robes that stand near God's throne and glorify Him .
8. State briefly what happens when each of the seven trumpets blow ?
9. What is the sign of the chosen Saints of God ?
10. Who is the one sealed with the seal of beast ?
11. What is the beautiful picture given at the beginning of
14th chapter?

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Lesson 19

BOOK OF REVELATION III

Destruction of Satan and great victory of God's people.

Aim: To know about the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption

Part V

Ch: 15-16 Pouring out the 7 vials of the Wrath of God is the main subject.

Like the 7 trumpets, 7 angels pour out 7 vials of the wrath of God one by one upon the wicked people of the earth, who killed the prophets, shed the blood of believers who suffered for Christ. God's wrath came upon them.

When the 1st vial was poured out, the wicked people with the seal of beast were infected with grievous sores. The 2nd vial was poured on the sea. The sea water was turned like the blood of dead men and all the living creatures in it died. The 3rd vial was poured on rivers and fountains they became blood. God gave blood for drinking, to the wicked people who shed the blood of saints and prophets.

The 4th angel poured the vial on the sun and the sun got the power to burn up the earth with fire. Men were burned by the terrible heat. But the wretched people did not repent but were blaspheming God. The 5th one poured the vial on the throne of the beast; its kingdom was darkened. The 6th was poured on the great river Euphrates. The water in that river was drained up to pave the way for the Kings coming from east. Then three evil spirits looking like frogs came out of the mouths of the great dragon, the beast and the false prophet. They went about the earth and gathered kings and got ready for the war of the great day of God almighty. The unclean evil spirits united them at a place called Armageddon in Hebrew. But Armageddon is not mentioned in the Old Testament. There is reference to a place 'Megiddo' in the old Testament and some think it is that place. In general, we may understand that the battle of Armageddon is a final struggle of Satan against the Church.

The 7th vial was poured in the sky. "All finished" came a voice from the throne of the temple then. Thunder and lightning and earthquake occurred. The great city split into three. Towns of the gentiles fell. God did not fail to remember giving his wrath to the great Babylon. There was heavy hail fall. Even the wicked people that worship Satan and the beast, were blaspheming God.

His is a picture of God pouring his wrath on the wicked who persecute God's people. In Rev. 16. 17. it is stated as 'finished' and from this we may understand that it is a description of the end of the world.

Part-VI

Ch. 17 to 19 say about the destruction of Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, the beast and the false prophet. This subject is different from the 5 previous subjects. A woman sits upon a deep red beast having 7 heads and 10 horns: she is adorned with ornaments and is holding a golden cup which is filled with the filth and uncleanness of her adultery she is called Babylon, Mother of Harlots. The seven heads of the beast are 7 mountains. These mountains indicate Rome. The city of Rome and the Roman Empire that massacred the believers and drew them into adultery and other vices during the time of Apostle John are pictured by the symbol of a great Harlot.

Jesus Christ, son of God was incarnated during the period of Roman Empire. Rome was a wealthy empire. By trade with other countries it amassed worldly riches. Along with it all vices and wickedness grew there. Christians were subjected to persecutions Blood of saints was shed. They had the punishments for this sin. Rome was destroyed.

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The destruction of the beast, false prophet and all the wicked enemies of Christ and God's people, is described Ch. 19. verse 7-10 refers to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Here is a beautiful picture of those redeemed by the holy blood of Jesus and attaining the fulfillment of the promises to them.

Thus the first coming of Jesus Christ, other happenings during the Church period, things related to the 2nd coming of the Lord, His descending from heaven with hosts, and the wicked being punished at the last judgment, are described in part 6.

Part - VII

Ch. 20 and 20 are included in this Satan's doom and the great victory of God's people are found in this part.

The destruction of Satan, the first enemy of God's people and his helpers the beast and Mother of harlots and their worshippers, is described before. The complete destruction of their head, the great dragon that is Satan is found here. It is this Satan that caused man to lose the garden of Eden; eternal life and God's company.

Along with the complete destruction of Satan, the picture of man regaining all that he lost is also shown. The earth that was cursed as a result of man's sin caused by the temptation of the old snake is redeemed and reinstated also, along with the ruin of that snake (Satan). Death the wages of sin, suffering, tears, sorrow and lamentation - hereafter nothing of the kind will there be.

The one sitting on the throne says, "Here, I make everything new". Again in 21:6 he says "finished".

Ch. 20 : 4-5 says, "Satan was chained for thousand years" . That Christ will reign in the world is after the 2nd coming of Lord; some people interpret thus. It is hard to accept this, according to Bible study. Really Satan was chained when Christ ascended to heaven. So it is to be considered that the church period is the 'Thousand years Reign'. Besides, it is the martyrs who were beheaded for Christ, that are to reign. They are reigning with Christ now itself.

Part 7 begins saying about the defeat of the great dragon that is Satan had by the death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ. After describing the happenings related to the 1st coming of the Lord, he says about the things just before the 2nd coming. At the 2nd coming of the Lord, Satan is pushed into the fiery hell and given the last judgment. Making a recreation (born again) God's people are admitted into eternal life and those who are not God's people are pushed into the fiery hell. Describing New Jerusalem, the holy city as the right of inheritance of God's people, the book of Revelation closes. Because God's plan of redemption is completed, we see this completion in the 7 parts.

Besides the book sealed with 7 seals, there is reference about the small book that John was asked to eat and the book of Life. In the book of Life, the names of all believers that have God's seal on them, are written. Those whose names are written in this book shall be saved. They will have their tears wiped and will reign in heaven with eternal happiness. This will take place at the 2nd coming of the Lord.

In Ch. 21, St. John sees the New heaven and the New earth, it is said. The Apostle sees the New Jerusalem (holy city) coming down from God out of heaven. From the throne of Heaven, there was a great voice saying "Here, God's tabernacle is with man. this symbolizes the Lord's second coming and happy life to all redeemed saints. As God, the father and Jesus Christ the slain Lamb are seated on the thrones of this holy city there is brilliant light. No night is there. The river of living water flowing crystal clear from the throne and the tree of life on either bank, are seen. This is a beautiful picture of God dwelling with the redeemed believers and his angels. On the gate tower are written the names of 12 tribes and 12 Apostles - St. John finds.

Therefore the 24 elders seen near the throne of heaven, mentioned throughout the book of Rev: are the 12 tribal chiefs and the 12 Apostles, we have to consider. But some interpreters say that they are the representatives of those that are sanctified and bodily taken to Heaven. The 4 creatures with 6 rings each, seen in the midst of the throne and around, are cherubs, we can believe. 'The Lord of hosts dwelling in the midst of cherubs, it is said in 1 Samuel 44. In Ezekiel 1.5 also is said in detail about, Cherubs.

Questions :

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1. What happens when each vial of wrath is poured out.
2. Babylon, the Mother of Harlots. Who is pictured by this ? Why ?
3. The fall of the great Dragon (Satan) and the redemption of Gods people. Describe.
4. What is written in the book of Life.
5. Give a brief description of the beautiful city - the New Jerusalem.
6. Give a brief account of the eternal life that the redeemed believers get.

Memory Verse:

Rev: 22.17 "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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Lesson - 20

REVELATION IV – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Aim: To understand the teachings of Revelation based on the course of history.

Lessons 9, 10 & 11 were helpful to understand the basic things about the book of Revelation. Only the explanations of very important symbolic usages are included in the book.

One who attempts to study the book of Revelation should at least know the following points :-

1. The book of Revelation has to be studied in 7 parts. Each part Deals with the first coming of Christ, his life in this world, the crucifixion, death, ascension to heaven, second coming and the plan of Redemption.
2. The Israelites consider the number '7' as a complete (integral) number and gives importance in that 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 vials of wrath etc.
3. Satan who was pushed down from heaven for opposing God is always working against God and against man. Satan who prevented man from the happiness of Eden and eating the fruit of the tree of Life is finally defeated.
4. 'Babylon, the Mother of Harlots' symbolizes the Roman Empire. The Empire and its Emperors who persecuted Jesus Christ and the Apostles, killed many a male child, and shed the blood of thousands of saints, were subjected to God's wrath and punished.
5. Before God's anger fall upon the wicked people and destroyed them, the angel of God puts Gods seal on the foreheads of the believers and separates them. At the same time Satan puts the beasts seal on his followers. Those marked with the beasts seal will be subjected to God's wrath. The names of those with God's seal on their foreheads shall be written in the book of life. They will enjoy eternal happiness by the last judgment.
6. Around God's throne in heaven, 24 elders sit and praise God. Those who were beheaded for Christ dwell under the altar near the throne, praising God. It great multitude wearing white robes' washed and purified in the blood of Christ, enjoy the presence of God. In the mist of God's throne, dwell 4 creatures with 6 wings each - the Cherubs.
7. Cha. 11: 8-9 says, "The beast ascending from the bottomless pit, fighting and killing the two witnesses of God, their dead bodies tying on the city streets for 3½ days and later ascending to heaven, the Lambs wedding mentioned in Ch. 19: 7-8, the Armageddon war mentioned in chap. 20:8, the last judgment stated in chap. 20:11-13 the redeemed believers around the throne of God, enjoying heavenly bliss and the Lamb in New Jerusalem, the holy city mentioned in chi. 21:21 - 23; these and other things deserve special study.
8. The angel flying high in the sky mentioned in Rev. 4: 6-7 shows that before the second coming of Christ, even when the church is persecuted, God's gospel will be being preached throughout the world. What happened when the Russian rule that worked against Christ and Christians, ended and the new Russian rule began, is to be studied in relation with this subject. The missionaries from all over the world - Europe, America, China and so on, flew to Moscow, preached the gospel about Jesus, repentance and salvation. Moscow city resounded with gospel proclamations Leningrad was again renamed as St. Peter square. These are incidents of modern history. These missionaries, we can consider as the flying angels.
9. The old Babylon the present Iraq and the neighbouring regions and Euphrates river are mentioned several times in the book of Rev for that purpose; but it was not effective. Thus Isaiah's prophecy in Isa 54:17 was fulfilled. Israel, no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. So what is said in the book of Rev: about old Babylon and the unexpected occurrences there at the end of the 20th century are to be analyzed and studied in comparison.
10. The Lords second coming, the judgment, the redemption to God's people and the redeemed children of the church enjoying eternal bliss with God in New Jerusalem are undisputed things. The church should constantly

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proclaim the gospel about repentance and remission of sins. The church should take up the mission of the flying angel. Because the second coming of Jesus Christ is nearing, we should, await to receive Him, with prayer and repentance. This thought must be there in everyone who studies the book of Revelation.

Memory Verse:

Rev: 22:20 "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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PART 4

CHURCH HISTORY

Lesson 21

THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF MALANKARA CHURCH

Aim:- to learn the church history from 6th century to 16th century, based on historical records.

In classes 3 to 5, we studied a brief history of the Christian church from the beginning period to the 6th century and a detailed history from the 16th century till date in classes 6, 7 and 8. But the history of the long period of nine centuries between these two periods has not been the subject of study till now. Clear and undoubtable historical records to know the happenings of these times are very few. The travelogues of some western travelers, a few rock inscriptions and books besides the opinions and inferences of modern historians from their studies etc. help us to understand the history of the Middle period to some extent. So let us follow that track.

In the 6th century, Cosmos, a Christian traveler belonging to Alexandria in Egypt, visited Kerala during his world travel. Though a trader at first, he later became an ascetic (monk). In his book "Universal Christian Topography", he has recorded that the Christian church in Kerala during his visit, had progressed well. In every reference to St. Mary in that book, 'Mother of God' is the term used. As this is quite contrary to Nestorian. He has written that he saw here a well established church having many priests and deacons and good churches in addition to a Metropolitan that came from Persia.

Although there were true believers and Nestorian heretics in Persia in those days, it was the Catholicos of Selucia under the Patriarch of Antioch who was sending Metropolitans to Malankara. Therefore it is clear that the Malankara church was connected to the throne of Antioch.

The inscriptions on the Persian granite crosses seen in Kottayam Valia Palli (church) made in 7th and 8th centuries clearly show that the Malankara church maintained the true orthodox faith under the throne of Antioch and had not accepted the heresy of Nestorians. The inscription 'Jesus Christ, the true God died on the Cross' on the granite Cross strongly opposes the Nestorian heresy.

The second Christian migration of 822 A.D. is an important milestone in the history of Malankara church. Under the leadership of Sappore Easo, a Syrian trader, a company of Syrians including two Bishops, Mar Sabore and Mar Afroth arrived at Kollam, one of the main harbour-towns on the Kerala coast. As they received several concessions from the local ruler, they settled in Kollam and the neighbouring places, carried on trade and progressed; established churches and remained in the true faith.

In the 10th century, the Malankara Christians who had risen high economically and otherwise, ordained one of them as their king in a region near Kochi. After his time, that family ruled for some more years. This is known 'as villiar vattom', the only Christian royal family that ruled in Kerala. Having no children, this royal family gradually ended and the regions they ruled were annexed to the kingdom of Kochi. The Chenkol (Royal Rod) that was the symbol of kingly power of the villiar vattom kings was in later years presented by Malankara Christians to Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese navigator who came to Calicut. There are records about this in Portuguese history.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, the Antiochian church (Jacobite Syrian Orthodox church) was prospering. There were 103 Bishops and 20 Metropolitans ruling the church. At the same time, the Nestorian church weakened in Persia, their old centre of power and strong-hold. But, by the 13th century, the Antiochian church weakened owing to changing political situation. Neither the Patriarch of Antioch nor the Catholicos under him could send Bishops continuously to Malankara. The Coptic church too could not help Malankara. Utilizing this opportunity, at different times from the close of 15th century, some Nestorian Bishops came and worked in Malankara. As their dress, language and mode of worship were like that of the Jacobite Bishops, people, not knowing their real faith, accepted them. Thus the 16th century can be called the Nestorian period.

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But even though the Bishops who came to Malankara during this period were Nestorians, people did not accept their hereby and their teachings. There was a manuscript copy of the old ancient Syriac Bible that was in use before this period in Malankara which escaped from the hands of the Goan Bishop Menezis who destroyed all the great syriac books. This book was saved and kept in the Ranni church. This manuscript copy was later presented to the CMS missionary Dr.Claudius Buchanan by the Metropolitan Mar Dionysus I. In many parts of that book there are portions to be read on the various festival in the name of St. Mary which was not acceptable to the Nestorians. Thereby it is clear that the people of Malankara church stood firm in the Jacobite faith even during the period when the Nestorian Bishops ruled here.

It was in the beginning of the 14th century that a Roman Catholic Bishop John de Monte Carvino who started from Rome to China accidentally reached Kerala. The Christian church that existed in Kerala or India from the time of St.Thomas had no connection whatsoever with the Roman Catholic Church. In pursuance of this visit, various monastic congregation members and other church workers began to come to Kerala continuously. It was at Kollam that they first concentrated. From the time Vasco da Gama came to Calicut in 1498, the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Kerala gained strength. It was when Vasco da Gama came the second time (in 1502) that the Rod of Villiar Vattom royal family was presented (Chenkol) to him, as mentioned before.

From 1539, the Bishop of Goa, John de Alburquerque with the assistance of native kings, began an organized persecution of Malankara Christians who did not join the Roman Catholic church. They added to their side many people by giving money, giving free education with free boarding to students in the Catholic seminaries and the like.

The centre of these activities was Kodungalloor and the surrounding places. Following the advent of Menezis as the Arch Bishop in Goa, the persecutions against the Syrian Church aggravated. The Udayamperoor Synod (1599) that followed and the Koonankurisu Declaration (1653) are the consequences of that persecution. Even Roman Catholic historians are of the opinion that Archbishop Menzis had no jurisdiction over Malabar when this Synod of Diamper was convened and therefore it was illegitimate. If, at the Udayamperur Synod, the Malankara church was brought under the Roman Yoke in the presence of military force, at Koonankurisu, the majority of the people threw away the Roman Yoke and returned to the mother church under the holy apostolic throne of Antioch.

Questions

1. Who was the Christian traveler that visited Kerala in the 6th century ? What is the name of the book he wrote ?
2. How can you prove that Cosmos was not a Nestorian ?
3. Malankara Church was under the holy throne of Antioch. Give evidences.
4. When was the second Syrian migration ? Who was their leader? Who were the Bishops that came ?
5. Which is the sole Christian royal family that ruled in Kerala ? To whom was the 'Rod' of that royal family presented ?

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Lesson - 22

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Aim: To know the origin, growth, faith and rites etc. of various Orthodox churches.

The origin of all the various Orthodox churches throughout the world was in the Middle East. Therefore they are generally called Oriental churches or Eastern churches (During the early centuries only the Roman church was known as Western church). But in the matter of faith, Oriental churches stand divided as two main sections. The first section is '**the Oriental Orthodox churches**' which includes the Jacobite church. The main churches of this section are :- the Syrian Orthodox church (Jacobite church) founded with Headquarters in Antioch, the Egyptian or Coptic church with its Headquarters in Alexandria in Egypt and the Armenian church of Armenia which lies between the Black sea and the Caspian sea at the South East part of Europe. The second section is the 'Eastern Orthodox Churches' which includes the church with headquarters in Constantinople.

There are some radical differences regarding faith between the Oriental Orthodox churches (which includes our church) and the Eastern Orthodox churches.

1. The Oriental Orthodox churches recognize only the three synods of Nice, Constantinople and Ephesus as universal Synods. They do not accept the synod of Chalcedon and the others.
2. The Oriental churches reject the doctrine of the dual nature of the Messiah that is accepted by the churches of Rome and Constantinople.
3. The Oriental churches do not agree to make any change in the Nicene creed.
4. For the above reasons none of the Oriental churches has communion with the Eastern churches while there is communion among the various Oriental churches.

The Syrian (Syriac) Orthodox Church

When the promoters of the dual nature doctrine with royal support persecuted the Syrian Orthodox Church, the latter stood by their true faith and offered resistance. Following this many Bishops of the true faith were put to death in large number and the remaining ones were imprisoned. A critical stage approached when the source of ordaining priests and Bishops of the true faith would slowly disappear. It was at this stage that Jacob Burdana's undaunted activities and sufferings saved the church and the continuous succession of priesthood was maintained without any break . The intolerant enemies insultingly called the members of the faithful Antiochian church by the name 'Jacobites' meaning "those who followed Jacob". But the true believers who witnessed the great services of Jacob Burdana, accepted this insulting title as an honour. Thus it was from the 6th century that the Syrian Orthodox church of Antioch was known as the Jacobite church also. Hiding this historic fact, some catholic writers have tried to twist history by stating that the Jacobite church is a new church that originated in the 6th century. It was many years after establishing the Throne of Antioch in AD 37 that St. Peter first arrived in Rome. This is a historical reality that no one denies. Therefore it is indisputable that the throne of Antioch is more ancient than that of Rome.

The Russian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Greek and other Orthodox churches are all national churches that are within the boundaries of each country. But the Syrian Orthodox church is not a national church of Syria but is an International (universal) church that uses Syriac as official language. The early Headquarters of the church namely Antioch, Diarbaker, Mardeen were all in Turkey. From the 6th century onwards members of the church came under attack from other religious fundamentalists. The rulers of Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq etc were intolerant of the Christian religion and forcibly converted many members of the church to their religion and massacred all those who refused to be converted, making our church a church of martyrs. Only very few people escaped. Therefore, even today only a small percentage of the population are Christians in the regions of origin of the church. In the midst of these difficulties, the Antiochian church that was entrusted with the responsibility of the administration of all the east, constantly rendered necessary help and cooperation to the church in India by sending Bishops and the like. Thereby a considerable section of the Indian church stands firm in the true faith.

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The 20th century is a period of great development with respect to the Syrian church. In the beginning of this century the church had worked substantially only in West Asia and India. But as a result of the development and growth in this century, dioceses were formed and permanent Metropolitans were ordained and appointed in the United States in North America, Brazil in South America, Netherlands in Western Europe, Sweden in Northern Europe and Australia, therefore the church has had a global expansion.

The present head of the Syriac Orthodox Church is His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. He is the supreme head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church and resides at Damascus, Syria. The local head of the Syriac Orthodox Church in India is His Beatitude Mor Baselius Thomas I who is also the Catholicos of the East.

The Egyptian or Coptic Church

While the churches of Antioch and Rome feel proud of having been founded by St. Peter, the Egyptian church believe that St. Mark, the chief disciple of the St. Peter and gospel writer, is the founder of their church. It was universally recognized from the first century itself that the cities of Antioch, Rome and Alexandria were church capitals of equal status. In the earlier centuries the Christian church spread only in a small part of the African continent. That was in the countries on the Mediterranean coast and the North Eastern part of Africa. From the 6th century onwards, the Christian churches in the North African countries from Libya westwards, started becoming weaker. Only in Egypt and Ethiopia did the Christian church remain. According to the decision of Nicene synod they were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Alexandria. Following the title of 'Pope' taken by the Patriarch of Rome, the Patriarch of Alexandria was often referred to as the Alexandrian Pope by some historians.

Till the 20th century Egyptians were ordained and sent as the Bishops of Ethiopia by the Alexandrian patriarch. After the first world was in 1929, the Alexandrian Patriarch ordained a number of Ethiopian priests as Bishops as per the request of the Ethiopian Emperor who was a member of the Coptic church. Again in 1951, by Ethiopian pressure for national church, the Patriarch ordained an Ethiopian Bishop as Arch Bishop (Metropolitan) (Aboona) with the official name Basselios and gave him power to ordain Bishop for Ethiopia. Following this, in 1959, the Alexandrian Patriarch gave recognition to the title of Patriarch itself to the Aboona of Ethiopia subject to some conditions.

Conditions mutually agreed to

1. The Alexandrian patriarch himself continued as the Supreme Head of the Universal Coptic church which includes Ethiopia.
2. The authority to ordain the patriarch of Ethiopia will vest only with the Alexandrian patriarch.
3. The right to call together the universal Coptic synod and to preside over it shall also belong to the Alexandrian Patriarch.
4. When the Bishops assume position there for Ethiopia, they shall declare their obedience to the Alexandrian patriarch as to their Patriarch.
5. The Ethiopian church shall mention and remember the names of both the Patriarchs in the 'Thubden'.

The Armenian Church

We have no clear information about the origin of the Armenian church. Till the 5th century, the Bishops of Armenia were under the administration of the Arch Bishop of Caesarea who was under the Patriarch of Antioch. At that time the language of worship there was Syriac. Therefore we can legitimately think that the Armenian church originated by the missionary activities of the Syrian Orthodox church. In the 5th century the Persian Empire conquered the Armenian region; following this the Caesarian administration and the use of Syriac language in worship ended. Thereafter they became a national and autocephalous church using the Armenian language in worship. Nevertheless they did not make any alterations in the faith and rites. Thereby, even today, it is a church that has communion with the Antiochian church and the Coptic church. Although it was continuing

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for several decades as a Republic in the Communist state of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) the true faith and the church there did not die. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia is now an independent Republic. The Headquarters of the Catholicos - the Head of the church - is in Echmiadry, the Armenian city.

Eastern Orthodox churches

It is the church under the Patriarch of Constantinople, that can be treated as the Mother church of the various Eastern Orthodox churches of today. Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria - only these three ancient Patriarchal capitals existed at the time (325) of the Synod of Nice . According to the decision of the Synod of Constantinople (381) the city was raised to a Patriarchal capital on a par with the other three cities of the political consideration that it was the capital of the empire. The other thrones had to accept this decision. Nevertheless, in 518, the then Patriarch of Constantinople took for himself the title 'Ecumenical patriarch', may be he thought his position had a lesser ancestry than the other Patriarchs. The successors also continue using this title.

Gradually the Roman Empire went to pieces. Different nations with Christian majority took form in its place. The churches of the nations which thus became free, in course of time, ignored the supremacy of the patriarch of Constantinople. Each one of the Bishops of the capital cities of each country, at different times, declared himself the patriarch of his country. More than a dozen countries in Europe claimed autocephaly and the Eastern Orthodox National churches came into existence. Although the Ecumenical patriarchs refused to recognize these independent churches then and there, gradually, the National churches of Greece, Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Cyprus etc. became a reality. Because the origin of the church of Constantinople was not from Apostolic heredity but in the name of political significance, gradually Constantinople had to recognize the churches that gained freedom under the same consideration. Though, each of these churches was independent in internal administrative affairs, the Ecumenical Patriarch has been given the approval by the other churches to call together the General Synod of the Eastern Orthodox churches and to preside over it.

Even though the various Eastern Orthodox Churches that accept the dual nature doctrine and recognized the decisions of the synods of Chalcedon and others, are in communion with each other, they do not have this relation with the Oriental Orthodox churches.

Questions

1. Which are the churches that come under the section 'Oriental Orthodox Churches'?
2. What are the existing radical differences between Oriental Orthodox churches and the Eastern Orthodox churches.
3. The true believers accepted this insulting name as an honour. Which insulting name ? why ?
4. How can we prove that the throne of Antioch is more ancient than that of Rome.
5. The Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church is considered as an international church, today. Why ?
6. Who is the founder of the Egyptian church.
7. Who gave recognition to the patriarchal status to the Aboona of Ethiopia. When ? What are the conditions mutually agreed upon ?
8. Who took the title of honour 'Ecumenical Patriarch' for himself ? When ? why ?

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Part - 5

Doctrines of faith

Lesson 24

THE HOLY CHURCH

Aim: To learn what is meant by church.

The church is a community of the faithful (believers). The Head of the church is Christ (Eph. 1.22). The church is the body which is connected to the head that is Christ.

The church can be divided into two, the New Testament church and the Old Testament Church. Jesus Christ, the son of God came into the world and saved mankind from Satan's bondage by shedding his blood. He preached the gospel through his Apostles. The community of believers which Christ founded and the Apostles looked after is called 'New Testament church'. God's people beginning with Abraham the father of Believers, David, Israelites and all who believed in God before the coming of Christ are called the 'Old Testament Church'. In the holy Bible the Church is compared to three things.

1. The bride of Christ, the bridegroom (Mat 9.16, 26.1. Rev. 19.7)
2. The Church is Christ's body (Rom 12.5, Eph. 1.23)
3. The Church is a house (Mat 16. 18, 1 Pet 2.5)

Explanation

1. The Church is Christ's bride.

The relation between Christ and church is pictured as the relation between bridegroom and bride. As the bridegroom and bride love each other, live and grow together joyfully, the church, a community of believers should dedicate everything to Christ the bridegroom, live together in joy and sorrow and attain eternal happiness. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride so shall thy God rejoice over there' says Isaiah 62.5.

2. The church is the body of Christ.

Christ is the head and church the body. Without the head nothing can be done in the body. There are many organs in the body that function jointly with the head. Each member of the church is an organ of the body that is the church.

3. The holy church is likened to a house.

The members of the church are the stones joined to the corner stone that is Christ, of the spiritual house. The church is a beautiful house built like this. It is built upon the rock that is Peter. Mat 16 . 18 "you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The same idea is given in 1 Pet 2.5 "Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house".

The church founded by Christ remains today surviving all crises. The church will exist till the advent of Christ. The reason for its existence is that the way of Christ is always being preached. The Lord will redeem the church on His second coming. The redeemed members of the church shall live with God in eternal happiness.

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Duties of the church

1. Preaching the gospel. The most important duty of the church is preaching the gospel. "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark. 16.15).

2. Christian service is the duty of Christians or the Church. "If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13.14). The members of the Church are bound to love one another and help one another.

3. To grow in the power of God is the duty of the Christian Church. The Church should be able to grow in the power of God (Colos 2-6-7).

4. It is the duty of the Church to give alms with charity and mind the strangers (guests). Freely you get; freely you give (Mat 10. 18).

"Beloved thou doest to the brethren and to strangers which have borne witness of thy charity before the church" (3 John 1.5-6). Help one another especially the poor and this is the duty of the Church

The qualities or signs of the Church.

1. The Church is universal (2) The Church is Apostolic (3) The Church is (only) one (4) The Church is holy. Universal means the church is spread all over the universe. The Apostles have brought into practice many regulations and modes of worship. It is traditionally being recognized. So the church is said to be Apostolic. The Church is one. As God is one, God's people - the Church - is one also. The Church is holy. Christ is the head of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ who is the head. So the Church is holy.

Questions

1. What is meant by Church ?
2. Which things is the Church compared to ?
3. 'The Church is a house' Explain.
4. What are the duties of the Church ?
5. What are the qualities (signs) of the Church ?

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Lesson - 25

GOD

Aim: To see the true God who incarnated to witness truth.

God is almighty, creator of all, all pervading, real truth and full of love.

It is said in the creed "Almighty father, the creator of heaven and earth, all that is visible and invisible, true and one God, we believe in"

As God is truth, God is love. So also He is one. There is only one god. Monotheistic faith is a very lawful fact.

Man's search for the omnipresent and omnipotent God is like one who stands at the shore and wishes to study about the ocean and seeing the pearl oysters, coloured sand particles and some beings washed ashore by the huge waves, takes a decision about the great ocean. Man searches for God from the beginning of the world.

The search continues now also. But when the 'Messiah', the son of God incarnated into the world, God revealed himself to the world. Nevertheless all people could not understand God. Some people still think that God is the forces of the universe. Some others worship certain mighty persons or beings as God. We can believe that the search for God will ultimately reach the true and one God.

God is omnipresent. God exists every where, in everything, and every now and then. Nobody can do anything, hidden from God.

God has no beginning or end. In God, there is no beginning or end. Isaiah 41.4.

God is spirit. Because God has no beginning, He has no body. One who has body will have to be controlled in body, space and time. God is not to be condensed thus. "God is a spirit." John 4.24:

God is only one. Only one God is there, the true one God.

Although many people searching God have reached many Gods, they must be able to find out the real God. That is the true one God.

God is truth, is love. That which is truth is God. In John 18. 37-38 Jesus Christ replies to Pilot's question thus "I am King and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." Pilot asks Christ "What is truth ? " God is love, full of mercy Because God loved the world, He sent His son to the world for man's salvation. God is waiting with mercy, for the salvation of all mankind.

Questions

1. Who is God ?
2. 'God is one'. What do you understand from this ?
3. 'God has no beginning or end' Explain.
4. 'God is truth', is love'. Explain.

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Lesson - 26

HOLY TRINITY

Aim: To understand the doctrine of Trinity.

There are three personalities or Knumas in God. Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three 'Knumas' join in God; that is the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of trinity is an important faith like the monotheistic faith. By the term 'Knuma' is not meant 'having special body but to mean 'having mind or power of decision thinking power, ability to work'. We do not consider that a corpse has a personality even though it has a body.

We shall examine the verses referring to trinity in the Bible. "Then God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gene. 1.26) Jesus Christ directs his disciples. "Therefore you go and baptize in the name of father, son and Holy Ghost, and all that I ordered you.....". 'At the time of the baptism and came out of water, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And a voice from heaven saying 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Mat 3. 16-17). Thus it happened, it is written. This part gives the clearest evidence about Trinity. "And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14.16). It is clear from these Bible verses that the doctrine of Trinity is according to the Bible. (Biblical)

There is no difference in status, size or power among the three 'Knumas' Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three personalities have one essence (meaning) one Kingship, one nature, one will, one thinking and one power.

From saying 'father' one need not think there was a time when the son was not there. Like the father, the son too has neither beginning nor end. The Holy ghost proceeds from the father and is taken from the son. Jesus says to his disciples, "He who hath seen me, hath seen the father". Thus there is trinity in unity and unity in trinity. This is the true faith.

By saying 'Son', we can say he is born. By saying 'Father', we can think he is the generator also. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and is taken from the Son. Viewed thus, we can understand that the 'Knuma' Father, son and Holy Ghost have one nature and different qualities. That is fatherhood, birth, and proceeding.

'Unity in Trinity'. To fully understand this supernatural mystery, a divine revelation is needed. God cannot be compared to another. Still, to understand the mystery of trinity two examples are given below.

God is light. So God can be likened to the sun. Where there is sun, there is sun's ray or light. Where there is sunlight there is heat. Heat and light are different qualities. But all these are contained in the sun.

Similarly, God can be compared to a full circuit. We know there is energy in a battery. But to be convinced of it, the two poles of the battery should be connected to a bulb. Then the bulb will glow and give light. The circle of battery, and bulb forms the circuit. This circuit can be likened to God. Battery represents God the father, wire, God the son, and bulb the Holy Ghost. There are three factors here. When the three unite it works as a power circuit having only one factor. But they all together show one God.

God is only one God.

Questions

1. What is the Holy Trinity ?
2. Prove that the doctrine of Trinity is an accordance with the Bible.
3. Trinity in unity, unity in Trinity. What is meant by this. Explain.

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4. 'Knuma' or personality. What do we understand by this ?

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Lesson - 27

RESPONSE IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST (QURBANA)

(Believers who participate in the Holy Qurbana have to utter all the responses timely and take part in the worship actively and with devotion and faith)

1. After the public celebration of Holy Qurbana begins, the sexton (reader) stands on the step of the 'Madbaha' at the northern side, facing west and says, "from the book of Acts of the Apostles - Barekhamor".

What is the response of the people then ?

"Glory be to the Lord of the Apostles and his mercy (blessings) be upon us for ever."

2. Standing on the step of 'Madbaha' at the southern side and facing west, the reader says, 'from the epistle of St. Paul.....Barekhamor.

What is the response by the people then ?

"Glory be to the Lord of the Apostles and His mercy be upon us for ever".

3. Before the reading of the Holy Gospel, the priest says, from.....Apostle, that preaches life and salvation to the world ."

What is the response ?

"Blessed is He who has come and is to come. Praise be to Him who sent him for our salvation and His mercy be upon us all for ever.

4. Following, the priest says, "At the time of the dispensation of Jesus Messiah our God and saviour, these happened thus." What is the response then ?

People: "Thus we believe and confess."

5. After the priest has finished the 'sedra', what should be the response of the people ? People - "Amen. May the Lord accept your ministrations and help us by your prayers."

6. When the priest says "Peace be to you all" and gives peace what should people say ? People: "And be with your spirit."

7. When the sexton says "Let us give peace to one another, everyone to his neighbour by holy and divine embrace." what is the response of people. People : "O Lord God, make us worthy of this peace all the days of our lives".

8. Before the blessing of the bread and wine by the priest, the sexton/deacon calls out, "The priest offers this living sacrifice to God the father the Lord of all things on behalf of us all, in peace and reconciliation", what is the response then?

People : "This Qurbana is mercy, peace, sacrifice and thanks giving"

9. When the priest, waving his hands over the holy Qurbana, says, "Let us praise the Lord with fear" what is the people's response ?

People: "It is right and just to do so"

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(Praising the Lord with fear)

10. Afterwards the Priest says a prayer. What is the response ?

People: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty by whose glory, the heaven and earth.....are filled, hosanna in the highest. Blest is the name of the Lord God. Glory be to Him in the highest.

11. After blessing the wine the Priest again says, "And He commanded, do this for my remembrance." What is the response at this time ?

People : "We commemorate Thy death, O Lord, and we confess Thy resurrection and await thy second coming. May thy blessings be upon us all."

12. When the sexton/deacon says "How awful is this time ! wherein the Holy spirit comes down and hovers upon this Eucharist - stand ye still in reverence and pray," what is the response ?

People : "Peace be with us and good will be to us all."

13. "Answer me O Lord !" calling out thus three times, the Priest invokes the Holy spirit. What is the peoples response then ?

People : "Kurielaison Kurielaison Kurielaison."

14. When the Priest raises the 'peelasa' and consecrates, what is the people's response ?

People "None is Holy save the one holy Father, the one holy Son and the one holy Spirit Amen,

15. When the Priest raises the 'Kasa' and consecrates, what is the response ?

People : "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the living Holy spirit, one God for ever and ever, Amen."
"

16. Just before the Priest, holding the Kasa and Peelasa turns to the west, the sexton says "Let us all say aloud" what is the response ?

People : "Praised and adored are the Father, Son and Holy ghost. To Him be praise from the beginning, for generations to generations .

"Haleloo-yyaah"

17. Just before the Qurbana ends the Priest turns to the west and blesses the people. Before the curtain closes what is the response of people ?

People: "Amen - May the Lord accept your Qurbana and help us by your prayers".

In Class 9 - Study Prayers and all the songs of the Holy Qurbana for the Examination.

