

INDEPENDENT SYRIAN CHURCH OF MALABAR THOZHIYOOR

SUWISESHA SANGHAM

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXT BOOK

EIGHTH LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

In the present Sunday School curriculum of the Independent Syrian Church of Malabar, there is insufficient material to teach the faith principles, traditions and the history of the church. The Syrian church still observes all those traditions that are Bible-based, commanded by Christ and which were obeyed and followed by the disciples. Of late, it has been brought to notice, that there is a tendency to criticize the following of these traditions. People who have not understood the purity and holiness of the rites that are observed by the Syrian Christians get entangled in such criticisms and denounce the faith principles of the Church. Therefore, the Suvisesha Sangham of the church decided to include the worship order, faith truths and church history along with the Bible Lessons in the Sunday School curriculum and selected and appointed a committee for the implementation of the same. It has been decided to use this book which has been prepared and published by this committee at the eighth level. Particular acknowledgement is hereby registered to Late Mr. K.C. Abraham who gave a hand-written form of this book.

This has been published not just for a student to learn by heart, it is for all the believers in the church, and for all those who would like to know more about the church.

The mark list for the various sections for the Common Annual Examination that is conducted by the Suvisesha Sangham is given below:

PART ONE – BIBLE LESSONS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| a. Old Testament and New Testament | 50% |
| b. Memory verses 1 | 10% |

PART TWO – WORSHIP ORDER

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| a. Songs for worship | 5% |
| b. Worship Bible portions | 5% |
| c. General knowledge | 10% |

PART THREE – FAITH TRUTHS

PART FOUR – CHURCH HISTORY

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PART ONE

BIBLE LESSONS

A. OLD TESTAMENT

1. Prophetic verses on the birth of Jesus

God created man in His own image. Eve was also created from the first man Adam. God believed that they would love God and worship Him with praise and thanksgiving. However, as God allowed them to reason for themselves and act accordingly, it caused them to sin. God had given His Ten Commandments and all the Laws associated with it only from the time of Moses. Till then they discerned between good and bad according to the inner awareness that God gave them through their conscience. When the devil pressurises and influences the virtuous thoughts of man he is tempted to forsake God's desire and act according to his own desires. Thus sin spread across the world.

Man overthrew the good intentions of God. So the LORD said, "I will wipe out these people I have created, and also the animals and the birds." – Genesis 6:7. God liked Noah who lived during those days. He was repentant of his sins and relied on God for his salvation and respected the inner voice of God in him. So God destroyed everybody except Noah and his family in the flood.

Human beings increased in number as descendants of Noah. However, one among them in Babylonia got a crooked idea – to build a tower up to the sky so that they would not get scattered. God confused their language. He obstructed their endeavour. People fell into sin again. God saw one good man among them – Abraham. God took him from among the evil people and led him to Canaan so that he would know about God and learn His ways. People increased in number again. When Abraham's brother's son Lot began to get interested in earthly comforts he forgot God. Sodom and Gomorrah which was under his leadership became the centre for all evil. By the intercession of Abraham God saved Lot and his family and destroyed the twin cities with burning sulphur.

Even then sin was not removed from the earth. So God gave the Ten Commandments written on stone tablets through Moses so that people would become aware of sin. If the people's actions were against the will of God it would be considered sinful; and so God gave the Laws and the sacrifices to be offered unto Him for forgiveness of sins.

As ages passed by, all sacrifices became mere exhibitions. And God grieved about it. Then God started talking to the people through prophets.

"Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering to me? I have had more than enough of the sheep you burn as sacrifices and of the fat of your fine animals. I am tired of the blood of bulls and sheep and goats..." (*Good News*) – Isaiah 1:11

"The LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God." - Micah 6:8

"I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me" – Hosea 6:6

“These people claim to worship me, but their words are meaningless, and their hearts are somewhere else. Their religion is nothing but human rules and traditions, which they have simply memorized.” – Isaiah 29:13

“Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.” – Isaiah 58:7

“Turn to me now and be saved, people all over the world! I am the only God there is.” – Isaiah 45:22

“But even now,” says the LORD, “repent sincerely and return to me with fasting and weeping and mourning. Let your broken heart show your sorrow; tearing your clothes is not enough.” Come back to the LORD your God. He is kind and full of mercy; he is patient and keeps his promise; he is always ready to forgive and not punish.” – Joel 2:12,13

Though God spoke through the prophets to the people, without God they kept moving into sin and more sin. God does not desire the destruction of even one man. He was trying to bring humans into the straight path again. So God took a new decision - He would send His own son into the world and give His own life as ransom and save everybody. There is an indication of this in the book of Genesis:

“All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed your descendants—all because you (Abraham) obeyed my command.” Genesis 22:18.

Isaiah said: “But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.” – Isaiah 53:5

Prophet Zechariah says: “I will fill the descendants of David and the other people of Jerusalem with the spirit of mercy and the spirit of prayer. They will look at the one whom they stabbed to death, and they will mourn for him like those who mourn for an only child. They will mourn bitterly, like those who have lost their first-born son.” – Zechariah 12:10

In the book of Deuteronomy Moses has written:

“I will send them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will tell him what to say, and he^[a] will tell the people everything I command.” – Deuteronomy 18:18

The prophetic words that God will send His son into the world and how God fulfilled those words as recorded in the Gospels are given below:

Jeremiah 23:5 - The LORD says, “The time is coming when I will choose as king a righteous descendant of David. That king will rule wisely and do what is right and just throughout the land. (Matthew 1:1)

Numbers 24:17 ... A king, like a bright star, will arise in that nation. Like a comet he will come from Israel. (Matthew 2:2)

Hosea 11:1 - "When Israel was a child, I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son"

Daniel 2:44 - At the time of those rulers the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end. It will never be conquered, but will completely destroy all those empires and then last forever. (Matthew 12:28)

Micah 5:2 - The LORD says, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times." (Matthew 2:6, John 7:42)

Isaiah 7:14 - Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman^[b] who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.' (Matthew 1:22, Luke 1:31)

Psalms 89:36-37 - He will always have descendants, and I will watch over his kingdom as long as the sun shines. It will be as permanent as the moon, that faithful witness in the sky." (Luke 1:33)

Isaiah 9:7 - He will rule as King David's successor, basing his power on right and justice, from now until the end of time. (Luke 3:31)

Psalms 2:7 - "I will announce," says the king, "what the LORD has declared. He said to me: 'You are my son; today I have become your father.'" (Luke 1:35)

Isaiah 60:6, 9 - They will come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense. People will tell the good news of what the LORD has done!... They are ships coming from distant lands, bringing God's people home. They bring with them silver and gold to honour the name of the LORD, The holy God of Israel... (Matthew 2:11)

The wise men who were instructed by God not to go to Herod returned to their own lands by a different route. Herod, when he realised that the wise men had deceived him sent his men and killed all boys under the age of two who were in Bethlehem and its suburbs.

Prophet Jeremiah refers to this wailing in his prophecy:

Jeremiah 31:15 - "A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping. Rachel is crying for her children; they are gone, and she refuses to be comforted. (Matthew 2:17-18)

As God had instructed Joseph in a dream they had gone to Egypt. So Baby Jesus was saved from the child massacre.

Matthew 2:23 and Luke 2:52 says: ...so he went to the province of Galilee and made his home in a town named Nazareth. And so what the prophets had said came true: "He will be called a Nazarene."

As all those who wanted to take away the life of Baby Jesus had died, the angel of the Lord told Joseph to return to the land of Israel. They came and settled in Nazareth in Galilee. Only St. Matthew and St. Luke have recorded Jesus as having lived in Nazareth. St. Matthew

recorded it as a fulfilment of a prophecy. However, there is no such prophecy recorded as said by anyone.

The Hebrew word for 'branch' is 'ne-ser'. Prophetic words that denote that meaning are given below:

Isaiah 11:1 - ...but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants. (Matthew 2:23, Luke 2:51)

Zechariah 3:8 -...I will reveal my servant, who is called The Branch! (Matthew 2:23, Luke 2:51)

Zechariah 6:12 - LORD Almighty says, 'The man who is called The Branch will flourish where he is and rebuild the LORD's Temple.' (Matthew 2:23, Luke 2:51)

Leviticus 12:3 - On the eighth day, the child shall be circumcised. (Luke 2:21)

Exodus 13:2 - The LORD said to Moses, "Dedicate all the first-born males to me, for every first-born male Israelite and every first-born male animal belongs to me."
(Luke 2:23)

Leviticus 12:6 - When the time of her purification is completed, whether for a son or daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of the LORD's presence a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. (Luke 2:24)

Isaiah 9:6 - A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, "Wonderful Counsellor," "Mighty God," "Eternal Father," "Prince of Peace." (Luke 2:11)

Malachi 4:4 - "But before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes, I will send you the prophet Elijah." (Matthew 11:14, Luke 1:17)

Malachi 3:1 - "I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me." Matthew 11:10, Luke 7:27)

Isaiah 40:3 - 4 - A voice cries out, "Prepare in the wilderness a road for the LORD! Clear the way in the desert for our God! Fill every valley; level every mountain. The hills will become a plain, and the rough country will be made smooth." (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3)

Malachi 3:3 - He will come to judge like one who refines and purifies silver. As a metalworker refines silver and gold, so the LORD's messenger will purify the priests...

2. Prophetic verses on the Public Ministry of Jesus

Jesus had taken baptism from John the Baptist before John could be imprisoned because of Herodias. Jesus was thirty years old then. During the baptism, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove and dwelt in Jesus making known the presence of God. Prophet Isaiah speaks of this incident in the following manner:

Isaiah 11:2 – ‘The spirit of the LORD will give him wisdom and the knowledge and skill to rule his people. He will know the LORD's will and honour him...’ (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, John 1:32)

After receiving the baptism, the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. When Jesus had fasted there for 40 days he was hungry. Then the devil said to him “If you are God's Son, order these stones to turn into bread.” And Jesus answered: “The scripture says, ‘Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks.’”

Deuteronomy 8:3 – ‘You must not depend on bread alone to sustain you, but on everything that the LORD says.’ (Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4)

Psalms 91:11, 12 – ‘God will put his angels in charge of you to protect you wherever you go. They will hold you up with their hands to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones.’ (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10)

Deuteronomy 6:16 - “Do not put the LORD your God to the test...” (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12)

Deuteronomy 6:13 – ‘Honour the LORD your God, worship only him...’ (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8)

Jesus went away to Galilee after the temptation by the devil. He did not stay in Nazareth, but went to Capernaum, a town by Lake Galilee, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. There he began to preach “Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of heaven is near!”

Isaiah 9: 1-2 - The land of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali was once disgraced, but the future will bring honour to this region, from the Mediterranean eastward to the land on the other side of the Jordan, and even to Galilee itself, where the foreigners live. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. (Matthew 4:14-16)

Jeremiah 50:6 - “My people are like sheep whose shepherds have let them get lost in the mountains. They have wandered like sheep from one mountain to another, and they have forgotten where their home is. (Matthew 10:6)

Psalms 22:22 - I will tell my people what you have done; I will praise you in their assembly (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:16)

Isaiah 61:1-3 - The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit. He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison. He has sent me to proclaim that

the time has come when the LORD will save his people and defeat their enemies. He has sent me to comfort all who mourn, to give to those who mourn in Zion joy and gladness instead of grief, a song of praise instead of sorrow. (Luke 4:18,19)

Isaiah 49:6 – “...I will also make you a light to the nations — so that all the world may be saved.” (John 1:8)

Psalms 45:2 - You are the most handsome of men; you are an eloquent speaker. God has always blessed you. (Luke 4:22)

Psalms 37:11 - ...but the humble will possess the land and enjoy prosperity and peace. (Matthew 5:5)

Isaiah 55:1 - “Come, everyone who is thirsty — here is water! Come, you that have no money — buy grain and eat! (Matthew 5:6)

Job 25:3 - Can anyone count the angels who serve him? Is there any place where God's light does not shine? (Matthew 5:45)

Psalms 118:22 - The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all. (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17)

Isaiah 8:14,15 - Because of my awesome holiness I am like a stone that people stumble over; I am like a trap that will catch the people of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel and the people of Jerusalem. Many will stumble; they will fall and be crushed. They will be caught in a trap.”

Psalms 110:1 - The LORD said to my lord, “Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.” (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42)

Exodus 3:6 – “I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (Matthew 22:32)

Psalms 69:8 - I am like a stranger to my relatives, like a foreigner to my family. (John 7:5)

Isaiah 6:9, 10 - So he (Jehovah) told me to go and give the people this message: “No matter how much you listen, you will not understand. No matter how much you look, you will not know what is happening.” Then he said to me, “Make the minds of these people dull, their ears deaf, and their eyes blind, so that they cannot see or hear or understand. If they did, they might turn to me and be healed.” (Matthew 13:14)

Haggai 2:21-22 - “I am about to shake heaven and earth and overthrow kingdoms and end their power. “ (Matthew 24:7)

Micah 7:6 - In these times sons treat their fathers like fools, daughters oppose their mothers, and young women quarrel with their mothers-in-law; your enemies are the members of your own family. (Matthew 10:21, 36)

A multitude of people thronged around Jesus to listen to his advices forgetting everything including food and drink and even personal needs. This was because, Jesus explained every idea with illustrating parables and in a manner that anyone could understand. Comparing the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and all the people listening to his sermons to seeds to be sown in the fields are examples of using simple ideas that the ordinary man could relate to

Psalms 78:2 - I am going to use wise sayings and explain mysteries from the past. (Matthew 13:35)

As the prophets have spoken, Jesus Christ during his public ministry healed many sick people.

Isaiah 29:18,19 - When that day comes, the deaf will be able to hear a book being read aloud, and the blind, who have been living in darkness, will open their eyes and see. Poor and humble people will once again find the happiness which the LORD, the holy God of Israel, gives. (Matthew 11:4, 5)

Isaiah 35:5 - The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear. (Luke 7:22)

Isaiah 42:6, 7 - "I, the LORD, have called you and given you power to see that justice is done on earth. Through you I will make a covenant with all peoples; through you I will bring light to the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind and set free those who sit in dark prisons. (John 9:17)

Isaiah 50:5 - The LORD has given me understanding, and I have not rebelled or turned away from him. (Mark 7:35)

Isaiah 53:1 - "Who would have believed what we now report? Who could have seen the LORD's hand in this?" (John 12:38)

Micah 4:6,7 - "The time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will gather together the people I punished, those who have suffered in exile. They are crippled and far from home, but I will make a new beginning with those who are left, and they will become a great nation. I will rule over them on Mount Zion from that time on and forever." (Matthew 11:5)

Isaiah 42:1-3 - The LORD says, "Here is my servant, whom I strengthen — the one I have chosen, with whom I am pleased. I have filled him with my Spirit, and he will bring justice to every nation. He will not shout or raise his voice or make loud speeches in the streets. He will not break off a bent reed nor put out a flickering lamp. (Matthew 12:17, 18)

Besides healing the sick Jesus during his public ministry performed a lot of miracles. There are prophecies about that.

Psalms 65:7 - You calm the roar of the seas and the noise of the waves; you calm the uproar of the peoples. (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39)

Psalms 107:29 - He calmed the raging storm, and the waves became quiet. (Luke 8:24)

Job 9:8 - No one helped God spread out the heavens or trample the sea monster's back. (Matthew 14:26)

2 Kings 4:43 - ...but he (Elisha's servant) answered, "Do you think this is enough for a hundred men?" Elisha replied, "Give it to them to eat, because the LORD says that they will eat and still have some left over." (Matthew 15:33; Luke 9:17; John 6:9)

Psalms 33:9 - When he spoke, the world was created; at his command everything appeared. (Luke 5:4)

People used to follow him in crowds because of his interesting dialogues using parables and relevant sermons and seeing the miracles he was performing. Such a crowd movement became a threat to the Jewish leadership. So the Pharisees and scribes followed Jesus in order to accuse him of blasphemy in either his words or deeds. They too relied on the word of God for their arguments:

Deuteronomy 23:25 - When you walk along a path in someone else's grain field, you may eat all the grain you can pull off with your hands... (Matthew 12:1)

1 Samuel 21:6 - So the priest gave David the sacred bread... (Matthew 12:4)

Leviticus 24:9 - The bread belongs to Aaron and his descendants, and they shall eat it in a holy place, because this is a very holy part of the food offered to the LORD for the priests. (Matthew 12:2)

Isaiah 49:24 - Can you take away a soldier's loot? (Matthew 12:29)

Psalms 82:6 - 'You are gods,' I said; 'all of you are children of the Most High.' (John 10:34)

Prophetic verses on the death of Jesus on the Cross

It was with the aid of false witnesses that the Jewish leaders executed their plan to inflict capital punishment on Jesus for blasphemy in action or word. The prophetic verses on this are as follows:

Psalms 2:2 - Their kings revolt, their rulers plot together against the LORD and against the king he chose. (Mark 3:6; John 11:47)

Amos 9:9 - "I will give the command and shake the people of Israel like grain in a sieve. I will shake them among the nations to remove all who are worthless." (Luke 22:31)

Psalms 35:11 - Evil people testify against me and accuse me of crimes I know nothing about. (Matthew 26:59)

Psalms 27:12 - Don't abandon me to my enemies, who attack me with lies and threats. (Matthew 26:60; Mark 14:58)

There was one more reason why the Jewish Leaders were doubly vengeful towards Jesus. The people had made Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem as a royal entry. Moreover, he drove out all the merchants and buyers and sellers in the Temple at Jerusalem. They did not like this authoritative action of Jesus.

Zechariah 9:9 - Rejoice, rejoice, people of Zion! Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey — on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Matthew 21:4 ; Mark 11:7)

Leviticus 23:40 - On that day take some of the best fruit from your trees, take palm branches and limbs from leafy trees, and begin a religious festival to honor the LORD your God. (Matthew 21:8)

Seeing the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the Temple they inquired:

Exodus 2:14 - "Who made you our ruler and judge?" (Matthew 21:23)

Jesus observed the Feast that every Jew is supposed to keep as per the Law.

Deuteronomy 16:16 - "All the men of your nation are to come to worship the LORD three times a year at the one place of worship: at Passover,..." (John 4:45)

Jeremiah 31:31 - The LORD says, "The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20)

Psalms 41:9 - Even my best friend, the one I trusted most, the one who shared my food, has turned against me. (Matthew 26:23; Luke 22:16; John 13:18)

In order to fulfil the prophecies, Satan used Judas to betray Jesus. Jesus was severely persecuted:

Zechariah 11:12 - I said to them, "If you are willing, give me my wages. But if not, keep them." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver as my wages. (Matthew 27:9)

Zechariah 11:13 - The LORD said to me, "Put them in the Temple treasury."^[a] So I took the thirty pieces of silver—the magnificent sum they thought I was worth—and put them in the Temple treasury. (Matthew 27:9-10)

Isaiah 53:5,6 - But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received... But the LORD made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved. (Matthew 8:17)

Isaiah 53:7 - "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word. (Mark 14:61)

Isaiah 50:6 - I bared my back to those who beat me. I did not stop them when they insulted me, when they pulled out the hairs of my beard and spit in my face. (Matthew 26:67)

Psalms 38:13, 14 - I am like the deaf and cannot hear, like the dumb and cannot speak. I am like those who do not answer, because they cannot hear. (John 19:9)

Pilate washed his hands before sentencing Jesus to death, so as not to be guilty of an innocent man's blood on his hands.

Leviticus 24:15, 16 - Then tell the people of Israel that anyone who curses God must suffer the consequences and be put to death. Any Israelite or any foreigner living in Israel who curses the LORD shall be stoned to death by the whole community. (John 19:7)

Zechariah 13:7 - The LORD Almighty says, "Wake up, sword, and attack the shepherd who works for me! Kill him, and the sheep will be scattered. I will attack my people. (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27)

Psalms 22:7 - All who see me make fun of me; they stick out their tongues and shake their heads. (Matthew 27:39)

Isaiah 53:3 - We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him — we ignored him as if he were nothing. (Matthew 27:29; Mark 9:12; Luke 23:11)

Psalms 69:19, 20 - You know how I am insulted, how I am disgraced and dishonoured; you see all my enemies. Insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. I had hoped for sympathy, but there was none; for comfort, but I found none. (Matthew 27:29)

Psalms 38:11 - My friends and neighbours will not come near me, because of my sores; even my family keeps away from me. (Luke 23:49)

Psalms 69:4 - Those who hate me for no reason are more numerous than the hairs of my head. My enemies tell lies against me; they are strong and want to kill me. They made me give back things I did not steal. (John 15:25)

Psalms 22:16 – An evil gang is around me; like a pack of dogs they close in on me; they tear at my hands and feet. (John 19:18)

Isaiah 53:12 - ... He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven.” (Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37)

Psalms 69:21 – When I was hungry, they gave me poison; when I was thirsty, they offered me vinegar. (Matthew 27:34, 48; Luke 23:36; John 19:29)

Psalms 22:18 – They gamble for my clothes and divide them among themselves. (Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24)

Psalms 22:1 – My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (Matthew 27:46)

Psalms 22:8 – “You relied on the LORD,” they say. “Why doesn't he save you? If the LORD likes you, why doesn't he help you?” (Matthew 27:43)

Amos 8:9 – The time is coming when I will make the sun go down at noon and the earth grow dark in daytime. (Luke 23:44)

Ezekiel 32:7 – When I destroy you, I will cover the sky and blot out the stars. The sun will hide behind the clouds... (Matthew 27:45)

Psalms 31:5 - I place myself in your care. (Luke 23:46)

Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 – “If someone has been put to death for a crime and the body is hung on a post, ²³ it is not to remain there overnight. It must be buried the same day, (John 19:31)

Psalms 22:17 – All my bones can be seen. My enemies look at me and stare. (Luke 23:35)

Isaiah 53:9 – He was placed in a grave with those who are evil, he was buried with the rich, even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie.” (Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:64; Luke 23:53; John 19:41)

Psalms 16:10 – ... Because you protect me from the power of death. I have served you faithfully, and you will not abandon me to the world of the dead. (Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:7; John 20:17)

Hosea 6:2 – In two or three days he will revive us... (Luke 24:46)

Zechariah 12:10 – “I will fill the descendants of David and the other people of Jerusalem with the spirit of mercy and the spirit of prayer. They will look at the one

whom they stabbed to death, and they will mourn for him like those who mourn for an only child. They will mourn bitterly, like those who have lost their first-born son.
(John 19:37)

SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SACRIFICE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT (1)

The people of Israel are descendants of Abraham chosen by God to be His own people. Sacrifices were a form of worship that God had commanded them to follow. Sacrifices formed a main factor in their worship. People in Asia, especially in India are familiar with offerings and sacrifices. Hindus offer sacrifices to please and appease their favourite gods. However, the Westerners were not acquainted with these sacrifices and its traditions and circumstances. These sacrifices that the Lord had fixed for the Israelites were a precedent of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross at Golgotha.

There were different purposes for the sacrifices established by God.

1. Sacrifices are oblations made unto God. Oblation means “a thing offered unto God”. It is a sacrifice of thanksgiving that is offered unto God from a person’s fruit of labour like an agricultural farmer from his crop harvest or a shepherd from among his cattle and sheep.
2. Sacrifice of blood denotes life sacrifice. Placing the hand on the sacrificial animal represents bonding of self with the animal. Then when the animal is sacrificed it is equal to sacrificing oneself.
3. Become united as the sons of God. Man who was separated from God because of the sin of the first parents becomes reconciled with God through self sacrifice.
4. It is a service of covenant renewal between an individual and God. According to the socio-cultural traditions, the Jewish people had a custom wherein those who were involved in any major decision making or deal fixing, would sit and eat a meal together before carrying out the transaction. After the sacrifice, all those who made the sacrifice would eat the sacrificed thing. Having the meal together in such a manner creates a tendency in them to enter into a covenant between themselves and God. Jesus Christ’s Last Supper was a similar event.

When we study the sacrifices commanded by God through Moses we see that it is in the backdrop of the above-mentioned intentions.

CERTAIN FACTS ABOUT SACRIFICES

The person who is making the offering should lay his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal in front of the Tent of the Lord and cut it. The priests should sprinkle its blood on the altar and around it. After removing the unholy parts of the animal, the rest of the parts should be placed on the burning firewood of the altar and burnt.

If one’s offering is from among the cattle it could be male or female but one without any defects. It should be a calf without any defects. Even if it is a sheep or goat it can be male or female without any defects.

If one is unable to sacrifice any of the above-mentioned animals it could also be a baby dove or pigeon.

The odour of this sacrificial offering on the altar is a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord. The burning of the sacrifice on the altar becomes a burnt offering.

The fire on the sacrificial altar should never ever be doused or go off. It should always remain alight.

Wild animals are forbidden for sacrifice even if they are defect-less.

SACRIFICES THAT THE LORD HAS COMMANDED

1. Burnt Offering

The ritual of Burnt Offering wipes away the sin of sinful people; or else forgotten. The offering brought to the presence of the Lord for Burnt Offering should be a defect-less male among the cattle. In order to please God it should be offered at the entrance of the Tent of the Lord. When the person who is offering the sacrifice places his hand on the head of the animal and bonds himself to the animal it becomes an atonement for himself.

2. Food Offerings

This offering is made using grains and harvested crops. It is a voluntary offering. The tradition of this sacrifice is considered to be an ancient one. Cain had offered from the yields of his land. Melchizedek is known to have offered bread and wine as an offering. Food offering is of three types:

- i. **Uncooked Food Offering:** When anyone makes this sacrifice his offering should be well-ground flour. Incense and olive oil should be put on it. The odour of this food offering is sweet smelling to the Lord. This is a very holy offering to the Lord.
- ii. **Baked Food Offering:** The offering is bread baked in an oven. It must be made without yeast. It may be thick loaves made of flour mixed with olive oil or thin cakes brushed with olive oil. If the offering is bread cooked on a griddle, it is to be made of flour mixed with olive oil but without yeast.
- iii. **First Fruits Offering:** Here roasted grain is mixed with olive oil and incense and burnt on the altar as an oblation unto God.

3. Peace Offering or Fellowship Offering

An offering made when man enters into a peace covenant between man and man and man and God is called a Peace Offering. It is also known as a Thanksgiving Offering when it is offered for graces received and to be received.

When all other sacrifices restrict the sacrificial animal to be a defect-less male, this sacrifice can be offered with either a male or female animal only that it should be without blemish. This is not a sacrifice that is offered out of sorrow or compulsion. It is a heartfelt offering unto the Lord.

4. Sin Offering

Sins are those deeds which man commits against the holiness of Jehovah. Sin offering is the sacrifice that God has commanded for deliverance from such sins. In other words, it is the rite that purifies man and makes him worthy to stand before God. In those days,

the Jews saw sin as a serious matter. They did not have a lackadaisical attitude about sin as something that could be absolved through a sacrifice. In sin offering the importance is laid on the blood. Since blood is life, it is God's right. An ordinary man can slaughter the sacrificial animal. However, sprinkling of blood and smearing of blood could be done only by a priest. There was a misconception in those days that the important part of the sacrifice is the slaughtering of the animal. Actually, both then and now, sacrifice is the service of obtaining forgiveness of sins by becoming aware of sins and confessing those sins to God with penitence.

God has clearly stated when, who and how sin offerings should be made.

- i. **Priest** – If a priest makes a mistake and does something that Jehovah has commanded not to be done and committed a sin that could bring about blame on the people, then as a sin offering, he should offer a young bull which is without any defect.
- ii. **The Israeli people** – If as mentioned above, a sin is committed and its harm would affect the entire people of Israel, then the entire community will have to perform a sin offering. If they are guilty of committing sin by doing something that Jehovah had commanded should not be done, when they become aware of their guilt, the whole community has to make a sin offering. The offering is to be a young bull without blemish. The bull should be brought to the Lord's presence before the Tent of the Lord and the leaders of the community should place their hands on the head of the sacrificial animal. They will have to kill the animal in the presence of the Lord. Then the priest will make atonement for them. Then the Lord will forgive them their sin.
- iii. **A chieftain** – When he becomes aware of having sinned against the Lord by doing something against the Law of the Lord, then he should offer a male goat that is without defect as sacrifice for the sin offering. The chieftain should place his hand on the head of the goat in the presence of the Lord and kill it there. When the priest lays it on the altar and burns it as atonement God will forgive the chieftain for the sin he had committed.
- iv. **One among the people** – If it is one of the ordinary people who has sinned against God by doing something against the Law of God, when he becomes aware of the sin, he should bring a female goat that has no defects as a sacrifice. He should place his hand on the head of the goat and make the sacrifice. When the priest lays it on the altar and burns it as atonement for his sin, it becomes a sweet-smelling sacrifice and God will forgive him his sins.
- v. **Offerings for Wrong Doings** – Though sin offering and offerings for wrong doings are the same there are two main differences:
 - a. If a person unintentionally commits a wrong-doing concerning the holy articles he should make a sacrifice of a blemish-free goat according to his wrong-doing.
 - b. If a person tells lies to Jehovah or to his friends or deceive them, then for the forgiveness of his sin, he should sacrifice a goat that is without blemish. In case of cheating, along with the offering for wrong-doing he should return the property with an additional one fifth of its value.

This offering for wrong-doings was made to God with two intentions:

1. As an atonement for the forgiveness of sins committed
2. As a purification ceremony for the individual who has committed sin.

SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SACRIFICE

FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT (2)

Sacrifices Decreed by God

God had given instruction to Moses on the ritualistic procedures and orders of how each sacrifice should be offered. The tribe of Levi were given the right and authority to conduct the rituals. Among them Aaron and his sons were installed as priests. The people of Israel offered the sacrifices unto the Lord fully aware of the will of God and in full repentance. Over the years the sacredness and holiness of these sacrifices began to fade away. The sacred sacrificial rituals became more of a plain showy ritualistic act. Truth and justice disappeared from the society. So, God began to declare His wrath on the people through His prophets. (We have studied these portions in earlier lessons.) But the warnings and exhortation did not bring about any change in the people. So, God gave a promise through His prophets in order to save the people of God.

Each and every Israelite who was saved from Egypt by the blood of his lamb took a vow before God, "We will obey the LORD and do everything that he has commanded." When there was fall in that vow, God made a covenant with the people - "The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah." It was the fulfilment of this prophecy that was accomplished in the birth of Jesus Christ.

The priesthood of the Levites and the sacrificial rituals carried out by them could not solve the actual problems of man. The sacrifices of bulls and goats could not absolve man of his sins. Because of this, they continued to be in the state of sin and could not praise God with a pure heart. Those sacrifices could only bring about an external show of purity in man. They could not come before the presence of God with a penitent heart for the sins they had committed. It just was not possible with the worship order of those days. The layout of the Tent of the Lord itself was such that instead of bringing the people closer to God it kept them away from God. Therefore, the Old Testament arrangements were insufficient to bring man to perfection. The sacrifices came to be complete through Jesus Christ the High Priest. That is the reason for the human incarnation of His own Son which was announced through the prophetic words of the prophets.

Priesthood is the privilege of the Levi tribe. However, Jesus was installed as the High Priest, not following this tradition. Levite priests had to offer a sacrifice for their own sins; Christ did not need to. Because the Levitical offerings were incomplete, it had to be repeated every time. Since Jesus Christ's sacrifice is perfect to bring atonement for sin, it is offered only once and is not repeated. The Levite sacrificial matter was cattle and sheep, animals that could not speak for themselves. Christ gave Himself to be sacrificed. Levite priests offered sacrifices in a worldly Tent, but the tent in which Christ serves is greater and more perfect; it is not a tent made by human hands... Thus Christ levelled the chasm between man and God that came about because of sin.

ANGEL

Jesus Christ is more exalted than the angels. God does not deal directly with humans. Angels are the mediators between man and God. Angels take the prayers of man to the presence of God and convey God's messages to man. However, Jesus Christ seated on His eternal throne is carrying out truth and justice.

Jesus Christ is nobler than Moses. Moses was just a minister who served in the House of God. But Jesus, as He is the own son of God, is an owner and heir. Though Jesus Christ was born as the High Priest he entered into that duty at the time of his baptism when there was a voice from heaven. He did not get this priesthood as an ancestral or tribal inheritance, neither did He take it on his own. God entrusted Him. Psalms 110:4 makes it very clear: "You will be a priest forever in the priestly order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned in the Old Testament.

TITHE OR ONE TENTH

When Abram was returning as a victor after vanquishing the kings who had taken Lot as a prisoner, he met Melchizedek at Jerusalem. He gave Abram and all those who were with him bread and wine and blessed them. And Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the loot he had recovered.

The Levitical priesthood is of Aaronic descendancy and has an ancestral existence. However, Melchizedek's priesthood is different from Levitical priesthood. It was not of linear inheritance. Since the Bible does not mention the demise of Melchizedek, even his priesthood does not cease to exist. So then it is eternal. In the same way, Jesus' priesthood also was not of Levite priestly succession. It is unique and eternal.

The first parents who were banished from Paradise used to offer the sacrifices that were offered at the Tent of the Lord to attain eternal life. And John received from his father Zechariah, the priesthood which Aaron and his descendants had handed down the generations. Jesus had the eternal priesthood like that of Melchizedek to offer bloodless sacrifice as we saw in the earlier paragraph. But for Jesus to get the right to offer blood-shedding sacrifices, He had to receive Aaronic priesthood. That is the reason why Jesus Christ who is the High Priest took baptism from John and received the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

In order to attain eternal life, it was necessary for a person who dies in sin (or after committing sin) to have a sinless person shed blood for him. It was the Father's will that His own son should suffer and die. In His suffering Jesus Christ identified with man and through His death was able to save mankind. Since Jesus Christ was sinless, He did not have to make sacrifices for His own sins. Instead He became the sacrifice Himself. That is, He was the priest who was offering the sacrifice and the sacrificial matter also, all at the same time.

BLOODLESS SACRIFICE

Because mankind received eternal salvation by His self sacrifice, Jesus marked the end of blood-shedding sacrifices. Jesus commanded that anyone who wants deliverance from the bondage of his sins and be worthy to experience eternal salvation had to eat His flesh and drink His blood. For that He established the blood-less sacrifice like that of Melchizedek.

Mark's Upper Room was prepared as the venue for this on Passover Day in the presence of the disciples.

Then Jesus took bread, blessed, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying 'This is my body given for you.' In the same way he took the cup, blessed and gave it to them saying, 'This is my blood being shed in the new covenant. Do this in remembrance of me'.

OLD TESTAMENT AND THE AMENDMENTS THAT JESUS GAVE IT - I

When His people, the Israelites, were delivered from bonded slavery in Egypt and started their journey to Canaan as one community, their chances for sinning increased. Therefore, in order that they do not fall into sin and deprive themselves of the glory of God, He gave them instructions on what to do and what not to do in the form of the Ten Commandments written on two stone tablets. If the people violated any of those commands, the punishment that should be meted out to them and procedures to be observed were proclaimed by God to Moses. All the people saw and heard the thunderous sound, the trumpet blast, the lightning and the smoking mountain. The people trembled in fear and stood at a distance. They said to Moses, "If you speak to us, we will listen; but we are afraid that if God speaks to us, we will die."

As eons passed on, the people found loop-holes in the commandments. That which was constituted for the good of the people were being given twisted explanations and caused evil. So Jesus said: "Take care; be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6)... "So you must obey and follow everything they tell you to do; do not, however, imitate their actions, because they don't practice what they preach. They tie onto people's backs loads that are heavy and hard to carry, yet they aren't willing even to lift a finger to help them carry those loads (Matthew 23:3, 4). So the old commands needed to be amended.

1. Exodus 20:12

"Respect your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you."

The Jews of those days had developed many traditions as unwritten rules in the Laws and creed written in the Old Testament in order to maintain it. One among them was the term 'qurban' which means 'offering'. Under the cover of tradition, if anyone declares this word, all his wealth goes to the Temple. Subsequently he is released from the above-mentioned Law. Jesus Christ said that God has commanded that anyone who pledges his wealth to the Temple and makes his parents equal to orphans should be sentenced to death instead of giving importance to his pledged deed. (Exodus 21:15 - "Whoever hits his father or his mother is to be put to death.) And Jesus reminds them of this (Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:9-12).

2. Exodus 20:13

"Do not commit murder."

On the face of it, only the person who does the killing comes under the arm of law. At the same time, the person who supported and abetted the killing or those who instigated the murder escapes from the clutches of the law. Jesus says that you do not have to commit murder as such; if anyone feels strong animosity towards any person and just utters harsh words he deserves the punishment meted out to a murderer. Because, when anger increases it culminates in murder. (Matthew 5:21, 22)

3. Exodus 20:14

“Do not commit adultery.”

According to the seventh command given by God to Moses only those who have been caught for the act of adultery deserve punishment. But Jesus says that any man who looks at a woman with lust deserves to be punished; because, he has committed adultery with her in his heart. And Jesus goes on to say: “So, if your right eye causes you to sin, take it out and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body go off to hell.”

4. Exodus 21:24

“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”

According to the Law of Moses revenge is allowed. But the followers of Jesus are not supposed to take revenge. It appears to be a stand contrary to the Old Testament Law. The followers of Jesus had to be the images of tolerance and mercy; they had to have a helpful and large-hearted attitude; they had to be the embodiment of compassion and help for the needy in order to reveal the love of God. Jesus said: “But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him.” (Matthew 5:39-42)

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you... Do for others just what you want them to do for you... Lend and expect nothing back. You will then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful... Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you. Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands — all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.” (Luke 6:27-38)

5. A. Exodus 20:8

“Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.”

On an invitation, Jesus had gone to the house of a Pharisee leader for a meal. It was on a Sabbath day. There was a sick person. Jesus Christ never missed an opportunity to do good even in the midst of critical eyes and even possible criticism. The Pharisees knowing that Jesus would heal the man and so spoil the holiness of the Sabbath day, conspired to charge him publicly in front of the people. Jesus who was aware of their plans asked them, “Does our Law allow healing on the Sabbath or not?” And Jesus said: “If any one of you had a child or an ox that happened to fall in a well on a Sabbath, would you not pull it out at once on the Sabbath itself?”

By healing the sick man Jesus showed that even though working is a breach of the command "Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy", doing such good deeds is not work as such. (Luke 14:1-6)

B. Jeremiah 17:21, 22

"They must not carry any load on the Sabbath; they must not carry anything in through the gates of Jerusalem or carry anything out of their houses on the Sabbath. They must not work on the Sabbath; they must observe it as a sacred day,"

We have seen how Jesus explained that healing a sick man on Sabbath day was not a work as such and therefore not a breach of the Law. In the same way, Jesus healed the paralysed man at Bethesda Pool on a Sabbath day. The healed man took his bed and walked. The Jewish leaders alleged that it was a breaking of the above-mentioned Law. When he took up his bed and walked as Jesus had ordered him, the miraculous power of Jesus' words was revealed there. But the religious leaders alleged that it was a violation of the Law. The man who was healed, when he took up his bed and walked as per the instruction of the one who healed him did not see any wrong in it.

Jesus was trying to give a new perspective to the notions of the Jewish religious leaders about maintaining the holiness of the Sabbath. It is inappropriate to read the statement that God rested on the seventh day as though God just lazed his day out or that God took complete rest on that day. We can only read it as having retired from the six-day work of creation. God does not look at the day or week to do good for man. We should be able to see goodness as good. Sabbath should never be a hindrance for doing good.

6. Leviticus 19:18

"Love your neighbours as you love yourself"

Jesus Christ proclaims these words during his Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said "love your friends and hate your enemies" with relation to the above-mentioned Law. However, such a command is not found anywhere in the Law of Moses. There is something similar to this in some ancient tomes related to the Bible. It is presumed that Jesus may have made that statement with reference to some old scriptural writings (Kootaan writings) which has some similar thoughts. Jesus' commands ascribe more importance than the authority of the Old Testament Laws. Jesus said: "But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! You must be perfect — just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6: 27-38)

7. Leviticus 20:10

"If a man commits adultery with the wife of an Israelite, both he and the woman shall be put to death."

The Jewish leaders of that time brought to Jesus an adulterous sinner woman who deserved the death penalty. The sentence was carried out by all those who had

gathered around and stoning the convict to death. Jesus desires that a sinner should have a change of heart and be saved instead of being put to death. The conspiracy of those leaders was that according to Jesus, if this lady was set free, then that would mean that Jesus is opposing the Law of Moses. Jesus who was aware of this ploy did not oppose the Old Testament Law, but only suggested an amendment to it: "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her." There was no one among them who was worthy of that. Then all of them dispersed one by one. Through this Jesus also taught an age old philosophy. Before anyone accuses someone of something they should conduct a self examination and see if they themselves are blameless of any sin. Besides, because Jesus Christ has forgiven and freed us of our past sins, it reminds that we have to live a life without committing sin. (John 8:1-11)

8. Deuteronomy 24:1

"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house..."

According to the Law of Moses, if a man dislikes his wife because he finds something indecent in her, that was reason enough to divorce her. Though the interpretations for the word 'indecent' are many, ultimately the meaning was amended to suit the wishes of a man to leave his wife and make it convenient to marry another woman. So, if what a woman cooks is not tasty enough for the man that would have been good reason to give her the divorce papers. By Jesus' time divorce had become a common affair.

The man and wife relationship arranged by God is based on the Laws. According to the Law, adultery is a great sin. The Pharisees were actually adulterating the Law by making light of the Law under the cover of the Law. A man who marries another woman after forsaking his own wife also commits adultery. The man who marries the woman who was forsaken by her husband also commits adultery. What they considered perfect was unrighteous in the sight of God. It was the stability and purity of a marriage relationship that was meant by the Law. Actually Moses was compelled to accept the above-mentioned condition when the people refused to stand firm on the commitment made during their marriage and there was no other way out. Jesus spoke about this matter when injustice was at its peak. (Matthew 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18)

"But in the beginning, at the time of creation, 'God made them male and female,' as the scripture says. 'And for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' So they are no longer two, but one. No human being must separate, then, what God has joined together." (Mark 10:6-9)

OLD TESTAMENT AND THE AMENDMENTS THE JESUS GAVE IT – II

When the Laws that God gave through Moses to the people of Israel were twisted and turned and interpreted to suit personal interests, life became difficult. Moreover, justice was totally lost. It was in this situation that Jesus Christ gave some amendments to the Laws of the Old Testament. Besides that, Jesus Christ gave some good advices as new laws to the world. Just as Moses gave the Laws to the people from Mount Sinai, Jesus went atop a hill and started his sermon.

1. Who are the blessed

As the 'Sermon on the Mount' has been included in the study of the Service order in the second part of this text, that Bible portion is not being discussed here. (Matthew 5: 2-10)

2. Position of the disciples

Jesus had advised the disciples on how to relate with people when they go out into the world and preach about the Kingdom of God.

"You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it. You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lamp-stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16)

3. Of Moses and the Prophets

The New Laws or the New Testament became the completion of the Old Laws or Old Testament. There was a general allegation that most Christian believers ignore the laws of Moses and the prophets. In reply to that Jesus said:

"Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true. Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with—not until the end of all things. So then, whoever disobeys even the least important of the commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be least in the Kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys the Law and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of heaven. I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires." (Matthew 5:17-20)

4. Offering on the Altar

Jesus said that before offering sacrifices in the Temple of the Lord, one should reconcile with one's brother and should be ministers of peace without having committed any crime or murder.

"So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the

altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God. If someone brings a lawsuit against you and takes you to court, settle the dispute while there is time, before you get to court. Once you are there, you will be turned over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, and you will be put in jail. There you will stay, I tell you, until you pay the last penny of your fine.” (Matthew 5:23-26)

5. Charity

Helping those in need is a blessed act, but it should not be for fame. Jesus said:

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

(Matthew 6:1-4 - NIV)

“Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public so that people will see what you do. If you do these things publicly, you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven.

“So when you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it, as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets. They do it so that people will praise them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. But when you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-4 - Good News)

6. Prayer

Pointing at the Jewish leaders who made useless lip-service in order to get other people’s attention and admiration, Jesus said:

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you. When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that their gods will hear them because their prayers are long. Do not be like them. Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6:5-8)

7. Fasting

As about the Jewish leaders’ charity and prayer, Jesus said the following about the way they make their faces distorted when they fast:

“And when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you go without food, wash your face and comb your hair, so that others cannot know that you are fasting—only your Father, who is

unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18)

8. Real investment

Do not store up treasures in this world by making an exhibition of your deeds.

Treasures should be acquired in heaven through your secret godly ways;

“Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

9. Faith and trust in God

We should have the faith that we have a living God who cares for us and place our trust him accordingly.

“The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are no good, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you is darkness, how terribly dark it will be! You cannot be a slave of two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass—grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have! So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from, or my drink or my clothes?’ (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.” (Matthew 6:22-34; Luke 11:35-34-36; 16:33)

10. Do not judge others

When we rise to judge others, other people will judge us on the same standard.

Jesus said:

“Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others. Why, then, do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? How dare you say to your brother, ‘Please, let me take that speck out of your eye,’ when you have a log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

“Do not give what is holy to dogs—they will only turn and attack you. Do not throw your pearls in front of pigs—they will only trample them underfoot.” (Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-38, 41-42)

11. Love for children

If fathers of this world will grant the wishes of their children, our Heavenly Father will give good things. Jesus said:

“Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive; and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to those who knock. Would any of you who are fathers give your son a stone when he asks for bread? Or would you give him a snake when he asks for a fish? As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.” (Matthew 7:7-12; Luke 11:9-13)

12. Those who enter the Heavenly Kingdom

Jesus explains on those who stand for and against God:

“Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it.

“Be on your guard against false prophets; they come to you looking like sheep on the outside, but on the inside they are really like wild wolves. You will know them by what they do. Thorn bushes do not bear grapes, and briars do not bear figs. A healthy tree bears good fruit, but a poor tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a poor tree cannot bear good fruit. And any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. So then, you will know the false prophets by what they do. Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. When the Judgment Day comes, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God's message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!’ Then I will say to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!’ So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, and the wind blew hard against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock. But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, the wind blew hard against that house, and it fell. And what a terrible fall that was!” (Matthew 7:13-27; Luke 3:24, 6:43-44, 13:25-27)

13. Seeking forgiveness

After saying that those who are obstinate and do not repent or correct their wrong should be ostracised from the church, Jesus advised his disciples on forgiving as follows:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

"No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)

14. New Commandment

Jesus addresses the disciples as 'children'. It portrays his profound love for them.

Jesus who loves his disciples so much gives them a new law. Jesus said:

"And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35)

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT WORKS WONDERS

Following the demise of Moses, the prime duty of Joshua who was commissioned by Jehovah as Moses' successor was to cross the River Jordan and reach the land of Canaan. Before entering into a new life, as a way of praising God for all the good He had done and as a preparation for purifying their minds and leading a life of hope in God, Joshua declared a three-day fast among the people of Israel. During that time Joshua remained in communion with God and God gave him a plan of what he had to carry out. Jehovah also gave him confidence and asked him to be determined and courageous.

Joshua instructed the people on how to cross the River Jordan and enter Canaan. The priests carrying the Ark of Witnesses with the Covenant Box first stepped into the river. As soon as the priests stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing and piled up, far upstream. The ground on which the priests were standing became dry land as the flow downstream was completely cut off and the multitude of people was able to cross over and reach Canaan. In remembrance of this miraculous event, twelve stones from the river were placed on land and twelve stones from the land were placed in the river. As soon as the priests stepped out of the water onto the land, the river returned to its normal state. Joshua divided the Promised Land into twelve and gave it to the people who had reached Canaan.

THE ARK TO THE BATTLEFIELD

During the reign of Eli who was high priest and judge of the Israelites, in order to ensure victory in a battle with the Philistines, Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas took the Covenant Box to the battle field. However, the Israelites were defeated in that battle and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli were also killed. The Philistines who captured the Covenant Box took it to the temple of their god Dagon and placed the Covenant Box in front of it. The afflictions that fell upon the Philistines following this we studied in the Fifth Grade. The Israelites who finally got back the Covenant Box from the Philistines kept it safely in the house of Abinadab who lived on a hill.

When David became the king of Israel, he gathered thirty thousand skilful soldiers and set out to bring the Ark of the Witnesses to Jerusalem. The Ark which should have been carried by the priests of the Lord, was instead placed in a new cart just as the Philistines had done. The oxen carrying the cart stumbled and the Covenant Box nearly fell off the cart. Terrified by the incident, David aborted his mission and left the Ark of the Witnesses at the house of Obed Edom.

THE ARK IN JERUSALEM

Three months after the above incident, David brought the Ark of the Witnesses to Jerusalem, carried on the shoulders of the priests as instructed by the Lord. In order to avoid any accidents as they started the journey they offered a sacrifice and prayers and with dancing and celebrations brought it to the place that was specially prepared for it in Jerusalem and placed it there.

THE COVENANT BOX IN THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE

King David began to get troubled by the fact that he was living in a palace and the Covenant Box of the Lord was placed in a tent. So he informed Prophet Nathan about his wish to build a Temple for the Lord. Nathan reported God's word on that: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name.' David had amassed all the wood, silver, gold and gems necessary to build the Temple. He showed his son, Solomon, the tools of the Temple and its models and measurements. He also explained to the priests and the Levites about their schedules and orders and arranged each one's responsibilities and how to function in the Temple.

However, when some acts against the will of God were committed, that resulted in God's ire. God brought repentance in David through the message of Prophet Gad and punished the Israelites with three days of plague. Through this punishment the Lord sent the angel of destruction and carried out a great annihilation among them. Seventy thousand people were killed in three days. When David saw the angel of destruction with its sword extended over Jerusalem, David cried out to God: "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people." Then the Lord relented and ceased the destruction. Then David bought the land where he saw the angel standing, which was the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David built an altar there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings unto the Lord. David called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. David decided to build the Temple at this place.

King Solomon hired a lot of labourers and began to build the Temple. The construction of the Temple began 480 years after leaving Egypt. Using Lebanese oak wood and cedar wood the Temple was constructed and its accessories made. As in the Ark of the Covenant that was in the Tabernacle Tent, this Temple, too, had three distinct areas - a Sacro Sanctum or the Holy of the Holies, The holy Place and the Nave. The Temple also had a porch. The dedication ceremonies of the Temple lasted for seven days. Every Israelite was brought together for it. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies. Twenty thousand bulls and 1,20,000 lambs were sacrificed. When Solomon prayed with a grateful heart fire came down from heaven and consumed the oblations. The glory of God filled the entire place.

OUR HOUSE OF GOD TODAY

Just as the Jerusalem Temple was built in the East-West direction, our Syrian Christian Churches are also built in the East-West direction. There is one difference. The Holy of Holies or the Sacro Sanctum or the Sanctuary was in the west, however, in our churches the *madubaha* or altar is in the east. In the centre is the Holy place or inside the railings and opposite that the *hykala* or nave. As with the Jerusalem Temple our churches, too, have a porch. The position of the Holy of Holies was changed from west so that the worshippers could face east and worship God. We have already learned in detail about the Importance of the East in the second part of the Sixth Grade Lessons when we studied about our worship order. Though our churches are even today built in the model according to the instructions

given by Jehovah God, there is difference in the observation of rites. Those days, the people of Israel offered blood sacrifices. However, that tradition has been completely changed and our Lord and Messiah established the blood-less sacrifice and commanded us to obey and follow it.

Let us understand the different areas of our church and its importance.

1. MADBAHA OR SANCTUARY

What we see here primarily is the 'Thronos' or 'Altar Table' or the 'Sacrificial Table'. Though it is the death of our Lord and Saviour on the cross that is observed on this sacrificial altar during the Holy Qurbana, all matters related to this world are commemorated. So, according to the occasion, the 'thronos' is transformed to be the cattle shed where Jesus was born; the River Jordan *where* Jesus was baptized; the hill where Jesus began his public ministry; the Upper room of Mark where the Holy Qurbana was instituted; Golgotha where he died on the Cross; Mount Olive where he ascended into heaven.

Besides the thronos, another article found in the madbaha is the 'Evangaeli Mesha' or 'Gospel Table'. This is used to read the Gospel in remembrance of the Sermon on the Mount of our Lord. Though the place of this table is just in front of the 'thronos', after use it is moved to the south side so as to cause no inconveniences.

2. WITHIN THE RAILINGS (AZHIKKAKAM)

This place is situated just after (below) the sanctuary and is slightly raised in level from the rest of the church floor. A table is placed here - Table of Baptism. To the south of this table, is the permanently placed baptismal font that is cut out in rock. The priests use this table for the 'Yaama prayers' (time-specific prayers) and other special prayers in the church. Symbolising the golden lamp in the Jerusalem Temple a lamp is hung in front of this table. However, since this is not a mandatory article some Syrian churches do not have this lamp.

3. HAIKALA OR PRAKARAM OR NAVE

People who come to participate in the worship stand in this place. Those people who are not baptised also can stand here. However, the church rules that those who have not been baptised should move to the porch or verandah before the priest enters into the main portions of the Holy Qurbana - that is at the time of the declaration of faith in the Creed.

4. POOMUKAM OR PORCH

This is a place that is assigned to the western-most part of the church. Those who wish to be baptised can stand in this place and attend the entire Holy Qurbana service. The one who wishes to be baptised can enter into the 'prakaram' or Nave and from there into the 'azhikkakam' and receive baptism at the baptismal font and become a member of the church. Then the person receives blessings and felicitations from the Table of Baptism. That person receives the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of anointing of the Holy Mooron. Then, the person fulfils his or her faith by the celebration of the Word from the 'Evangaeli Table' and participating in the Holy Body and Blood from the 'Holy Thronos' which is the spiritual table and becomes worthy of eternal life.

FROM THE ARK OF WITNESSES TO OUR CHURCH TODAY

In the past years, we have studied about how Jehovah heard the wail of the Israelites, the people of the Living God, who were living as slaves in Egypt and delivered them by the wonders He worked through Moses. En route to Canaan, their Promised Land, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. Till that time the place to worship God was the sacrificial table which was made of stone and sand. In order that the people should remember that it is Jehovah God who liberated them from slavery to freedom and leads them on, God decided that there should be a Temple where He could be present and be in their midst.

It was at Mt. Sinai that God gave a vision to Moses and made him the leader of the Israelites. God appeared to Moses in a burning thorny bush. Lakhs of Israelites had camped in the valley of this mount. God called Moses to the place where He had first appeared to Moses. "Come up to me into the mount and be there..." (Exodus 24:12). Moses obeyed God and climbed up the mount and stayed there. He waited for Jehovah for six days over there. On the seventh day God called Moses near to Him on the mountain top.

As the people of Israel had to travel far more to reach their Promised Land, God commanded Moses to build an ark or tabernacle which could be carried around in order to facilitate worship of God. He gave the necessary instructions on how to build the ark. A lot of gold, silver and copper was needed for that. As all of Israel should be participants in the building of the ark, Moses requested that every Israelite should make their own donations. The people gladly welcomed this request. The ark was built according to the instructions God had given Moses. Let us look at the names given to this ark in the different books.

1. Ark of the Testimony – Exodus 25:22
2. Ark of the Covenant – Numbers 10:33
3. Ark of the Lord = 1 Kings 2:26
4. Ark of the Lord. The Lord of all the earth - Joshua 3:13
5. Ark of God – 1 Samuel 3:3
6. Holy Ark - 2 Chronicles 35:3
7. Ark of Strength – Psalms 132:8

During their journey to Canaan, the people of Israel used to rest in tents. The Ark of Testimony was also safely kept in a tent. In the tent besides the Box of the Covenant, Moses arranged the Altar of Burnt Offering, Bronze Basin, Table of the Bread of the Presence, Lamp-stand, Altar of Incense, and the Place of Atonement or Seat of Mercy, according to the command of God.

1. ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

The entrance into the Tent is from the East side. The first thing seen on entering into the tent was the Altar of Burnt Offering. As this altar was covered in bronze, it was known as the Bronze Altar. All the other arrangements were made to the west side behind the Bronze Altar. That meant, only those who were worthy of going near the Altar were allowed to go as far as the Place of Atonement which was at the western most end. There was one particularity for this Altar. It was the largest among all the other things. The Altar had four bronze rings and four horns made of acacia wood

and covered with bronze. During their journey, in order to provide convenient portability, fire from heaven would come down and burn the offering on the altar. By this the people were contented that God had accepted their offering.

2. BRONZE BASIN

The Bronze Basin was situated to the west of the Altar of Burnt Offering. This basin was always filled with water. The priests who were entering to offer sacrifices were to wash their hands and legs with this water. The punishment for making offerings without observing this rite of cleansing was death.

Aaron and his sons were washed according to the commands of God and consecrated and anointed by the Anointing Oil. Even so, if they prepared to serve in the Tent of Meeting, they were to wash their hands and feet from the water in this basin. This is God's command.

3. TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

This Table is situated on the north side in the second part of the Tent of Meeting or the Tabernacle of Congregation or else the Holy Place. This table was built according to the measurements given by God. There were rings attached to the either sides of this table. The intention was to pass poles through the rings in order to carry it during their journey. It was mandatory that at all times there were 12 un-leaven breads on this table. Even during their journey only the priests were allowed to eat this bread.

4. THE LAMP STAND

This lamp-stand made of pure gold was placed behind the curtain to the south side. The lamp was made in the model that was according to the plan from the sacred heart of God that was shown and instructed to his servant Moses.

5. ALTAR OF INCENSE

This was another important thing placed in the Holy Place itself. It was similar in form to the Altar of Sacrifices which was the first thing that one saw as soon as one entered the Tabernacle. It had rings and poles in order to carry it about during their journey. The fragrant incense to be offered on this altar was to be blended according to the instructions of God and offered only unto Jehovah; and only the priests were allowed to offer it.

6. THE TABERNACLE

God had commanded a curtain to be placed between the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. The place for the Ark of the Covenant was inside the curtain. The first instruction that God had given Moses, was the details of constructing this tabernacle. The following things were kept in the Tabernacle.

I. Pot of Manna

Manna was the food that was brought down from heaven and given to the people of Israel to eat during their wilderness journey. They had preserved some of it in a golden pot in order to always remember the blessings God had given them.

II. Aaron's blossomed staff

Following the dispute on priestly rights, each of the twelve tribes was asked to place a staff with their name etched on it, in front of the Tabernacle. The next day, the staff of Aaron who belonged to the tribe of Levi had sprouted, budded, blossomed and bore fruit. Thus, Aaronic priesthood was proved to have been appointed by God. The earth opened up and swallowed along with their household all those who had rebelled against Moses and those who associated with the rebellion. In remembrance of this truth, Aaron's staff was kept safely in front in the Tabernacle.

III. The Commandment Tablets

The two stone tablets on which God had encrypted with his own hands the Ten Commandments and given to Moses was kept in the Ark of the Covenant.

IV. Place of Atonement or Mercy Seat

The Seat of Mercy is the cover of the Covenant Box. Though the Covenant Box or the Ark of the Covenant and the Seat of Mercy are two parts of the same thing, it is known by two different names. However, as they both are joined together, at sight they seem as one item. The Mercy Seat is made of beaten pure gold. This is the seat of God's mercy.

FASTING – ACCORDING TO OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT – I

In the Seventh Grade we studied about the different Lents (Fasting) that Syrian Christians observe today, its basic principles and its corresponding references in the Old Testament and New Testament. This year we shall study the different Fasts mentioned in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. Three days in Sinai Wilderness – (Exodus 19:1-11)

On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai and camped there. God called Moses from the Mount in front of the desert... “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:... And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation... I will come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you for ever... Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai...”

Moses came down from the mountain and consecrated the people. They washed their clothes, too. He told the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.” On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

2. Moses on the mountain for forty days – (Exodus 19:16 – 20:17; 24:1-18; 32)

It was the Ten Commandments according to which the people of Israel were to live in obedience to God that the Lord had pronounced aloud to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments were learnt in the Fourth Grade. God had written and given it on two stone tablets. Besides the commandments, he had also proclaimed the laws which they had to observe.

When the people saw that Moses was rather late in getting down the mountain they went to Aaron and said: “Come make us gods who will go before us.” According that, he made a golden calf and worshipped it and made a great celebration of it. When Moses came down from the mountain, the two tablets of Covenant Law were in his hands. When he neared the camp and saw the calf and the dancing he burned with anger. He threw the tablets out of his hands breaking it to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

Moses prayed for the people, “Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the

words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain.” So Moses chiselled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him. And the Lord wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water.

3. Three days by the River Jordan – (Joshua 3:1-3)

The forty years of wilderness life was the result of the doubting created by the opinion of those who went to spy on the Land of Canaan. Then came the entrance into the Land of Canaan, but Moses was denied permission to set foot into Canaan. This was the punishment for doubting God during the water crisis at Kadesh Meribah. So God selected and ordained Joshua as Moses’ successor. Moses climbed up to the top of Pisgah and saw the Canaan land and died there.

The prime responsibility of Joshua who was ordained by God was to get the people of Israel across the River Jordan and enter the Land of Canaan. In order to receive an idea on how to carry out his responsibilities Joshua decided to get into communion with God. For that Joshua declared a three-day fast among the people of Israel.

4. One day at Mizpah – (1 Samuel 7:1-17)

In the last lesson we learnt about how the Ark of the Covenant was lost because of the wickedness of Eli’s sons and how it was safe-guarded in Abinadab’s house on the hill when it was fetched back. When even after twenty years, the Ark of the Covenant remained there, the Israelites cried out to Jehovah. Then Prophet Samuel said to the people, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” In accordance, all Israel gathered together and cried, “We have sinned against the Lord.” They drew water and poured it out before Jehovah and fasted for a day.

When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines went to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were greatly worried. They said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He prayed to the LORD on Israel’s behalf, and the LORD answered him. While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the LORD thundered with a loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The Israelites pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way.

5. Elijah, 40 days – (1 Kings 19:1-18)

In the Seventh Grade we learnt about Elijah’s sacrifice at Carmel and the subsequent killing of the priests of Baal. When Jezebel, wife of King Ahab heard all this, she became furious. She was a wicked woman. Through a messenger she informed Elijah

that within 24 hours she would decapitate him. Frightened by that threat, Prophet Elijah ran from there for the safety of his life. After he had run for a whole day, he came to a broom bush and sat under it and wished to die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." While he was sleeping there, an angel touched him and woke him up and said, "Get up and eat." When he woke up and looked around, there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again to sleep. The angel of the LORD came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night. Then the Lord commanded him, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." A great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." Jehovah emboldened him and commanded him to go and anoint Hazael as king over Aram, Jehu as king over Israel and Elisha as his successor.

6. King Ahab fasted – (1 Kings 21:1-29)

By the wicked connivance of Jezebel, King Ahab procured Naboth's vineyard to make a vegetable garden. According to the command of God, Elijah informed the king on the horrible death that was awaiting the king and Jezebel who were guilty of it. We have learnt this Bible portion in the Seventh Grade.

Elijah reminded him that there was never a king like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife and behaved in the vilest manner. These words of Elijah caused Ahab to retrospect. Then he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and prayed to God.

God who lends ear to true repentant prayers listened to Ahab's prayer and said: "Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

7. King Hezekiah for three days – (2 Kings 20:1-21)

As per the proclamation of the Lord, Prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and told him that he was going to die. The king was greatly troubled in heart when he heard this. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, "Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with whole-hearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then Isaiah got another message from God. He went to King Hezekiah and said: "This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your

tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David'."

As a result of his prayers, King Hezekiah's illness was healed and his life extended by another fifteen years from what God had initially decided. He was given three days' time for spiritual cleansing in order to receive it. The King also received a sign from Isaiah that all this would come to pass – he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

8. Three days by the River of Ahava – (Ezra 8:1-23)

The end result of kingly reigns forgetting God. Babylon had attacked the Kingdom of Judah and looted the Temple of Jerusalem, stealing the golden and silver sacrificial accessories, setting the Temple on fire and taking the Judeans as exiles. By the third attack, the Kingdom of Judah was in ruins. For nearly seventy years the people of Judah had to live in exile in Babylon.

During the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, according to a vision that he had from God he sent back to Jerusalem those exiles who were interested, under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Ezra was one of the exiles who were left in Babylon. He was a person who had placed his faith firmly in Jehovah God and lived a life strictly observing his faith values. As years went by, moral degradation set in among the Jews in Jerusalem. When Ezra heard this news, he understood that it was his moral responsibility to revive them. With the permission of the king, he prepared to go to Jerusalem with 1500 men of religious fervour and their women and servants. They camped by the river that flows to Ahava and stayed there for three days. Ezra firmly believed that Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, was strong enough to rescue His people from all their enemies. So they stayed there and fasted and prayed for three days and set out to Jerusalem renewed in spiritual strength.

FASTING – ACCORDING TO OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT – II

9. Three days Fast that Queen Esther declares – (Esther 4:1-17)

In the Fifth Grade we have studied in detail, how a Jewish lady Esther, became the queen of King Xerxes and how the queen saved the Jews from the cruel annihilation. The first commandment among the Ten Commandments given by God to the people of Israel goes as follows: "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them..." The order of Haman the chief among King Xerxes nobles was against this. And he also readied a pole to impale those who went against Haman's orders.

It was in this circumstance that Queen Esther declared a Fast for three days as the first step to save the people of God. After that, through her clever strategy she hung Haman on the gallows he had prepared to impale the Jews and thus was able to save the Jews.

10. Daniel for three weeks - (Daniel 10:2-3)

“At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.”

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel on what is to happen in the future and a clue on the great tribulation to come. In order to get a proper understanding of it from God, he started a Fast. Daniel became weak after three weeks' Fasting. Then a messenger of God came and strengthened him. Then through a vision God showed him all the wars and change of powers in that were to happen in the future.

11. Jonah's three days – (Jonah 1:1-2:10)

Prophet Jonah did something that displeased God. After that he was caught in the stomach of a fish as part of God's punishment. This we have learnt in Grade One. For three nights and three days he was in the belly of the fish and he prayed to God from there. “In my distress I called to the Lord... ‘Salvation comes from the Lord’.” God heard Prophet Jonah's prayer. According to Jehovah's command the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land.

12. People of Nineveh for forty days – (Jonah 3:1-10)

Prophet Jonah who escaped from the belly of the fish went to Nineveh as per the instructions of God went around proclaiming loudly: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites, accepting Prophet Jonah's words, believed God and proclaimed a Fast. The king of Nineveh, rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the ashes. All of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth and fasted.

The king sent out a decree: “Let neither man nor beast; herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.” Accordingly, the people of Nineveh left their wicked ways and sought refuge in God. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

13. Jesus Christ in the wilderness for forty days – (Matthew 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13)

In order to gain victory over Satan's temptations and to be strengthened in the spirit, the Holy Spirit led Jesus to Fast in the wilderness. For forty days and forty nights Jesus gained spiritual strength and courage. There were three different kinds of temptations by the Satan. He withstood them all uttering the Word of God. When Satan lost in all his connivances, he left Jesus and went. Then the angels came near

him and served him. In the First Grade we studied the different temptations that Satan used against Jesus and the scriptures quoted by Jesus.

14. The Wilderness Fast of John the Baptist – (Luke 1:80, Matthew 3:1-17)

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.” It is John the Baptist who is described here. In the wilderness, his food was locusts and honey. He was a martyr who victoriously accomplished the duty that God Almighty had entrusted him living a perfect and strict life of Fasting, even in his dressing, which was reminiscent of Elijah who was the prophet among prophets. We have studied about John the Baptist in Grade One and Grade Five.

15. Anna’s Fast –(Luke 2:36-37)

“There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”

There was a reason for the widowed and aged Anna to have remained in Jerusalem Temple in prayer and fasting. It was to see the Saviour of the World, the Redeemer of Jerusalem. That was granted to her. She praised God for that. There were some other people in that House of God who were fortunate to see this. She also explained to them about this Saviour.

16. Saul, three days in Damascus – (Acts 9:9)

“For three days he (Saul) was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.”

In the Seventh Grade we have studied how Saul who hunted and persecuted Christ’s disciples was touched and converted and named Paul making him a disciple of Christ. He needed to be prepared for such a miraculous conversion. He was made blind. Unable to see anything, he spent the time in prayer and meditation giving up food and drink. As a result of that Ananias came to him on the third day. “Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit’. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again.”

PART TWO – WORSHIP ORDER

A. Songs

1. Dheiva suthanmaar aayiduvaan..... Hebrews 13:7
2. Paulose sleeha..... Galatians 1:8-9
3. Entay shareeram bhakshipaan..... John 6:54
4. Mudikall moodanjottithakidum..... 2 Timothy 4:8

B. PRAYERS

1. Including Psalm 51 Mayyal prayers (Dawn prayers)
2. Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:2-10

C. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Second coming of Jesus and the experience of the Holy Qurbana

After basmalka the altar curtain is drawn. This curtain is drawn at this time because our Christ who has ascended into heaven is hidden to us. Denoting his second coming opening the heavens, the screens are drawn aside again.

At the time of his second coming "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. (Matthew 24:29-31) In order to create this impression, some churches have the practice of closing the *Madbaha* windows and creating darkness. The altar servers stand on either sides of the priest with lighted candles to depict the heavenly hosts accompanying Christ.

Before the screen is moved the priest and those in the *madbaha* partake of the Holy Elements. Symbolising the second coming, those believers who have come prepared are served the Holy Qurbana when they come to the western side of the *Madbaha*.

When we partake in the Holy Qurbana, Christ enters into us in His fullness, with all His might and all the virtues. In other words, we are surrendering our entire body to be His abode. Here is what Paul says about *this* "...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me". (Galatians 2:20) "...the two will become one flesh". *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*" (Ephesians 5:31-32) About this Holy Qurbana experience our Christ says: "...it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." (John 14:10) "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) This is the type of spiritual experience that we should have.

After serving the Holy Qurbana the priest prays: "The Holy Body that we ate and the Holy Blood that is for the remission of sins, which we drank should not be for our judgement and condemnation." However, "...whoever eats the bread or

drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:27) The punishment for such sinners is also stated. *“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...”* (John 15:2)

After placing the Holy Elements back on the ‘*Thronos*’, the priest says the prayer of thanksgiving. Through this prayer, God the Father is praised for His mercy in allowing the experience of Holy Qurbana. Then a prayer is said to Lord the Son. This is said to be the final prayer. In the Holy Qurbana all the prayers said by the priest are to the Father. However, this concluding prayer and the last part of the prayer said after the First Rooshma (Blessing with a sign of the Cross) and the prayer that starts as “*Valiyavanum...*” which the priest says when he comes to the west side bearing the Paten and Chalice are to the Lord the Son.

2. Investiture and Farewell

There is a misunderstanding that all the *Rooshmas* said by the priest by turning to the west and facing the people are all blessings. The first one is the Apostolic Blessing, the second is in the name of the Lord, the Son and third in the name of the Trinity. Thus, there are three blessings in the Holy Qurbana Service. The last and fourth *Rooshma* is just a Benediction.

Man who separates himself from the wearisome and difficult existence of this world and arrives at the presence of God and imbibes the heavenly enjoyment and becomes satiated in the joy and happiness of praising God with the heavenly angels, in the next moment comes back to earth. We go back to our homes with Jesus Christ whom we received into our hearts through the Holy Qurbana experience. This means that there will be some things that we would have to remove which we had been practising till then. This benediction is to impart courage to us who are weak and sinful, so that we can overcome our weaknesses and maintain the joy we experienced in the Church. The Church fathers have arranged it at the end of the public Holy Qurbana service. The first part of this benediction is a wish to continue our journey in peace with blessings and nourishment received by partaking in the Holy Qurbana. Our fathers view our life in this world as a journey through the wilderness. Just as we when we travel we arrange for food after resting in one oasis and got on to another oasis, we take the blessings from the sacred *madbaha* for such time until we partake of the Holy Sacrifice again. What we have to particularly pay attention to here is that not everyone who partakes of the Holy Qurbana will receive this blessing. We will receive blessing only according to our true wishes and petitions. We should come prepared and ready to accept it.

In our wilderness journey we need the security of God for safety from the thieves and bandits, and protection from the sand storms that suffocate and endanger. The Holy Trinity will save us from all this - we who have been saved by the victorious Cross of Christ, and sealed by the Holy Baptism. That is the assurance given in the second part of the benediction.

The last part of the benediction is a request to the spiritual people to pray for the forgiveness of the sins and weaknesses of the priest who is mere man.

3. Concluding Service

After bidding us farewell through the benedictory prayers, the curtain is drawn and the priest says these prayers in private. He prays kneeling down and conducts intercessory prayers and one part of the prayers for the departed souls (*Promeon* and *Sedra*) in this service.

As Jesus the Messiah who gave his life for his sheep has resurrected and ascended into heaven, we need have no worry of any harm for, through the experience of His Holy Body and Holy Blood Jesus has entered into us and is leading us in the righteous path. There is satisfaction as having eaten at a party, comfort as having been anointed and joy as having been quenched. Following His goodness for pardon of our shortcomings and His mercy for forgiveness of our sins there is hope that we will enter into God's Temple which is the heavenly Canaan. Remembering all this, the priest also recites Psalm 23. The last part of this service is taking farewell of the *Madbaha*: "I don't know if I would come back to your presence..." If one dies without being able to return to the altar, how pure should the rest of our life be is the great truth that has been written into this prayer.

4. Lord's Prayer

Before the establishment of the Holy Qurbana, just as the true believers were reconciled and made worthy of peace, it was necessary to impart courage before the ascension. Because the wages of sin is death, we lost the right to rebirth. However, by His resurrection we received a new birth. But we need to purify ourselves in order to be worthy of calling God the Father, 'Abba Father' again. The prayer that the priest offers at this time is particularly noteworthy. "O God the Father of our Christ the Messiah whom the Cherubs glorify and the seraphs extol, and who is exalted by the thousands and tens of thousands and tens of thousands of particularly wise heavenly hosts, to whom the sacrifices are offered as a sweet fragrance, who makes holy and completes the offerings, sanctify our bodies, spirits and souls so that we can say Our Father who art in Heaven with a pure heart and shameless face and pray and call you as 'Our Father in Heaven'. It is after this that we say the Lord's Prayer.

After the Lord's Prayer the priest again says, "O great and merciful Father who made us worthy of being called his children..." It convinces us that we have a Father who considers us as his own children and makes us call him 'Our Father in Heaven' with all the right of being his children. Through this the thought that we are orphans is removed. Instead it shows us that we have a father who leads us by our hand.

"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans." (Matthew 6:5) This prayer was taught to the disciples when he told them how to *"go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."* (Matthew 6:6) This

prayer is taught in such a manner, that we can request like we ask our own father. When we study each word in this meaningful prayer, we see that it enables us to examine ourselves, to remove our blemishes, all the pride in us, all the worldly strength and power, and submit ourselves before His Holy presence making it possible to receive blessings.

Our Father in Heaven... *"Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out 'Abba, Father'. So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."* (Galatians 4:6-7) John speaks of Jesus as... *"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12) We become His children when we believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him. Moreover, we become privileged to call 'Abba Father'."

Hallowed be thy name... *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16) *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* (John 15:8) If we wish to glorify His name then our lives should be made holy. St. Pauls says... *"As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you'."* Let us not let that happen. Let Job's prayer rise up from within us even in our difficult times... *"The LORD gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."* (Job 1:21)

May your kingdom come... *"...he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him."* (Matthew 25:31-32). He is coming to establish His kingdom. So we should be prepared as the five virgins who were ready with oil in their lamps to greet the bridegroom as in the parable of the Ten Virgins.

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven... *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* (Luke 22:42). Christ is praying this fully aware of the dreadful pain he would have to suffer. Yet he says 'not my will, but let your will be done'. If we can live knowing that it is the will of God, then this prayer will be fulfilled.

Give us this day our daily bread... We read that the Lord who hears prayers provided Manna from heaven and water from the rock for the people of Israel. We have also read that for God's prophet Elijah, God provided necessary bread under the broom bush through his messenger (1Kings 19:5), by the crows at the side of Kerith Brook and from the widow of Zarephath whose jar and jug that never did empty (1 Kings 17:16). All this for his prophet! We also know of how our Christ provided for the people who were listening to Him so that they would not fall of hunger on the way. Then surely, He will never be reluctant to give gifts to those who claim to be His children.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us... Christ has included this statement in here with a lot of consideration. *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you*

do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:14-15) It reminds us of one more thing, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one... Satan deceived the first parents. Then Satan tried to trap Jesus our Lord. Even now... *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1Peter 5:8)* We should remain awake and pray so that we do not fall into the clutches of the devil. *“This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Mark 9:29; Matthew 17:21 [KJV])*

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever... We should glorify the God who created us and who through His Son saved us and perfected us through the Holy Spirit. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1Corinthians 10:31)*

PART THREE – FAITH TRUTHS

1. PRAYERS

Prayer and worship form the most integral factor of religion. The meaning of the word prayer is 'a solemn request for help'. That is, we ask and receive from God our Father all our needs. We call this prayer. However, our Christ has stated:

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." (Matthew 6:31-32)

From these verses we understand that God knows all our needs and He will provide them. It also reaffirms:

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?" (Matthew 6:26-30)

Then where is the need for prayer in Christian life?

Prayer is a communication with God. This brings us closer to God. The Fast and Lents we observe creates situations for this. When we go near God's presence in prayer we see the Son seated at the Father's right side and thousands and thousands of angels praising Him. Why are the angels praising Him? Do they have any personal interests? No. As God is the creator and sustainer of everything, He is worthy to be praised. So, we too should with those angels, praise God.

Another side of prayer is that it is very essential for spiritual growth. Just as food is vital for our physical nourishment and growth, so also, prayer is necessary for our spiritual growth. Not just the body, the spirit also needs to grow along. As a human, man needs prayer to strengthen in spirit in order to control his human desires. When only the desires of the flesh are met, the spirit becomes sick and dies.

Jesus Christ's life was a prayerful one.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35)

After advising the multitude the whole day long, he would withdraw to the hills... (Mark 8:46) When Jesus prayed, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove... (Luke 3:22) Jesus' prayers at Mt. Tabor (Mt. of Transfiguration) and at Garden of Gethsemane are important events in His life. There are more such events when Jesus prayed. From this we understand that prayer was like life-breath to him. After each day's public ministry, He would ease His weariness and rest through prayer. It was through prayer that He received the strength and motivation from God for each day's activity. It is also clear that He was cheerful and joyous during such times.

Do we have this experience in our prayers? Our prayers are very mechanical and do not rise from the heart. The nature of our prayers stands out as just requisitions. That is why we do not have the experience of having communicated with God. Jesus has taught us what and how our prayer should be. That is what He teaches the disciples in the Lord's Prayer. Let us analyse the various factors of this prayer.

1. Praise and thanksgiving

"Hallowed be Thy name..." When we remember the mercies and blessings of God our hearts will overflow with gratitude. When that is put into words, it becomes praise and thanksgiving.

2. Requests and pleas

The prime factor in our prayers should be for spiritual needs. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Secondly for our physical needs... "Give us this day our daily bread."

3. Plea for Forgiveness of our sins

When we humbly come to the presence of God Almighty we remember our weaknesses and sins and wonder if we are worthy of standing before the Almighty God. That guilt feeling that arises in us, leads us to true repentance and pray "Forgive us our sins as we forgive others".

4. Protection from Satan

Satan our adversary is looking for opportunities to falter us. We need God's protection to not fall into Satan's trap by temptation like our first mother.

5. Surrender

We should submit ourselves completely to God. All our worldly riches and fame are indebted to God. If we are aware of this, we would gladly surrender ourselves to God.

Prayer from the heart according to God's wishes will certainly bear fruit. However, that does not mean there will be an immediate answer to the prayer. So there is no meaning in judging God as not the Living God and that God does not hear prayers. Zachariah the priest, who was righteous before God and blameless in observing the Laws and showing justice was childless. As the Jews considered children to be a gift of God, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth prayed to God. Yet God willed to give them a son only after they were much advanced in age. St. Paul prayed to God to remove the 'thorn' in his flesh. But God did not accept Paul's request. Instead, he got the reply

"My grace is sufficient for you..." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

When Elijah offered a sacrifice unto God and prayed to prove to the priests of Baal that his God is the Living God, immediately fire came down from heaven and burnt the offering.

Jesus' second coming is the Hope of all Christian people alone. To receive our rewards according to our deeds and become part of that heavenly experience we should be prepared. We wish to see all who are dear to us at that heavenly joy...

“pray for each other...” (James 5:16)

Jesus prayed so that his disciples would not be shaken... (Luke 22:31) So also, when we pray for our dear ones, Jesus teaches that we should pray for our enemies too. Jesus, while on the cross, prayed for those who persecuted him and asked God not to hold it against them,

2. HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Eve and Virgin Mary are two women who hold importance in the Holy Bible. Eve was the First Mother and Mary the Mother of God. Let us try to get to know these two women.

1. When Eve fell to the ploys of Satan, Mary was elevated by the Holy Spirit
2. While Eve believed that man was God, through Mary God became Man
3. While the Garden of Eden was lost because of Eve, through Mary we got the privilege to enter into the Heavenly Canaan
4. When Eve defied God, Mary humbly accepted God
5. Eve doubted God, while Mary fully trusted and believed in God
6. Because of unfaithfulness mankind fell, while through belief mankind was saved
7. Eve did not obey the commands of God, Mary obeyed the commands of God
8. While Eve became proud, Mary became the epitome of meekness
9. Eve is the mother of sinful man and Mary is the mother of mankind who have been saved and born again

Resembling the ladder that Jacob dreamt of, our forefathers attribute her as ‘The Ladder that climbs to heaven’. It is only when we profoundly study God’s way of saving man, do we see the sincerity and purity of our forefathers’ reasoning. God wishes that man should use his freedom with the spirit of goodness. He does not wish to reward or punish as man does good or evil – each person’s salvation is vested in themselves. Our Lord took incarnation through Virgin Mary in order to show us the way of salvation not because of the urgings of the heavenly messenger. On the contrary, perceiving the will of God underlying in the proclamation, it was in her meek and faithful acceptance and agreement,

“I am the Lord’s servant, may your words be fulfilled.”

As long as mankind’s salvation is only through The Lord the Son, and as long as the truth that no one gets to the Father but through the Son prevails we have to see the role of the Holy Mother as a noble one. If our forefathers have compared it to a ladder that climbs up to heaven, there is no wonder in it.

In our Adoration service, at the end of the *Kauma* is the prayer to the Mother of God. The Protestant Churches do not give much importance to this prayer. On analysing the words of the Scripture, the Syrian Christian Churches from the very beginning have been using this prayer to Virgin Mary and has been a source of blessing then and even now.

“Hail Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with Thee...” (Luke 1:28)

This is the opening words of the prayer. These are the words of adulation used by Angel Gabriel when he appeared to the Holy Mother. When our forefathers were uncertain whether we were even worthy of using the words that the angels used, the Reformative Christians push aside this prayer.

“Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...”
(Luke 1:42).

This is the greeting that Elizabeth gave Virgin Mary when she saw her.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God...”

The entire human race has been born in sin. When our Christ was crucified, died, buried and rose again on the third day, for our life, we all became inheritors of salvation. Through the sacrament of the Holy Baptism we receive re-birth and are cleansed of our sinful birth and attain salvation. No one who was born before our Lord Jesus has been redeemed of sinful birth. However, as the Holy Spirit took possession of the Virgin Mary, she became holy. As Mary was first among humans to be cleansed of sinful birth, she is called Holy. The Syriac word ‘*Mor*’ is made feminine when ‘*ththe*’ is added to the word. Therefore, we call her ‘*Morththe Mariyamay*’. What is wrong in using the nomenclature ‘Mother of our Lord’ and calling to her and praying to Holy Virgin Mary who became the mother of Lord the Son who came down to earth for our salvation?

“Pray for us sinners, to the Lord God Almighty now, always and at the hour of our death...”

Our forefathers completed the prayer to the Holy Mother by adding a supplication to the Words of the Scripture while confessing to the Mother of God who lives even today and is interceding for us, that we are sinners and please beseech the Lord Almighty for us. It has been added to the seven ‘*Yama Prayers*’.

Given below are the references given in the Old Testament giving an indication to the Mother of God.

1. Thorny bush – Exodus 3:2
2. Ladder – Genesis 28:10-18
3. The Ark of the Covenant – Exodus 25:10
4. Pot that held Manna – Exodus 16:33
5. Aaron’s blossomed staff – Numbers 17
6. Gideon’s bundle of fleece – Judges 6:36
7. Elisha’s new bowl – 2 Kings 2:19-21

When the Syrian Christians study about Virgin Mary and believe that she is the Mother of God and call upon her for intercessory prayers, certain sects of Christians have differences in belief. One among them is their argument that renders the Mother of God as an unfortunate lady. Here are two verses they quote in support of their argument:

1. “*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*” – John 2:4
2. “*...he (Jesus) said to her, “Woman, here is your son,”*” – John 19:26

The correct word in Malayalam translation for the word that refers to queens in Greek language is ‘Woman’. The Bible was translated into Malayalam by an English man who studied Malayalam. There are many such words in the Bible that were translated without considering the differences in the social and periodical elements which could influence its intended meaning and hence, its ideological meaning has been changed. In addition a lot of unwanted terminologies were included in

translating the impending thoughts. One such usage is the word (*thammil*) in the first verse. (Not in the Authorised KJV English Bible!) This word is only in the Malayalam Bible. People who do not understand these differences give it a wrong interpretation. Anyone can understand the impropriety in interpreting that Jesus Christ who while suffering agony on the cross had the heart to pray for His enemies, but would to His own mother who was heart-broken and sobbing seeing the misery he was enduring, without any respect refer to her as 'woman' and ask what is there between me and you.

Similarly, in the Fourth Century an ideology was spread that the Holy Virgin Mary was Immaculate. That is Holy Virgin Mary beyond her status of being the Mother of God was raised to being equal to God. Syrian Christians see this also as against the Bible. The faith difference we have against this blind belief is that in order to become the Mother of God and bear the Son of God, through a particular deliberation of God, this one lady alone was born without sin. Mary was born as an ordinary child as the daughter of Joachim and Anne (Hanna). She had an ordinary upbringing and it was after her marriage betrothal that the angel of God appeared to her and said to her:

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."
(Luke 1:35)

In this verse itself it is very clear that with the coming of the Holy Spirit she is made holy and is overshadowed by the power of the Almighty and the offspring would be called the Son of God. So we believe and perceive Holy Virgin Mary as the Holy Mother of God.

3. GOD

Since God supersedes all human understanding, studying about God and believing in Him has to be based on the Scriptures. We get an understanding of the absolute God through the historical facts after the creation of Adam, the prophecies of the prophets from time to time and the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord the Son fulfilling those prophecies.

God is not someone who can be set aside. We cannot set limits or boundaries to God's might or authority or wisdom or knowledge or anything.

"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea." (Job 11:7-9)

i. God is One

When the whole world was worshipping many gods and goddesses, God taught the Jewish people belief in one God.

"You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3;
Deuteronomy 5:7)

"I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God."
(Isaiah 45:5-6; 44:6)

What is fundamental in the Old Testament and what our Lord teaches in the New Testament is belief in one God.

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

ii. God is Spirit

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

Because God is Spirit he is formless. That is why Prophet Isaiah asks

"With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?" (Isaiah 40:18).

That is also why God through Moses in his second commandment says,

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." (Exodus 20:4)

Because God is Spirit and formless, it should not be considered that God is an inanimate thing that is incapable of thinking or understanding or loving. His thinking, knowledge and creativity are very evident.

iii. God is invisible

"Whom no one has seen or can see..." (1 Timothy 6:16).

"No one has ever seen God..." (John 1:18)

When Moses who is attributed to have spoken to God the most, expressed his desire to see God, he was told,

"You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:20)

iv. God is Eternal

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27).

"Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Psalms 90:2)

All creation has a beginning and an end. However, as there is no beginning or end in God, He is eternal.

v. God is Almighty

"With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

"For with God nothing is impossible." (Luke 1:37)

God is able to do anything He desires. That is the principle in almightiness. He cannot commit sin, or die or do injustice. It is contrary to the character of God.

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

vi. God is omnipresent and omniscient

When we say God is omnipresent, that means His presence is there everywhere. There is no place where His presence is not there. Neither does any place limit His presence. The psalmist says,

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in hell, you are there." (Psalms 139:7-8)

Just as He is omnipresent, God is also omniscient. He knows everything. For God there is no time differences like past, present and future. In His presence every time is the present time.

"You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." (Psalms 139:2-3)

"Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit." (Psalms 147:5)

God knows our contemplations, our thoughts and our motives. Therefore, man cannot think, do or wish anything hidden from Him.

vii. God is Holy and Perfect

God tells the people of Israel,

"I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy." (Leviticus 11:44)

Isaiah sees a vision where the angels proclaim the holiness of God. (Isaiah 6:3). Only holy people can see God or go near His presence.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8)

Our life will become holy depending on our perception of the holiness of God.

God is not only holy but also the source of all goodness. Absolute perfection!

Our Lord says,

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

viii. God is filled with Love

In John 1:1-12 we read that God is love, and that He loved the world so much that He sent His own Son to suffer agony in order to save mankind we. This idea is found in Romans 5:8. It is not possible to assess the height or depth or measure of God's love as it is beyond comprehension.

ix. God is full of grace, mercy and tolerance

"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

When our Lord the Saviour's kindness and love for mankind abounded He saved us not by the justice of our deeds but by His mercy.

x. God is true and just

“Let God be true, and every human being a liar.” (Romans 3:4)
“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

We believe that the Laws came through Moses and Truth and Grace came through Jesus Christ. The belief that God is faithful and is someone who carries out His promises gives us hope in life. As God is just, we believe that every one of us will be punished for our sins, and those who live according to the wishes of God will be partakers of the heavenly joy and those who do evil will get eternal hell.

xi. God is the creator, sustainer and ruler of all.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)
“I am the Lord, the Maker of all thing.” (Isaiah 44:24)
“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him...” (Colossians 1:16)

Someone who keenly observes nature will realise how cleverly and attentively the various factors in it have been created and put together, and would have no difficulty in comprehending that there is an intelligent creator behind it and that nature did not evolve by itself. By the power of the Word God created everything from nothing – all that is seen and unseen. God said “Let there be...” and everything came into being. He commanded and created. It is this belief that we proclaim in the first paragraph of the Creed or Faith Declaration... “We believe in the one True God, the Father Almighty; maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.”

CHURCH HISTORY

1. Koonen kurissu sathyam (Oath of the Leaning Cross)

The Portuguese through their trade started establishing their power in the northern part of Kerala. Slowly they started moving south and developed a hold over the local rulers. The King of Kochi, who became a toy in their hands, gave them the permission to build a Fort in Kochi. The Portuguese who saw churches in Kochi and its surrounding places were surprised. As they were believers of the Roman Catholic faith they started to convert the local Christians into Roman Catholicism. For this they founded an orphanage and school in Kodungaloor and a college in Vypeen Fort. To attract more people they started promising free education and financial aid. In order to distribute books containing Roman Catholic beliefs, they established a printing press in Kodungaloor. Some young people who desired the free offerings were ordained as priests. However, when the Portuguese realised that their peaceful means of spreading the Roman Catholic beliefs among the Christian brothers was not taking momentum as much as they expected, they started wielding threats. They unleashed aggression and corruption.

It was Mar Joseph Methran of the Nestorian belief who was ruling the Malankara Church during this time. Later, Mar Abraham and Mar Simon who came from Babylon ruled over the Malankara Church. However, the oppression over the people who stood against the Roman Catholic beliefs continued and they were being forcefully converted to the Roman Catholic Church. When the torment of the Roman Catholics became intolerable, these Babylonian bishops made Archdeacon (a titular name in the level of Corepiscopa) Geevarghese of the Pakalomattom family, in charge of all the affairs and returned.

In 1594, Dom Alexis de Menezes was consecrated as Archbishop with the firm resolution that the Malankara Church would be merged with the Roman Catholic Church. For this, security forces were appointed at all the ports on the western coast and in the Persian seas in order to block the arrival of bishops from outside Malankara. And if any bishop ever landed, special arrangements were made to send them back again or else hand them over to the Portuguese.

Menezes considered that in the pretext of an appeasement he could get the Archdeacon to his side and make him declare belief in the Roman Pope by getting him to endorse an oath with his signature and publish it. This would ensure the Archbishop unobstructed entry into all the churches in the Malankara Church and thus spread the Roman belief. For that he made all arrangements in Kochi and invited the Archdeacon. However, the Archdeacon reached Kochi with 3000 warriors. While the Archdeacon's guards were all waiting outside the room fearing Menezes would cause bodily harm on their Church leader, the door of the room was suddenly shut for some reason. Immediately, the armed young men moved forward crying out that they would lay down their lives for their Archdeacon and for the Church of Holy Mar Thoma. Then, a Latin priest shouted out that the Archdeacon

was safe and there was no cause for alarm. The Archdeacon then came out which avoided any unfortunate consequences. Menezes' initial attempt was foiled.

Then, the Archdeacon had to make a visit to the Vypeen Fort. Menezes used this opportunity. Yielding to compulsion and fearing the Portuguese might, and for the safety of his own life, he reluctantly put his signature on the oath. Thus the Goa Archbishop completed the first phase of his activity.

Later, Menezes presented himself to the king of Kochi, offered gifts and won him over which gave Menezes unhindered entry into the Malankara churches. He made speeches ridiculing the Patriarch of Damascus and praising the Pope. He gave expensive gifts to parish leaders and made regular visits to houses and with diplomatic words influenced many people. This helped him to make a lot of associates who helped him to call a Synod of representatives of all Malankara churches and set a stage where at that Synod he could forcefully get his decisions approved.

Near Kochi in Northern Travancore in the town called Udayempero, there is a church that was built in the name of all the saints. It was decided to hold the Synod here. So an invitation signed by the Archdeacon and the Archbishop inviting all the parish representatives was sent out to all the Malankara churches. Moreover, a decree was proclaimed that the wealth of those parishes who do not attend the Synod would be confiscated.

On June 20, 1599 this Synod convened. Besides the archbishop and his minions, Portuguese governor, leading officials and groups of armed people had already gathered there. 133 priests, 20 deacons and 660 lay leaders attended the synod. However, it should be particularly mentioned that the archdeacon did not attend this Synod and representatives of two parishes also did not attend the Synod.

At the Synod which lasted for seven days, 267 decisions which were prepared earlier were read and passed without giving any time for discussion or analysis. The Syrian Christians who were true believers had to fearfully and reluctantly put their signature to the decisions of the synod.

According to this Synod's decisions, Holy Qurbana had to be conducted using a reformed liturgy that went against and wounded the ancient beliefs; the forms in which the unleavened bread (patheera) which are used in the Holy Qurbana, should be placed in the churches, clergymen were banned from marital relations, clergy who were already married had to divorce their wives, changes in the rites of Lent and sacraments and many such Roman Catholic principles were enforced upon the people. Another cruel and unpardonable deed was that Menezes searched, confiscated and burnt all the old books which the Malankara church fathers had handed down the ages. The main reason why the Malankara Church's history has been mired in darkness is because of this. Menezes repeatedly tried many tricks to corner the Archdeacon who did not attend the Synod. However, without falling into any of those traps, he stood as a smouldering spark against the Roman Catholic

beliefs and through the Coonen Kurissu Sathyam (Oath of the Leaning Cross) burst into flames.

Father Robin, a scholar, was consecrated as the Roman Bishop of Malankara. After his decease, for a short while, Latin prelates, Brittey and Garcia ruled over the Syrian Church. They saw the Syrian Christians as mere slaves. Especially the proud and fanatical Garcia, whose rule was barbarous. The Syrian Church thirsted for redemption from this yoke of slavery and longed to have a shepherd who could strongly hold on to the old faith and lead them on. They saw that bright silvery light in Archdeacon Thomas, the successor of Archdeacon Varghese. Archdeacon Thomas started to work towards this goal.

Ahathullah was one of the Archbishops who reached here slipping the watchful eyes of the security placed at all the ports to prevent the landing of any prelates. There are two opinions regarding Ahathullah, one that he was sent by the Patriarch in Alexandria and the other that he was sent by the Persian Catholicos. When Ahathullah went to pray at St. Thomas' crypt in Mylapore, Madras (Chennai), he was questioned as they doubted his true identity and when it became obvious that he was a foreigner, he was arrested and put in prison.

Before Ahathullah could be imprisoned, Rev. Itty of Chengannur and Rev. Kurien of Kuravilangaadu Kezhakkedathu, who had been on a pilgrimage to Madras, happened to meet this Archbishop. At that time they narrated to him all that had been happening in the Malankara Church. Ahathullah comforted them and send with them a decree appointing Archdeacon Thomas who was supposed to have been the successor of Archdeacon Geevarghese, as the temporary head of the Church.

To chart a future course of action according to the articles of the decree, Syrian Christians from all around Malankara were invited and they gathered at Alangode. At that time they heard that Mar Ahathullah who was being taken to Goa for an inquisition had been brought to Kochi and was being held at the Fort. The people who knew that the result of this inquisition would be like throwing Ahathullah into a flaming furnace, decided to rescue Ahathullah through some means. About 25000 people besieged the Fort. The Portuguese closed the Fort gates and aimed their cannons at them. But by then, the Portuguese had already tied up Ahathullah and drowned him in the waters surrounding Kochi and killed him. There is another version that he was taken to Goa and burned at a stake.

Anyhow, when the mob realised that their bishop was not in the Fort, burning with rage became defiant and thronged in front of the Mattancherry Church. They tied heavy ropes onto the big rock cross in front of the church and holding onto it, they all swore saying, hereafter, we will not accept or obey Roman bishops or their beliefs and that till the time of their children will not surrender to Rome. As it was not possible for everyone to touch the cross at the same time and swear, they tied the rope to the cross so that they could hold onto the rope and make the oath. Tradition has it that this rock cross had a natural bend and that was why it was known as 'Koonen Kurissu' or 'Leaning Cross' and also that cross is the symbol of trials and

difficulties. As antagonism increased against those who had taken the oath and moved away, the authorities removed the cross which these people had used to take the oath. Thus, we can take pride that in this mass movement, the sufferings that the Syrian Church had to endure for 50 years under the Roman rule since 1599 was completely put to an end and the spiritual vigour that was lost at the Udayemperoor Synod could be recaptured.

2. Sister Church

In the previous classes we have learnt about Abraham Malpan the first reformer of the Mar Thoma Church, his brother and leader of the Malankara church, Mathews Mar Athanasius by whom Joseph Mar Coorilos was consecrated as the seventh metropolitan of the Thozhiyoor Church.

A resident of Kunnamkullam, Rev. Joseph received consecration as Mar Dionysius from Mardin and came to Malankara. He made several attempts to depose the then Metropolitan of the Malankara Church, Mathews Mar Athanasius and seize authority. However, nothing came to pass. Patriarch Peter III arrived in Malankara at the invitation of a certain sect of people who were displeased with the emphasis given by Mathews Mar Athanasius to the reformation activities of Abraham Malpan. On his way he visited Queen Victoria of England and procured a recommendation letter for the Madras government. On the basis of this letter, the proclamation which was made by the Thiru-Kochi government acknowledging Mathews Mar Athanasius as the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church was invalidated.

Later on, Joseph Mar Dionysius, who was the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church filed a plaint at the Alappuzha District Court making Thomas Mar Athanasius who became the successor of Mathews Mar Athanasius the accused. Joseph Mar Dionysius wanted to get the church wealth released and ascertain his authority over the church. While this dispute was in proceedings Thomas Mar Athanasius deceased in 1893. In this particular circumstance it was imperative to get a shepherd anointed for this sect of the Malankara Church.

We have studied in the Seventh Grade about the adventurous efforts of Mathews Mar Athanasius to consecrate a bishop for our Church which was in a state of widowhood after the demise of Geevarghese Mar Koorilos, the Sixth Metropolitan of the Thozhiyoor Church. The Thozhiyoor Church which remembers this event with gratitude, could not be without helping this sect. At the time when the people of the Malankara Church were standing as two opposing rivals and embroiled in a heated dispute, it was only natural that there would be objections and threats to an investiture ceremony. However, deciding to brave all oppositions, on the appointed day itself at Kottayam Cheriya Palli, Thozhiyoor Church's Eighth Metropolitan, Joseph Mar Athanasius along with Suffragan Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Koorilos consecrated Abraham Malpan's youngest son, Rev. Dathos as the Titus I.

The dispute that lasted for 25 years was adjudged in favour of Mar Dionysius of the Malankara Church. This caused a very significant rift in the history of the Malankara Church. The defeated sect under the leadership of Titus I broke away and formed

another church. This is the Mar Thoma Church. They stand firmly rooted in their forefathers' faith and beliefs and follow their footsteps.

The Thozhiyoor Church views this Mar Thoma Church which has slight differences in the rites of traditional beliefs, as a Sister Church and continues with mutual understanding the Apostolic Laying on of Hands. The two churches have a history of not involving in the administrative matters of each other. However, when in crisis, they always lend a helping hand to one another. Therefore, fraternity is maintained between the churches till today.

3. Administrative Regulations

All that was obtained from the Kattumangatt fathers and all the wealth their successors had amassed, the successive Metropolitans who had ruled during their respected tenures with a Vicar General kept it in their possession and was selling and buying and making profit for themselves and enjoying it. Moreover, these Metropolitans used to write a dying deed or testament or will for his successor.

During the tenure of the Ninth Metropolitan, Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, following the sudden demise of then Vicar General, Job Cheeran, the Metropolitan himself started handling the church wealth. His successor continued the practice.

This period was a time when democratic thinking was beginning to take shape. People started to express their opposition and discontent in the Metropolitans' handling of the church wealth by themselves as the overruling authority. Then according to the counsel of Abraham Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, efforts were made to form an advisory committee consisting of parish representatives, in order to make an Administrative Regulation.

In July of 1947, Yuhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan visited many parishes and tried to convince the people of the need for an Administrative Regulation and also sought their opinions. In May 1948, the representatives of all the parishes assembled at Kunnamkullam Church. Later, on May 14th they convened at Thozhiyoor Diocesan Church and accepted the Administrative Regulations. It was the hands and efforts of Yuhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan that was behind the formation of such an accountable Administrative Regulation. Our gratitude to this great man who opened a new chapter in the annals of the Thozhiyoor Church knows no bounds.

4. Porkullam Church

It was the Antiochan representative, Joachim Mar Coorilos who first established the Porkullam Church in the place where the Old School stands. However, no evidential proof has yet been found as to why that Church was moved from there to the present site.

The place where the church stands today was bought and built by the Seventh Metropolitan, Joseph Mar Coorilos (Alathur) and sanctified and dedicated in the Malayalam era 1062 on the first day of the month of *Tulam*. The first *Madbaha* with eye-catching art work was a donation by Kunnamkullam resident Shri Paramel

Chakkunny. But following an earth quake, there appeared a fissure 24 feet long on the wall and when it grew dangerously large, in 1968, the *Madbaha* was rebuilt to its present form and dedicated in 1970.

The dispute about this church is the only wound worth mentioning in the history of the Thozhiyoor Church. The Church has suffered financial losses and the Metropolitan and many individuals have gone through tremendous difficulties because of this.

There were some people in the Porkullam Church who were opposed to the Administrative Regulations which was brought about by the untiring work of Yuhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan and accepted by the committee for the betterment and development of our Church. This opposition grew and came to be known as the famous Porkullam Church Case. In the plaint it was stated that the Thozhiyoor Church authorities had no rights spiritually or worldly and that they had entered for spiritual needs on a temporary basis and the 1948 Administrative Regulations were not applicable to them. The case which lasted for nearly 10 years finally was awarded against the favour of the plaintive. Following this the General Body of the parish assembled and according to the Administrative Regulations selected and send representatives to the Church Council and the parish continues to observe these regulations.