ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL

CLASS VII

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PREFACE

We thank God that we were able to revise and up-date the text books of all classes in three years time. The curriculam and syllabus adopted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches remain the same.

This book is a translation of the text book of class VII. The orginal was written by Rev Dr. V.P. Vargheese. The English translation was made by Sri Josy C. Abraham, Director, Bombay Diocese. We are indeed grateful to both of them for their valuable help in producing this book. I am sure, this will be earnestly welcomed by all the students who cannot read Malayalam.

Devalokam
15-2-2009

Fr. Dr. O. Thomas
Director General

CONTENTS

UNIT - 1

CHRIST ON HISTORY

LESSON-1

BIRTH OF JESUS

St. Luke, the Evangelist, is the one who gives much information regarding the birth and childhood of Jesus. It is in this gospel, incidents such as, birth of John the forerunner of Jesus, appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary, Birth of Jesus in the manger, visit of the shepherds, Bringing of Infant Jesus to the temple, are recorded.

God sent the Angel Gabriel to Mary at Nazareth to inform her regarding the birth of Jesus. Mary was then betrothed to Joseph. The angel appeared to her and said " Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you", Mary was startled hearing the words of the Angel.

The Angel said to her, " Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus". "How will this happen, as I am unmarried"? asked Mary to the Angel. The Angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you". Due to the Holy Spirit, Mary became pregnant.

Isaiah, who lived seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, prophesied: from a Virgin, the Saviour of the world would be born. "The Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel". (Isaiah 7:14). This prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

The Hebrew word Immanuel means 'God is with us'. The word Jesus means, 'Lord is Saviour'. The Son of God was born from the Virgin, as the redeemer of the world from sin and evil.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town near Jerusalem, in Judea. Palestine was under the Roman Empire in those days. Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor, issued an order, to take the census of all people under the Roman Empire. Everyone had to register his name at his native place. This was to number all people of families living in countries under the Roman Rule. Joseph belonged to the family of David. So Joseph left Nazareth, along with Mary and went to the town of Bethlehem, the city of David. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby and she gave birth to Jesus, and laid Him in a manger.

Outside the town shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks. An Angel appeared to them in the night. The shepherds became very much frightened. The Angel said to them, " Do not be afraid, I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Today your Saviour is born in the city of David, he is Christ, the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11) Immediately a large group of angels joined together and praised God, Saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among the people who please God". (Luke 2:14). When the angels had gone, the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the child lying in the manger and praised God.

Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was born in a manger. It was the poor shepherds who first heard the good news of the birth of Jesus. It was for them, the grace was received first, to see and worship the infant Jesus.

Memory Verses :- Luke 2: 11-14.

Questions

(1) Which prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus from Virgin Mary?

(2) How did it happen, for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem?

LESSON-2

CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

On the eighth day of His birth, infant Jesus was circumcised. Like Christian baptism, it was a custom prevailing among Jews. The child was named Jesus.

According to the Jewish law, on completion of forty days, after the birth of a male child, the mother and child were to be brought to the house of God. This was for the purification of the mother and for the dedication of the child before God. In accordance with this law, Joseph and Mary brought the Child to Jerusalem temple and offered the sacrifice commanded by the law of Moses. Expecting the arrival of the Saviour, old Simon and Anna were residing in the temple. Simon had been received the message through the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he sees the Christ, Promised by God. Stirred by the Spirit of God, Simon reached the temple. He took the child Jesus in his arms and praised God and said, " Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the gentiles; and the glory of your people, Israel". Then Simon blessed Joseph and Mary.

The prophetess Anna, who had lived in the temple for long with fasting and prayer, also seeing the child Jesus praised God. She spoke to all who were expecting the coming of the Messaiah. Joseph and Mary, after praying in the temple, went back to their home town, Nazareth in Galilee.

Jesus, Again in the Temple

Every year, during the feast of the Passover, the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem. When Jesus was twelve years old, according to the custom of the feast, they went to Jerusalem and worshipped in the temple. After the feast while Joseph and Mary were returning, the boy Jesus remained back in the temple. Thinking, Jesus would be along with the co-travellers, they had gone a day's journey. When sought for Jesus and not found, they returned to the temple. After three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. All were astonished in His understanding and answers.

Mary said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I had sought you anxiously". Jesus answered to them, "why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business"? House of God, is the temple where God abides. House of God is the most suitable place, for Jesus, the Son of God to stay, He revealed.

After that, Jesus along with His parents returned to Nazareth and lived in their obedience. Because of wisdom, prayer and extremely good behaviour, Jesus became a beloved to both God and men.

Child Jesus teaches us three things :-

(1) The dedication and enthusiasm to attend the worship in the house of God.

(2) The eagerness to learn from the elders and teachers.

(3) The experience of growing in obedience and discipline, subjected to parents.

Memory Verse : " And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2: 52)

Questions

(1) "Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace ". Explain the context.

(2) Which are the examples that we can adopt from child Jesus?

LESSON-3

BAPTISM OF JESUS

Jesus began his public Ministry, when He was about thirty years old. (Luke 3:28)

John the Baptist had begun his ministry even before that. To prepare the people of Palestine to receive Jesus, was John's Mission. That is why John is called the fore-runner of Jesus. "Repent, confess your sins, and turn towards God", John exhorted the people. Those who do not repent, upon them will come God's punishment, he warned. "Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire". (Luke 3:9) "What shall we do?" People asked John. He answered and said to them, " he who has two pairs of clothes, let him give to him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise". (Luke 3:11). John baptized those who repented their sins. John's baptism was a sign of remission of sins. People who witnessed the ministry of John, reasoned whether he was the Messiah or not . John answered, saying to them all, " I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I, is coming, whose sandal strap, I am not worthy to loose; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". (Luke 3:16)

While John was baptizing in the river Jordan, Jesus also came to him. John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, as John's baptism was for the remission of sins and Jesus being the Son of God, was free from sins. "I have need to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me" said John. Jesus answered and said to him, "permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness".

When Jesus had been baptized and came up from the water, heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven which said "you are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased".

Jesus by his baptism showed that every one needs repentance and baptism. That is why, though he was Son of God, as man he received baptism.

The church Fathers teach that through the baptism in Jordan Jesus had established the Christian baptism. The baptism of John for remission of sins became christian baptism through the baptism of Jesus Christ. Where the Holy Spirit had descended in the form of a dove. With the Voice "You are My beloved Son, I am well pleased in You", God the Father was revealing to the world that Jesus was His son. Jesus was anointed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is, Jesus was revealed to the world as the Messaiah. The Hebrew word Messaiah and the Greek Word Christ, mean, the anointed.

Denaha is the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. (January 6). The Syriac word Denaha means revelation. The celebration of the appearance of Jesus to the world as God's anointed Saviour, is the feast of Dhenaha.

Memory Verse:- 'When all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized. While Jesus was praying heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove. Then a Voice came from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased". (Luke 3: 21-22)

Questions

(1) Why is John the Baptist called the forerunner of Christ?
(2) Why did John try to prevent Jesus, when he came to be baptized?
(3) For what Jesus received baptism?
(4) What is the importance of the feast of Denaha?

LESSON-4

SATAN TEMPTS JESUS

Jesus departed to the lonely wilderness, after His baptism. He went there for the preparation before beginning His public ministry. Forty days, Jesus spent there in fasting and prayer. When it was over, Satan approached Jesus, tempting Him. Three temptations, Jesus had to face.

First : Taking advantage of the situation, Jesus being very hungry, Satan approached Him saying, " If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread". It was a suggestion to use Jesus' divine power for selfish end.

Moreover, it was a suggestion to attract people by providing them food, their primary need. Satan was indicating that, people then, would accept Him as Messaiah. Gaining food alone is not the life-goal of man, replied Jesus. " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God". said Jesus. As of beasts, man cannot be satisfied by food alone, but he also needs spiritual things, clarified the Lord.

Second : According to the Gospel of St. Mathew (4:5), Satan led Jesus to the pinnacle of Jerusalem temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, jump down from here, For the Lord shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you in their hands, lest you dash your foot against the stone", (Psalm 91: 11-12). Then Jesus replied "It is written, you shall not tempt, the Lord your God" (Deu 6:16)

What Satan indicated was that if Jesus jumped unhurt from the pinnacle of the temple, witnessing that, people would believe in His miraculous power and accept Him as the Messaiah.

It was a suggestion to test God's care and protection. Jesus did not like to exhibit supernatural power to create awe among people and bring them into faith.

Third: Satan tempted for the third time. Jesus was led to a high mountain and showed Him all the Kingdoms of the World and their Glory, and said to Him, "All these things, I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me".

An allurement, to subdue the world by joining with evil and injustice?

An enticement, to gain worldly dominance , power and positions! That was it. Jesus resisted it. Jesus' aim was to manifest God's mercy and love through loving people, consoling them, and helping them.

The Lord wants to lead people to God with their free will, realizing God's love and not by seeing miracles. The Lord came into the world, not to establish a worldly Kingdom or dominion. So quoting again the Word of God, Jesus said, " Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ' you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only, you shall serve".

Being defeated, Satan left Jesus. We may have to face Satan's temptations in different ways and situations. Word of God is the chief weapon, with which we can face him. With Jesus' power we should gain victory over Satan.

Memory Verse : Jesus said to him, "It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve". (Luke 4:8)

Questions

(1) What is the meaning of Jesus' first temptation?
(2) What was the weapon that Jesus used to face Satan?
(3) What manner of Kingdom is that of Jesus?

LESSON-5

JESUS BEGINS PUBLIC MINISTRY

After gaining victory over Satan, with the power of the Spirit, Jesus returned to Galilee. Frequently, He used to go to the synagogue at Nazareth, His home town. On a Sabbath day, when He came to the synagogue, as His custom, Jesus stood up to read the scripture. He took the book of the prophet Isaiah and read like this, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me: Because the Lord has anointed Me, To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. (Isaiah.61:1-2).

Messaiah, would be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, prophesied Isaiah. The words Messaiah and Christ, mean anointed. We have seen that Jesus was anointed of Holy Spirit at Jordan. When Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah, He Himself was proclaiming this truth to the world.

As He finished reading Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus sat down to preach. In synagogues, Jewish Rabbis, used to sit and address the people and preach. Jesus began preaching by saying. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". (Luke 4:21)

People of Nazareth, His home town, were astonished, as they heard the sermon. How did He get this wisdom? Is He not the Son of Joseph? They said.

During His Public Ministry, Jesus preached in the synagogue of Galilee. His fame spread to all the neighbourhood. 'As the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, be converted,' he preached. He exhorted the people to live as children of God. God shows love and mercy to all, people also should do likewise. You love your

enemies, do them good. Lend to them who ask, without hoping anything in return. Then your reward will be great. And you will become the children of the Most High. For He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6: 35-36)

It is when God's love and mercy dwell in men that the Kingdom of God will appear on the earth. Love and mercy were made visible in Jesus' life. He became tender hearted when He saw the sick. People with various kinds of diseases were brought to Him. He laid His hand on each one of them and healed. Among them were people afflicted by evil spirits, 'you are Christ, the son of God,' cried the evil spirits and came out of people.

Large crowds were, always, drawn around Jesus, to hear Him and to get healed from sicknesses. Quite often, Jesus used, to depart from them for a while, to lonely places to pray.

Jesus, who preached to love the enemies, loved all people. Jesus viewed with equality, all those who were hated by the society. He preached to them and ate with them. It was disgusting for the Jewish leaders of that time. Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus for such deeds.

At Jesus' time, Palestine was under the Roman rule. The Romans appointed officers to collect taxes from people. These tax collectors used to threaten, and throw into prison, them that failed to pay taxes. So the Jews hated them. The evangelist, St. Matthew was a tax collector, first. His original name was Levi. On hearing the words of Jesus, Matthew followed Him. He, once, prepared a great feast at his home. A large group of guests, including tax collectors, sat to eat. When Jesus was found eating with them, the Pharisees and scribes asked His disciples, "why are you eating with tax collectors and sinners"? Jesus heard this and said to them: the sick and not the whole, have need of the physician. I have come to call not the righteous, but the sinners to repentance".

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus was ministering among those who were sick spiritually and physically.

He showed mercy towards them, loved them and preached to them to repent and become the children of God."

Memory Verse: "Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance. (Luke 5: 31-32)

Questions

(1) What was the importance of Jesus' reading the prophecy of Isaiah at Nazareth?

(2) What were the chief contents of the sermons of Jesus, in His public ministry?

(3) Give an example to show that Jesus loved all people alike.

LESSON-6

JESUS, THE LIFE GIVER

During the public ministry, Jesus had done a number of miracles. He healed the sick and those who were afflicted by evil spirits. Hungry were fed by increasing bread. Dead were raised. But Jesus performed no miracle to make anyone astonish. Because of His mercy towards people, Jesus had done all these. He felt compassion to those who were hungry or in bereavement. In this lesson let us study two of the miracles that Jesus had performed.

Jesus raises the dead

Jesus, while, preaching and healing the sick at Galilee, a man named Jairus approached Him. Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue of Jews. His twelve year old daughter was bedridden due to severe illness. Jairus pleaded Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter. Accepting his plea, Jesus started towards his house. A large multitude accompanied Him. On the way, some body from Jairus' house came and told that the girl was dead. Jesus consoled Jairus: "Do not be afraid, believe only, then she will be saved", Jesus came to the house. All those who gathered there were lamenting. "Do not weep, she is not dead, but sleeping", said Jesus.' They laughed at Him, as they knew the girl was dead.

Along with Peter, James, John, and the parents of the girl, Jesus entered the room. Jesus took her by hand and said "girl rise up". Immediately, she rose up, just as from sleep. He commanded the parents to give her food.

As Jesus is the son of God, He has authority, even over death. Just like He raised Jairus' daughter, in the second coming Jesus will raise all the dead. Jesus said that girl was sleeping. Death is

a sleep. About the dead, the Bible refers as those who are asleep. When the Lord comes again, they will rise up like those who are from sleep.

Feeds the hungry

Once Jesus and His disciples went to the town of Bethsaida. Bethsaida is a town situated on the east of the river Jordan and on the north of the sea of Galilee. Jesus went there to spend some times quietly at the wilderness outside the town Bethsaida, to pray along with his disciples and to teach them. But as usual ,a large multitude followed them. Jesus welcomed them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and He healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples requested Jesus to send the people to the villages to buy food and to spend the night there. "You give them food", said Jesus,' to the disciples. Except five loaves and two fish, we have nothing with us, should we go and buy food for these people", asked the disciples.

"Let the people be seated in rows" commanded Jesus. Then He took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. There were about five thousand men besides women and children. They all ate and were filled and twelve baskets of left over fragments were taken up by the disciples.

In all the four gospels this miracle is described. It is due to the spiritual hunger that people followed Jesus. Hearing the words of Jesus, their spiritual hunger was satisfied. Jesus was conscious about their physical hunger too. That is why He said to His disciples. "You give them food". God's will is not only to preach the word of God, but also to feed the hungry. Preaching the Word of God and acts of mercy together constitutes evangelism.

Memory Verse : "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (John 6:5)

Questions

(1) What was the aim of Jesus in performing miracles?
(2) What is the message we get from the incident of Jesus giving life to Jairus' daughter?
(3) What is the meaning of the incident of feeding the five thousand with five loaves?

LESSON-7

JESUS IN GLORY

(St. Mathew 17: 1-8, St. Mark 9: 1-9, St. Luke 9:27-36)

Jesus, once, went up to a high mountain to pray. (As per tradition, Jesus went up on mount Tabor) His beloved disciples, Peter James and John were with him. As He prayed, His face was shone like the sun and His clothes became white and glistening. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke to Jesus. They were talking about the impending death of Jesus on the cross at Jerusalem. Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

While he was yet saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them. Cloud is the symbol of the presence of God. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying . "This is my beloved son, hear Him". Even on Mount Sinai, God appeared to Moses, in cloud, Likewise on mount Tabor also God the Father, appeared in cloud, and showed to the world that Jesus is the Son of God. Peter, James and John saw the matchless glory of the Son of God.

Jesus was transfigured as He was praying. The aim of prayer is to become godly, that is, to attain holiness and goodness. Those who attain that will turn glorious like Jesus. Moses and Elijah had lived in holiness and goodness. Both of them attained glory as they were still alive. Forty days and forty nights, Moses stayed on Mount Sinai, in Gods' presence, when he received the ten commandments and testimonies. When Moses came down with the tablets on which the commandments were written, the skin

of his face. (Exodus 34: 28-35). Elijah was taken up to heaven in the chariot of fire (2 kings 2: 11-12)

The state of the departed saints is revealed at Mount Tabor. They in glory experience the presence of God and also speak to God. Saints while they were living, prayed and had seen God. This experience, continues even after death. That is why we seek the intercession of saints.

Like Jesus, in the same glory, the disciples saw Moses and Elijah. Similarly all the departed faithful also will receive glory.

In this incident, Moses and Elijah represent the Law and prophets. The meaning of the fact that Jesus stood with them and they talked with Him, is that Law and prophets, testify Jesus. Law and prophets indicated about Jesus and in Him they are fulfilled.

What Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus was about His death which was going to happen in Jerusalem. The real glorification of Jesus was His death on the cross. What appeared on Mount Tabor was the precursor of the glorification that Jesus was destined to attain through His death and resurrection. The feast of transfiguration, in remembrance of this incident, we observe on the 6th of August.

Memory Verse : "We all are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Questions

(1) How was the presence of God appeared on the Mount Tabor?
(2) Why do we seek the intercession of the saints.
(3) Why do we observe the feast of Transfiguration?

LESSON-8

JESUS THE KING

(St. Mathew 21: 1-11, St. Mark 11: 1-7, St. John : 12: 12-19)

The Jews hoped, the Messaiah would be born in the family of David, He would liberate them from foreign yoke and would establish the Kingdom of God. Some Jews believed that Messaiah would appear on a Passover day and rule as king. Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem, riding on a donkey was the incident in which Jesus appeared as the Jews expected. Zachariah prophesied regarding the coming of Messaiah to Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, saying, "Rejoice greatly, O, daughter of Zion! Shout, O, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey". (Zachariah 9:9)

In the Old Testament times, as a sign of peace and humility, Kings used to travel on donkey. Solomon had gone to Gihon on a donkey to be enthroned as King. But when a King goes for a war, he would ride on a horse.

Jesus came, not to establish His Kingdom through war and force, but through love, humility and peace. To manifest this, Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey.

Jews believed that the Messaiah would appear at the Mount Olive. (Zechariah 14: 3-4)

In accordance with that, Jesus began His journey to Jerusalem, from Bethphage, at the eastern slope of Mount Olive.

At Bethphage, Jesus sent two of His disciples, saying, "Go in to the village opposite to you, where as you enter, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat, Loose him and

bring him here. If anyone asks you, why are you loosing him, you shall say to him, because the Lord has need of him.

Perchance, the colt might belong to someone known Jesus. The disciples went and brought him. The disciples put their clothes upon the colt and made Jesus to sit on it and moved towards Jerusalem in a great procession. People joined with it. Some of them spread their clothes on the road. It is similar to spreading carpets. During the Old Testament time, after the enthronement of a Jewish King, people used to welcome him, by spreading their clothes on the road. (2 Kings 9: 13)

Some people cut the small branches of trees and spread them on the road, to make the way smooth and to honour the King Messaiah. People took tender leaves of date palms and accorded Him welcome, singing "Hossanna to the Son of David, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hossanna in the highest". (Mathew 21: 9)

The Aramic word, ' Hossanna means, 'save us'. During the feast of Passover, the pilgrims going to Jerusalem, used to sing the portion of the Psalm which says, "Lord save us .....Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord". (Psalm 118:5-29). Singing the same song, people welcomed Jesus. They sang in the hope that the Messaiah the anointed of the Lord, has come to save Israel. Leaders of the Jews did not like the way in which people welcomed Jesus, with enthusiasm and gladness. Some of them said to Jesus "Teacher, stop your disciples". Jesus replied, "If they keep silence, the stones will shout".

We observe Palm Sunday, to commemorate the triumphal entry of Jesus enthronement. With palm leaves, we receive Jesus, and we join the procession that day. Jesus was a King, different from the expectations of the Jews. His throne was the cross. Crown was the crown of thorns. The majestic apparel was the red gown, which He was made to wear, as a mark of humiliation.

Jesus was not a king who would establish His dominion, by taking arms and causing bloodshed. He came to found the Kingdom of God, through love and sacrifice and to make all the children of God.

Memory Verse : 'Rejoice greatly, O, daughter of Zion, Shout, O, daughter of Jerusalem, Behold your King is coming to you, He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey". (Zachariah 9:9)

Questions

(1) What was the reason for Jesus to choose a foal of a donkey, for His journey to Jerusalem?
(2) Why did He start His journey from Bethphage?
(3) Discuss, the important rituals of the service of the Palm Sunday.

LESSON-9

JESUS BECOMES THE SACRIFICE

(St. Mathew 27: 32-43, St. Mark 15: 21-32)

Jesus, before he suffered, desired to eat the Passover with His disciples. As commanded by Jesus, the disciples after the meal, prepared the Passover in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. Jesus founded the Holy Qurbana. He took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me". Likewise, He took the cup, blessed it, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you".

The Lord founded the Holy Qurbana, as an indication of His death on the cross which was to happen the next day. When we receive the body and blood of Jesus, we remember His death on the Cross and become partakers of it.

After eating the Passover, Jesus along with three of His disciples, went to the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of Mount of Olive to pray. Quite often, he used to go there, to pray in isolation. When they came to the garden, Jesus said to the disciples, "pray, lest you enter into temptation". Then He went forward and knelt down and prayed", Father if it is your will, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but yours be done." In this way, He committed Himself to the Father's will.

At this moment, a group of Jews reached there. Judas, one of Jesus, disciples was also with them. He came forward and kissed Jesus, to betray Him. The Jews arrested Jesus and led Him to the Sanhedrim council for trial. Sanhedrim was the religious court of the Jews. It was a council comprising of priests, religious scholars and Jewish leaders.

After that, they brought Jesus, before the Roman Governor Pilate. Palestine was then, under the Roman rule. The power to award death sentence to an accused was vested with the Roman administration. Therefore, to put Jesus to death, Pilate's permission was necessary. It was for that reason, Jesus was brought before Pilate, after His trial before the Sanhedrim council. Pilate did not find any fault in Jesus. He wished to set Jesus free. But for the sake of Jesus, He was least inclined to have a confrontation with the Jews. Pilate feared that the Jewish leaders might complain against him, to the Roman emperor.

When Pilate came to know that Jesus was from Galilee, Jesus was sent to Herod Antipas, who was tetrarch of Galilee. Antipas had been in Jersusalem, to attend the feast of Passover. As Antipas also could not find any fault in Jesus, He was sent back to Pilate.

Pilate knew, that the Jews wanted to put Jesus to death out of jelousy. Though Pilate could have set Jesus free, as he feared the Jews, tie delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. The Jews and the Roman soldiers took Jesus to a place called Golgotha. The Hebrew word Golgotha means, the place of the skull. Jesus was made to carry a heavy wooden cross, on which, He was to be nailed. Due to its heaviness, it was difficult for Jesus to walk. The soldiers compelled a man of Cyrene, Simon by name to bear the cross from behind. At Golgotha, Jesus was crucified, along with two criminals. A title was put on the top of Jesus' cross. " THIS IS THE KING OF JEWS'.

One of the criminals , blasphemed Him, saying, " If you are the Christ, save yourselves and us". But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not, even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? For we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong". Then that repentant criminal said to Jesus, "Lord remember me, when you come in to your Kingdom". "Assuredly I say to you, today, you will be with Me in Paradise". Saying this, Jesus made him to be heir of the Kingdom of God.

The sun became dark at the midnoon. The veil of the Jerusalem temple was torn into two. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Father, in to your hand, I commend My spirit". And having said this, he gave up His spirit. The Roman centurian, an eye witness of this, glorified God, saying, "certainly, this was a righteous man". Thus, He offered Himself as a sacrifice to the Father for the salvation of all.

Memory Verse : "And when Jesus had cried out, with a loud voice, He said " Father into your hands. I commend My Spirit". And having said this, he breathed His last (Luke 23:46)

Question

(1) What is the significance of the meal that Jesus ate with His disciples, before His death on the cross?
(2) What is Sanhedrim Council?
(3) Why was Jesus brought before Pilate?
(4) Though Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, why was He not set free?

LESSON-10

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

(St. Mathew 28: 6-10, St. Mark 16:108, St. Luke 24:1-12,
St. John 20: 1010)

The body of Jesus was buried in a tomb near Golgotha. After two days, on Sunday, some women came to the tomb. They saw the stone from the tomb was rolled away. They did not find the body of Jesus, in the tomb. As they were in deep thought about it, they saw two angels wearing shinning garments. The angels said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen". They were reminded of Jesus' saying that on the third day, he would rise again. The women ran and informed these things to the eleven disciples of Jesus and all others. Mary Magdalene, Salomi and Mary, the mother of James, were the women, who came to know first, the resurrection of Jesus.

The apostles did not believe the words of the women. Peter and John ran to the tomb. They marveled seeing the tomb empty

On the same day, two of the disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles away from Jerusalem. One of them was Cleophas. They were talking about Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. While they were talking Jesus joined them like a traveler. But they did not recognize Jesus. " What is this matter, that you argue among yourselves, while walking He asked. They told Him that the subject matter of their conversation was the death on the cross of Jesus of Nazareth and His resurrection. They also explained the fact that some women and some of the disciples went and saw the

tomb empty. From their reply, it was clear that these two disciples who were going to Emmaus, were not convinced in this. Jesus rebuked them for the lack of their faith. He said to them, O, foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and entered into His Glory"? Then he explained to them the portions of the Old - Testament, which points to His death and resurrection.

On reaching the village, Jesus was seen going further. But the disciples constrained Him and requested to spend the night with them. When they sat to eat, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broken it and gave it to them. Immediately, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. And Jesus disappeared from there.

Soon the two disciples returned to Jerusalem. They saw the disciples sitting together and talking about the appearance of Lord to Peter. They explained to the disciples, the things happened on the way and how they recognized Jesus while breaking the bread.

The bread that Jesus blessed, broken and given to disciples who had gone to Emmaus, was a reminder the Holy Eucharist. Holy Euchrist, is the meal that we eat with Jesus. Those disciples realized the presence of the resurrected Jesus, only when they received the bread that Jesus blessed and gave, their eyes opened and they recognized Jesus. Likewise, the occasion to see Jesus is when we receive the Holy Eucharist.

Peter and the rest of the disciples believed in the resurrection of Jesus, only after they saw Him. What is written in the Gospel is their testimony. Gospels are the basis of our faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

A number of times Jesus appeared to the disciples, after His resurrection. He preached to them and testified to them that He certainly had risen. After forty days, in the presence of the disciples at Mount Olive, Jesus ascended into heaven. While the disciples were yet looking up, two angels appeared and said to

them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into the heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11)

Jesus will come again, this is the hope that the angels gave the disciples. We should prepare and wait for the coming of Jesus.

Memory Verse: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen"! (Luke 24: 5-6)

Questions:

(1) Who were the first to know the resurrection of Jesus?
(2) What was the reason for Jesus to rebuke the disciples, who went to Emmaus?
(3) When did the disciples who went to Emmaus recognize Jesus? What is the importance of this incident in our life?
(4) Why do we believe in the resurrection of Jesus?

UNIT 2
PAUL THE CHOSEN ONE

LESSON-11

THE LORD CALLS PAUL

(Acts 9 :1-31, 11 :4-30, 13 :1-12)

In the New Testament, Acts of the Apostles, is the book after the gospels. The evangelical work of the apostles and their founding of churches at various places, after the ascension of the Lord to heaven, are written in this book. St. Luke who wrote the third gospel, is the author of the 'Acts of the Apostles' .The evangelical works of St. Peter and St. Paul are given preeminence in this book. Peter was the first among the twelve disciples. Paul became a Christian after the Pentacost . Paul's original name was Saul. It was Paul who laboured the most, for the growth of the Christian Church. Paul was the one who reached the Christian faith among the non-jewish people. So he is known as the apostle of the gentiles. Let us see, how was he called by God

Paul was born at a place called Tarsus in Cilicia a province in Asia-minor. (part of modern Turkey) . His parents were Jews. Paul grew as a zealous Pharisee . Cilicia was a Roman province. His father had the Roman citizenship. So Paul was born as a Roman citizen.

Paul was educated at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the famous scholar and Jewish Rabbi. This education was intended for serving as a Rabbi, in the Jewish religion. Paul gained mastery in other subject too.

With zeal, Paul worked for the Jewish religion. The Jews who accepted Christianity, were persecuted and imprisoned by zealous Jews, in those days.

Paul, with special letter of authority of the Roman rulers to the Sanhedrin council, engaged in persecuting Christians.

Paul, with this mission, went from Jerusalem to Demascus, a city in Syria. Demascus was an important city, about 200 kilometers north of Jerusalem. He went with the letter of authority to bring bound, the men and women who accepted Christianity, to Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin council, at Jerusalem would try and punish them.

When Paul came near Demascus suddenly a light from heaven shone around him . He fell down to the ground .

He heard a voice, saying, "Saul, Saul , why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you Lord ?" asked Paul. And the Lord said, " I am Jesus whom you are persecuting ".

The Lord said to him " Arise and go to the city, and you will be told what you must do". The men who were with him, stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing none. Paul got up from the ground, but was not able to see. Those who were with him , led him by the hand and brought him to Demascus. Unable to see nor to eat, he stayed in the house of a man named Judas, for three days.

In Demascus there was a disciple of Christ , named Ananias. Jesus appeared to him in dream. He was told to go to Paul, who was staying in the house of Judas. Ananias had heard about the deeds of Paul. So he expressed doubt and fear. Jesus said to him, "go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine, to bear my name before gentiles, kings and the children of Israel, For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake ".

Ananias went to Juda's house and said to Paul, " Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ananias laid his hands upon him and prayed and baptized him.

Paul stayed for sometime with the Christians at Demascus. He preached in the synagogues, saying, "Jesus alone is the son of God"." All were astonished in the conversion of Paul, who once persecuted Christians.

Jews of Demascus plotted to kill Paul. They ordered to keep watch at the gates of the city. But being known this, the Christians there, took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. Paul escaped and reached Jerusalem. Christians of Jerusalem were afraid to receive Paul, as they knew his previous history. But Barnabas brought him before the Apostles. He reported to them of Paul's conversion at Demascus and his witnessing of Jesus there. Paul stayed with the apostles and preached Jesus to the Jews.

The Jews could not counter Paul's words .The Greek Jews plotted to kill him .When the Christian brothers in Jerusalem came to know this, they took Paul to Caesarea. From there, he set to go to Tarsus, his own city.

Memory verse : "For, he is a chosen vessel of Mine, to bear My name before Gentiles , Kings and the children of Israel" (Acts. 9 : 15).

Questions

(1) Why did Paul go to Demascus ?
(2) Why did the Jews of Demascus want to kill Paul ? How did he escape from there ?
(3) Why were the Christians of Jerusalem afraid to receive Paul?
(4) How was Paul , who persecuted Christians got converted ?
(5) Paul is called the apostle of the Gentiles , why ?

LESSON-12

PAUL IN EVANGELICAL WORK

(Acts 13:22)

Barnabas, who introduced Paul to the Apostles, after his conversion, was working in Antioch. He went to Tarsus and brought Paul to Antioch. For about an year both of them preached in the synagogue at Antioch. Many had believed in Christ . It was in Antioch , those who believed in Christ were first called Christians.

In those days a great famine broken out in Jerusalem and Judea. The faithful in Antioch undertook a money collection and sent it to the Church in Jerusalem; through Barnabas and Paul. After the mission in Jerusalem Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch. They took John who was called Mark, along with them.

As they prayed to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Sprit said "Now separate to Me, Barnabas and Saul for the work to which, I have called them". The leaders of the Church in Antioch fasted, prayed and laid their hands upon Saul and Barnabas and sent them for the mission work.

Thus begun Paul's missionary journies. Paul had undertaken three missionary journies. In these journies, Paul preached the gospel in places like Asia-minor (present Turky), Cyprus, and Greece and founded churches there. Jews also were residing in those places. Paul preached in their Synagogues and converted Jews and Gentiles into Christianity.

During the first missionary journey, Paul worked in Cyprus and Asia-minor. John named Mark and Barnabas were accom-

panying him, in the journey. But at Asia-minor, Mark left him and returned to Jerusalem.

In the second journey, Bernabas was not with Paul. Silas was his companion in this journey. In the second journey Paul visited Asia-minor again. Timothy became Paul's co-worker, during his second journey, when he was at Asia-minor. Later on, Paul and his companions set out for Europe. They reached Philipi in Macedonia, the northern part of Greece. There a woman named Lydia, believed in Christ and got baptized. Lydia was the first Christian in Europe. Paul founded Churches in cities like Thessalonica, Corinth and Athens in Greece.

In his third journey, Paul had mainly gone to Asia- Minor. When he reached Ephesus, he taught in the school of Tyrannus, for two years. Jews and Gentiles heard Paul's preaching and believed in Christ. Large number of people became followers of Christ. The Jews and Gentiles could not tolerate this. So in all places Paul had to suffer opposition and troubles, from both these sections. After the third missionary journey, Paul came to Jerusalem. The believers gladly received him. They told him that the Jewish Christians had opposition with him, due to his stand regarding the Law. The Jewish Christians misunderstood Paul as teaching that the Gentiles who became Christians, need not have to observe the Law. To remove this misunderstanding, Christians advised Paul to perform certain rituals in the temple. He came to the Jerusalem temple, to pray and to shave the head, as part of the religious ritual. But some of the Jews from Asia-minor recognized him. Accusing him of teaching against the Law they stirred the people against him. They dragged him out of the temple and beat him. Paul was saved from death, as the Roman commander of the garrison and his soldiers came and took him bound to the barracks.

The next day, he was brought before the Sanhedrin council. They could not take any decision regarding Paul. The commander put him again in the Roman fort, under watch.

More than forty Jews took an oath, that they would not eat anything until Paul was killed. Paul's nephew, being known about this plot brought it into the notice of the soldiers, so he was sent to Caesarea with the accompaniment of soldier. Felix, the Governor there, put Paul into prison. For two years, to please the Jews, Paul was kept there without taking any decision.

After Felix, Festus succeeded him as Governor. Jewish leaders raised the matter of Paul, before Festus. They persuaded the Governor to send Paul to Jerusalem, for trial. Their scheme was to kill Paul on the way. Realizing the danger, Paul appealed to Caesar. As a Roman citizen, he could appeal to the emperor, to be tried before him. With the accompaniment of Soldiers, Paul was sent to Rome by ship, to have trial before Caesar and to have a final decision.

The ship which set sail from Caesarea, with 276 passengers, wrecked at Malta. Though the ship was completely destroyed all the passengers were safe. Thus, after an eventful journey, Paul reached Rome. He was permitted to stay in a rented house, under the watch of a soldier. He stayed there for two years and preached the gospel to those who same to him.

A few years later, when the emperor Nero persecuted the Christians, Paul was beheaded. Thus the Apostle of the Gentiles, fulfilled his mission.

Memory Verse : "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak then I am strong". (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Questions

(1) Who all were Paul's companions, during his first missionary journey? Which were the places they visited?

(2) In which missionary journey did Paul reach Europe? Who was the first to become Christian in Europe?

(3) Jewish Christians opposed Paul Why?

(4) Explain the circumstances that caused Paul to be sent to Rome as prisoner.

UNIT 3

KINGS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

LESSON-13

SAUL THE FIRST KING IN ISRAEL

(1 Samuel 8, 9, 10)

From the time, the people of Israel settled in Canan , they were ruled by judges. Judges used to advise the people and lead them in the battles against the enemies.

When Samuel was the judge, the people felt that Israel should have a king. Like the neighbouring countries they desired to have a stable government under a king. Moreover, though Samuel appointed his two sons as judges, they were taking bribes and making unjust decisions. Therefore the people thought, instead of judges, they should have a king. Elders of Israel approached Samuel and requested him to appoint and give them a king. Samuel tried to refrain them still in accordance with the Lord's command, he consented to appoint a king for them.

God had chosen Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. Samuel anointed Saul with oil. The spirit of God, made Saul a strong king.

Once, Nahash,the Ammonite king, with an army came up and encamped against the Israelites. A section of Israelites approached Nahash for a treaty of peace. But Nahash replied, " If agreed to put out the right eyes of all Israelites, he would make the covenant. His aim was to enslave the Israelites as one eyed. Saul came to know about the humiliating proposal. He organized an army of three lakhs thirty thousand Israelites and attacked the Ammonites and defeated them utterly. Because of this incident the people of Israel accepted Saul as their king. People under the leadership of Samuel, assembled at Gilgal and approved the kingship of Saul.

Saul became the king at the age of thirty. Soon after Saul lost the favour of God and Samuel, the judge.

The Philistines, once, encamped against Israel. Israelites were frightened due to the number and strength of the Philistine army. Israelites assembled together at Gilgal, under Saul. Saul's plan was to proceed for war after offering sacrifices at Gilgal, in the presence of Samuel. Samuel had instructed them to wait for seven days; but even after seven days Samuel did not arrive. People started to leave, disappointed. Immediately, Saul himself offered the sacrifice.

Soon after the sacrifice was over, Samuel came and he rebuked Saul. God wanted them to wait with patience, offer the sacrifice, receive His blessings and then wage the war. Instead, Saul became impatient and boastfully, in the absence of Samuel, offered the sacrifice. Saul thought, in every thing what he was doing, the Lord would be pleased. He ignored Samuel, the man of God. This caused the wrath of God to come upon Saul.

While the people of Israel were journeying from Egypt to Canaan, they had been attacked by the Amalekites. Again, several times, the Amalekites engaged themselves in war against Israel. The Lord commanded Saul to defeat them and destroy everything that they had. The commandment was to destroy both men and animals alike. Saul attacked the Amalekites and captured their king alive. From among the animals he preserved the stout and sturdy. The intention was to keep them for himself on the pretext of preserving them for sacrificing to the Lord.

The word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments". Samuel cried out to the Lord all the night for the sake of Saul.

Early in the morning, Samuel set out to meet Saul. Samuel came to know that Saul had reached Carmel and after erecting a pillar as a mark of his victory, he had gone to Gilgal in a rally. Saul did not bother to thank the Lord who gave him the Victory nor to get the blessings from Samuel, the man of God. Saul,

boastfully set up the monument and celebrated his victory by undertaking a procession.

Afterwards, when Saul met Samuel, he justified his deeds and said, "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But Samuel said, "what then is the bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear"? Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Samuel knew, this was not true, because after the victory in war, instead of offering sacrifice to the Lord and worshiping Him, he was working for his own self esteem. Samuel said to Saul that his action offended the Lord. Saul again justified his fault by saying that people had brought them to sacrifice to the Lord. Then Samuel said to him, "what pleases the Lord more; burnt offerings and sacrifice or obedience to His voice? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice; and to heed than the fat of rams".

Samuel said to Saul, "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king".

Many of the deeds of Saul afterwards were provoking to the Lord. Saul was defeated in a battle against the Philistines. Before being captured by the enemy, Saul committed suicide.

Though God raised Saul to the position of king, he failed to follow a life pleasing to God. Leading a life forgetting the blessings of God caused Saul's catastrophic end.

Memory Verse : " Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams". (1 Samuel 15:22)

Questions

(1) Describe the incident which made all the Israelites to accept Saul as king.

(2) What was the reason for the Lord to reject Saul as king? (Answer in four sentences.)

LESSON-14

DAVID THE KING WHO LOVED GOD

(1 Samuel 16-17)

God had chosen David as King instead of Saul. David was the eighth son of Jesse, who lived in Bethlehem, in Judea. His job was to look after his father's sheep.

After rejecting Saul as king, the Lord commanded Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil and go, I am sending you to Jesse, Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king"

Samuel came to the house of Jesse and invited Jesse and his sons for a sacrifice. When Samuel saw Eliab, the elder son of Jesse, he thought, ' this might be the king that God has chosen! But the Lord said to Samuel, " Do not look at the appearance or at the height of his stature because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart". Jesse brought all his sons upto the seventh, one by one. Samuel said, " Lord has not chosen them".

Samuel asked Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" Jesse replied, "there remains yet the youngest, and he is keeping the sheep". As required by Samuel, David the youngest was called from the pastures. David was a very charming boy. Then the Lord commanded, " Arise, anoint him, for this is the one". Samuel got up, took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brothers. From that time onwards, Lord's Spirit came upon David.

Lord's Spirit had departed from Saul. An evil spirit came upon him. So it became common, that Saul to get emotional and wrathful . The servants told the king that music would pacify the emotional outbursts. Accordingly, David, who was well versed

in playing harp was appointed in the palace. Whenever the evil spirit tormented Saul, David would play the harp and Saul would get relief.

Once, the Philistines encamped against Israel for war, their leader was Goliath, a giant of huge stature. He challenged the Israelites to send forward one of their representatives to fight with him. The condition was, if Goliath was defeated, the Philistines would become slaves of Israelites, if won, the other way around. None of the Israelites was bold enough to go up to fight with him.

Three of the elder brothers of David were soldiers in Saul's army. Jesse sent dried grains and bread to them in David's hands. As David was talking with his brothers, he heard Goliath challenging again. David also saw the Israelites running away from him. David told the Israelite soldiers that he was ready to fight with Goliath. When Eliab, the elder brother heard this, he scolded David.

This news came into the ears of Saul also. He called David and said to him, "you are not able to fight against this Philistine, for you are a boy, but he is a man of war from his younger age". David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep and when a lion or bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it, and stuck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth, and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard and struck and killed it," "your servant has killed both lion and bear". David continued, "the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine".

Saul said to David, " Go, and the Lord be with you".

So Saul clothed David with his armour, bronze helmet and a sword. But David was not accoustemed to walk wearing them. So he took them off and gave them back. Then he took his staff, and sling and has chosen five smooth stones and put them in his shoulder bag.

When David drew near Goliath, he asked David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with stick"?

The Philistine boasted saying, "I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field". Goliath drew near David. David took a stone from his bag, put it on his sling and threw it at Goliath's forehead. Struck by the stone, he fell on his face to the earth. David ran towards Goliath took his sword and killed him. Seeing the giant was killed, the philistines ran away.

With this incident, David became well known in Israel. When David, Saul and the Israelite soldiers were returning after the killing of Goliath, women welcomed them by singing and dancing and playing musical instruments. " Saul slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands"; they sang. Saul became angry when he heard this. Due to jealousy, Saul tried to kill David. Fearing Saul, David spent some time in forests and deserts. Jonathan, Saul's son was David's loyal friend. He did not agree with the behaviour of his father. Saul and his soldiers chased David to capture him. Twice, David had the opportunity to kill Saul. But the righteous David did not attempt to kill the king, the God's anointed.

After the death of Saul, David became the king of Israel. When David was enthroned as king, he was thirty years of age. David reigned forty years. David resided seven years in Hebron, and after that he made Jerusalem, his capital. From the time of David, Jerusalem became the capital of Judea. The Jerusalem temple was not built in David's time. He had chosen the place to build the temple and made preparations for its construction. Solomon, the son of David only, received the favour of God to build the temple.

Prior to the building of the temple, the main centre of worship of the Israelites was the Ark of Covenant and the tabernacle, in which it was placed. These were made at the time of Moses. When David became the king, the ark of the covenant was brought with great revelry, to the capital city, Jerusalem.

The king also took part in this revelry and immersed in the spirit of devotion, he danced before the ark.

David was the author of many of the Psalms. After enthroning his son, Solomon as his successor, David left this world. He was buried at Jerusalem.

Memory Verse : "So David went on and became great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him" (2 Samuel 5:10)

Questions

(1) How did David get a job in Saul's palace?
(2) Which incident made David well-known in Israel?
(3) What made Saul to attempt to kill David?
(4) What is the place of David, in the history of Jerusalem?

LESSON-15

SOLOMON THE WISE KING

(1 Kings 3:15-29)

Solomon, the son of David, was David's successor. Solomon's mother's name was Bethsheba. When David became old as commanded by him, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, took Solomon to Gihon. Gihon was a holy place in Israel. Zadok anointed Solomon, there, as king. After David's death Solomon became the king of Israel.

Gibeon was another holy place in Israel. Solomon, once, went to Gibeon to offer sacrifice. There, in the night, the Lord appeared to Solomon, in a dream. God said to Solomon, "Ask what shall I give you". "Give to your servant an understanding heart, to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil", that was what Solomon asked. The Lord was pleased, since Solomon did not ask for long life, wealth nor victory over enemies but only for wisdom. In addition to wisdom, God gave Solomon immeasurable wealth and fame too.

Solomon's wisdom and sense of justice became famous in Israel and in the neighbouring countries. Two women approached him once. Both of them stayed in the same house. A child was born to the first woman. On the third day, the second woman also gave birth to a child. Due to the negligence of the second woman, her child died. She laid the dead child near the first woman and took the live child and laid it in her own coat. In the morning, the first woman woke up. She realized that the dead child lying near her was not her child. There arose a dispute among them regarding the motherhood of the live child. To get this dispute settled they approached Solomon. Solomon listened

to the claims of both. After a moment's reflection, the king ordered to bring a sword. Then the king ordered to divide the live child into two and give half to one and half to the other. The mother of the live child pleaded with pain, " O, my Lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him". But the other woman said," let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him". The king found out the child's real mother. He ordered to give the child to its mother.

On the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the construction of Jerusalem temple had begun. It took seven years to complete the temple. The temple, the altar and the utensils in the temple were made with much care. David had brought, the Ark of the covenant, which was built at the time of Moses, to Jerusalem. As commanded by Solomon, the Ark of covenant was brought with great celebration and laid it in the temple. When the laying of the ark was over the Lord's glory in cloud, filled the temple. Solomon lifted his hands towards heaven and prayed for the people and thanked the Lord for all the blessings. The dedication service of the temple lasted for fourteen days. The dedication of the temple was one of the most important events in the history of Israel.

Solomon's fame reached far and wide. To test personally and to understand Solomon's wisdom, Queen Sheba of Ethiopia arrived in Jerusalem, with a large contingent. Camels loaded with immeasurable quantity of gold, jewels and spices were also brought with her.

Solomon answered well, all the questions of Queen Sheba - Witnessing the wisdom of the king, the luxuries of the palace and the festive procession to the temple, Sheba was over awed. Sheba congratulated Solomon, saying, " your wisdom and wealth are far greater than the fame that I heard of you".

There were trade relations with many countries, at the time of Solomon. Traders brought from distant countries Sandal wood, gold, silver, tusks pf elephants etc., for the building of the temple and the King's palace. Moreover, they also brought peacocks and monkeys for the purpose of recreation. Out of these, the

traders used to purchase, sandal wood, tusks of elephants and pea-cocks, from India.

Solomon did not like to wage war and subdue the neighbouring countries. He worked for the economic growth of Israel, through establishing friendly ties with neighbouring countries. Solomon took wives from different countries to establish cordial relations with them. A number of those wives, worshipped their own gods and goddesses. Because of their, allurement, he worshipped Astharoth, the goddess of Sidonians. He built special places of worship for his wives. Because of this, God became angry against the king. After the long reign of forty years from B.C. 970 to 930, Solomon left this world. He was buried in Jerusalem.

Memory Verse : "By humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches and honour and life". (Proverbs 22:4)

Questions

(1) Describe an incident which throws light on the wisdom and the sense of justice of Solomon.
(2) What was the reason for Queen Sheba to visit Solomon?
(3) What made the Lord to be angry with Solomon?
(4) What are the books known in the name of Solomon?

LESSON-16

HEZEKIAH, THE GOD-FEARING KING

(Isaiah 36,37,38)

After Solomon's reign, Palastine was split into two. The northern region was called Israel and the southern region was called Judah. The two regions came under the rule of separate kings.

Hezekiah was a king who ruled Judah, 200 years after Solomon. Hezekiah became king in B.C. 715, after the death of his father, Ahaz. In those times, people used to offer sacrifices at spots called 'high places'. People were burning incense and worshipping before the idols of goddess Ashera, and the bronze serpent, that Moses had made. Hezekiah removed all these and commanded that all should worship only in the Jerusalem Temple.

Assyria was a strong country in those days. The king of Assyria invaded Israel, the northern region and took away their king and some of the people to his country as captives. But the God-fearing Hezekiah did not surrender.

After some years, Sennacherib the king of Assyria, invaded some of the cities of Judah. Hezekiah sent messengers to the king of Assyria and pleaded to conclude a treaty of peace. He also agreed to pay penalty. As penalty, he had to give, the gold and silver of the House of the Lord, the palace and the treasuries to the King of Assyria. The Assyrian king was not satisfied with this. He sent a large army to invade Jerusalem. The Assyrian army asked the messengers of Hezekiah to surrender. The commander of the Assyrian army told them to ignore Hezekiah's words of saying them to trust in the Lord and defend Jerusalem". They boasted that, just like the gods of the places invaded

by Assyrians could not defend them, the Lord would not be able to defend Jerusalem. Hezekiah had commanded the people not to answer to the boastings of the Assyrian commander.

The messengers informed Hezekiah of the words of the Assyrians. When the king heard this, as a mark of sorrow, he tore his clothes and worn sack-clothes and went in to the House of the Lord. It was the time when the prophet Isaiah lived. The king sent people to the prophet and explained all things to him. Isaiah said to the messengers of the king," Thus you shall say to your master, thus says the Lord, do not be afraid of the words which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land". (2 Kings 19: 6-7)

At this juncture, a neighbouring country attacked the Assyrians. Still the Assyrian commander sent a letter to Hezekiah blasphemying the Lord and asking Hezekiah to surrender. When Hezekiah read that letter, He went into the House of the Lord with it and prayed to the Lord with great agony. The Lord answered the prayer and said I will defend this city, for My own sake and for My servant David's sake". In the same night the angel of the Lord went and killed one lakh and eighty thousand persons of the Assyrian army. The Assyrian king Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, his capital. While the king was praying in the temple, two of his sons struck him with sword and killed him. Thus Jerusalem was saved from destruction because of king Hezekiah's trust in the Lord.

Later on, Hezekiah became seriously sick. Prophet Isaiah came to see the king and he said to him, "Thus says the Lord, set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live".

Then Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done, what was good in your sight". And the king wept bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the premises of the king's palace, the word of

the Lord came to him and accordingly the prophet returned to the king and told him, "Thus says the Lord, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, I will heal you, on the third day you shall go to the house of the Lord, And I will add to your days fifteen years".

Isaiah took a lump of dry figs and laid it on the king's boil and he recovered. The king asked Isaiah, " what is the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day"? The prophet made the king know the word of the Lord. Isaiah asked him, should he want the shadow on the sun dial go ten degrees forward or ten degrees backward. 'it is easy for the shadow to go forward, so let it go backward, " said the king. Then Isaiah, the prophet prayed to the Lord and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward on the sun dial, which was built at the time of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father.

The good king Hezekiah, who could tide over the difficulties faced by the country and in his own life, because of the stead-fast trust in God, had brought about a number of schemes which were beneficial to the people. He built a big pond in Jerusalem and to bring water to the city, he caused to bore a canal through the rock. The canal ends at the pond Shiloam.

Memory Verse : " The Lord was ready to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments, All the days of our life, in the house of the Lord." (Isaiah 38:20) (Prayer of Hezekiah)

Questions

(1) What were the steps that Hezekiah took to make the faith in one God firm, in Judah?

(2) How did Hezekiah save Jerusalem from the threat of Assyrians?

(3) How did Hezekiah recover from the fatal illness?

UNIT 4

GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH

LESSON-17

CHURCH IS BEING PERSECUTED

The Lord had foretold the disciples that after His ascension to heaven, there would arise persecutions and tribulations to Christians. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulations, and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake". (Mathew 24:9)

It was through suffering persecution and death on the cross, that Jesus entered into glory. In the same way the Church attains the glory of God when it passes through tribulations. It is when we have pains and difficulties, we pray more and become more God reliant. God has allowed to happen tribulations to the church, so that the children of the church would have a life of prayer and dependence on God.

Christian church had persecution first from Jews. The first martyr of the church, St. Stephen was stoned to death by Jews. Stephen was accused of speaking against the Jewish temple and their Law. His confidence in God, with which he faced death, led to the conversion of Paul. After Stephen's death, the Jews persecuted the Church in Jerusalem. Consequent to this, many of the faithful, departed to different places and settled there. They spread the Gospel in those places and converted Jews and genlitles. A few years later, King Herod killed James, the son of Zebedee with sword, James was the first to receive martyrdom from among the apostles. Though Peter was shut in prison, miraculously, he escaped. Thereafter Peter and other apostles journied to different places.

In the earlier days, church had not much troubles from the Romans. But due to the instigation of the Jews, at times there were persecutions. Jewish religion was one of the recognized

religions in the Roman Empire. Initially, since the Romans did not consider Christianity to be different from the Jewish religion, the church had no trouble from them. Gradually they realized that Christian religion was different from Jewish religion. As Christian religion had no sanction from the state administration, the Romans started troubling Christians.

Persecution occurred for the first time from the Romans, at the time of Emperor Nero. In A.D 64, the City of Rome was burnt down. Christians were accused of its responsibility and persecution started. St. Peter was crucified and St. Paul was beheaded, during this persecution. The church observes 29th June as the day of their martyrdom.

Succeeding this Emperor Dometian (A.D 81-86) indulged in persecuting the church. In the Roman Empire, the emperor was considered as the representative of God and his visual image. Temples were built, here and there, with the idols of the emperor. Those who did not worship those idols were labeled as people who dishonour the emperor and disloyal to the state. Many Christian believers were killed stamping up on the charge of treason, as they refused to worship the emperor. It was during this period that St. John was banished to the island of Patmos.

Witnessing the courage of the believers in facing the persecution unwaveredly, many became members of the church. Further, the people who have gone to different places as refugees, because of persecution, undertook evangelical work in those places and thereby helped the growth of the Church.

Memory Verse: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake". (St. Mathew 5:11)

Questions:

(1) What was the reason for the Roman Government to persecute Christians?
(2) How did the persecution help the growth of the Church?
(3) Name the two apostles who attained martyrdom during the persecution of Nero.

LESSON-18

TIME OF GREAT TRIBULATIONS

The greatest tribulations, in the history of the church, were occurred in the third century. The Roman rulers persecuted the church, due to the suspicion and fear of the Christians." Suspicion and fear arose because of the reasons mentioned below:-

(1) Since the Christians refused to worship the idol of the emperor , they were suspected to be traitors and unpatriotic.

(2) In the Roman empire, there were idols and temples of different goddesses and gods. There were very few Christian churches prior to A.D. 300. There were no idols and images, in those churches, like those in the Roman temples. So they suspected Christians as godless people.

(3) Non-Christians were not admitted in Christian worship, especially the Italy Qurbana. Therefore Christians were accused of assembling secretly and conspiring against the state.

(4) The Christian belief that Christ would come as King and establish His Kingdom and rule, also given rise to misunderstanding. The Romans thought that it was an attempt to topple the state. They feared that the Christians would join hands with the neighbouring countries and overthrow the Roman empire.

(5) Large number of slaves and the poor of the Roman empire had joined the Church. It was feared that with their unity and support, the Government would be overthrown.

(6) The words of the Lord, "this is My body, this is My blood", in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, were heard stealthily by some people and wrongly interpreted to accuse the Christians of being canibals.

Persecution by Septimus Severus (A.D. 193 - 211)

Septimus Severus had decided to prevent the growth of the Church. By law, he prohibited the conversion of people to Christianity. The plea of Tertulian, who lived in those times, to the emperor, to show mercy to Christians, did not bear fruits. Severe persecution occurred in Egypt and North Africa. Origan was a theologian, who lived in Alexandria, in the third Century. His father and disciples were killed. The young Origan desired to become a martyr. But his mother hid his clothes. So he could not go near the persecutors. Due to this action of his mother, Origan escaped from death. Later he wrote large number of very valuable books. The newly baptized were particularly targeted by the soldiers of Septimus Severus. Putting into fire alive and throwing before wild animals were the modes of tormentation. In A.D. 211 Septimus died and up to A.D 244, the Church had peace.

Persecution by Desius (A.D. 244 - 251)

This was the first wide spread persecution against Christianity. Desius aim was to prevent the growth of Christianity. He issued a proclamation to the effect that all people should worship only the goddesses and gods officially recognized by the Roman empire. It was ordered that all should offer sacrifices in the Roman temples and preserve the testimonials of the same. The soldiers caught those who had no records and tortured them savagely. A few Christians bribed the soldiers and obtained certificates without offering sacrifices and escaped from torture. Desius wanted to make the Christians to abdicate their faith through tormentation. He ordered to cast the Christians into prison and torture them until they renounced their faith. He thought, martyrdom would strengthen the church while renunciation of faith would weaken it. So he tried to produce back-trackers of faith rather than martyrs. During this time Origan was taken captive and tortured Desius. In 254 Origan died. When Desius was killed in a war in A.D 251, there was a temporary respite in persecution.

Time of Valarius (253-260)

In A.D 253, when Valerius became emperor persecution started again. He prohibited the Christians from assembling together for prayer and entering the cemetery. He ordered to capture churches. His effort was not to destroy the church but to weaken it. Therefore it was especially the leadership of the Church that was troubled. Many bishops were deposed and banished. The clergy and the lay leaders who refused to abdicate the faith were persecuted and killed. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, the most important city in north Africa, attained martyrdom, during Valarius' time.

Persecution at the time of Diocletian

For forty years, after the death of Valerius, there was peace for the Church. It was at the fag end of the reign of Diocletian, the most brutal persecution started (284 to 304 A.D) Diocletian was a clever emperor. He thought, it was better for the unity of the country and for the safety of his position, to have all the people to believe in the same religion. So he ordered to worship the emperor as God. The proclamation issued in A.D 303, contained orders to destroy churches and to burn books of the Christians. Further, orders were issued to bind and persecute the clergy and the believers. Many became martyrs. In A.D 305, Diocletian abdicated his throne. Galarius and Maximian, who succeeded Diocletian, as rulers, also continued persecution. In A.D 313, when Constantine was enthroned as emperor, the period of great tribulations came to an end.

Memory Verse : "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake". (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Questions

(1) What were the reasons for the Roman emperors to persecute Christians?
(2) What was the peculiarity of the persecution during the reign of Desius?
(3) Is it right to say that persecutions were beneficial for the church?

LESSON-19

FATHERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Persecutions and heresies were the dangers, the Christian church faced in the second and third centuries. At the time of persecution many became martyrs and a few rejected the faith. Heresies are the doctrines opposed to what is recorded about Christ, in the gospel. The influence of other religions and philosophies had created heresies. Some people taught against the faith the church received from the Apostles. This caused to create confusion among the members of the church. The church fathers taught the members of the church the real apostolic faith and also wrote letters and books, explaining the distortions in the doctrines of the heretics. Some of them faced persecutions with hope and courage. St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna were three of such church Fathers.

St. Clement of Rome

St. Clement was the third Bishop of Rome, who lived at the end of the first century. He was the disciple of St.Paul and St. Peter. In the epistle to the Philipians (4:3), St. Paul qualifies him as his co-worker. Some Orthodox Churches have included in the Bible, two letters written by St. Clement, to the Church in Corinth. St. Clement had written his first letter when the Christians of Corinth deposed the clergy from their order. He asked the Corinthians to repent about their mistakes and obey the heads of the church. The orders of Episcopa, Priest and Deacon are constituted by the apostles in each church to lead the Church and to serve God, wrote Clement in this letter.

During the reign of Tragen, the Roman Emperor, Clement was sent to the mines, near the Black sea, for hard labour. He converted the prisoners working in the mines, as Christians. In A.D 100 under the order of the emperor Tragen, Clement was tied to the anchor of the ship and killed by drowning in the Black sea.

St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius, the third Bishop of Antioch was the disciple of the apostles Peter, Paul and John. He was also called Theophorus. The word Theophorus means one who bears God or one who was borne by God. Tradition teaches that the child whom Jesus took in His arms was Ignatius. During the persecution of emperor Trajan, Ignatius was taken captive and sent to Rome, along with two other believers. He was escorted by ten soldiers and he was to be thrown before wild beasts. They had to travel partly by ship and partly through land. During the journey the soldiers were torturing him. Ignatius had likened them to ten cruel leopards. During their journey when the group reached various cities of Asia-minor, the believers received Ignatius with reverence. He had written seven letters to the Churches of those cities.

While at Smyrna, he wrote to the Church in Rome in the following manner:-

"I require of you only this one favour, for me an altar is prepared, so allow me to be a sacrifice offered before God. I plead to you to allow me to become the prey to the beasts. For them have the capacity to prepare my way to God. I am the grain of wheat of God to be pulverized well by the teeth of wild beasts to become the holy bread for Christ. The soldiers were in a hurry to reach Rome before an important day and for Ignatius to attain martyrdom.

It was a practice to throw criminals and prisoners condemned to death, before wild beasts, in big stadiums called "Circuses" of Rome. The people of Rome used to sit on galleries to view this

and to enjoy. Thousands of Christians were executed like this during the time of persecution. When well-known people were executed large crowds used to assemble. In A.D 107, Ignatius was thrown before lions, in the stadium called 'Flavian Circus" of Rome, witnessed by the emperor Trajan and top individuals. Ignatius' example poured inspiration and courage in to numerous martyrs, in the history of the Church.

St. Polycarp of Smyrna

(A.D. 69-135)

Polycarp was born in a Christian family of Asia minor (The present Turky). He had learnt about Jesus, from the apostles. When the apostle St. John was staying in Ephesus, Polycarp was his disciple. Later on Polycarp became the Bishop of Smyrna. At the age of 86 years, the Roman soldiers captured him. The soldiers reached his home during night, to tie him up. He welcomed the soldiers, like guests and served them food and drinks. He sought permision to pray for an hour. Prostrating at the ground, he prayed for about two hours. The soldiers felt sorry in sending them to capture this very old and gentle person.

The soldiers brought Polycarp to the police chief. He took him in a horse carriage and went. On their journey, the police chief advised him to confess the emperor as God and escape from death. When Polycarp refused to do so, the chief became wild and threw him out of the carriage.

Afterwards, he was led to a Stadium, where criminals were publicly executed. A voice was heard from heaven, saying "Polycarp, be courageous". Some believers who were with him also heard this. He was brought before the Governor. The Governor told him, if he denied Christ, he would be set free. The Governor persisted. " Eighty six years, I have served Christ, till now He has done nothing wrong with me. How will I deny my King and Saviour"? Polycarp replied.

Polycarp was unwavered, when the Governor threatened him to be thrown before wild beasts. "Call them, there is no question of leaving the way of goodness", he replied.

The next threat was to burn him alive, if he did not curse Christ. That also failed to frighten him. Binding his hands and legs, he was laid on a heap of fire-wood and set on fire. The fire burnt around him like a covering, but did not touch his body. Finally, some soldiers struck him with a spear and killed him. In the abundant flow of blood, the fire was put off.

The Roman rulers thought the Church could be utterly destroyed by persecuting and killing Christian leaders. But the steadfast faith of the martyrs and their firm hope in the life after death, encouraged the members of the Church. These fathers instilled enthusiasm and inspiration in many to witness Christ, with added strength.

Memory verse: "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's". (Romans 14:8)

Questions

(1) How did the death of martyrs help the growth of the Church?
(2) What were the last words of Ignatius?
(3) Quote the words of Polycarp which reveal his astounding faith.

LESSON-20

CHURCH AT THE TIME OF THE SYNOD OF NICEA.

In the beginning of the fourth Century, the Roman empire had brought about a total change in its approach towards the church. The church, which was persecuted, became the official religion of the empire.

Conversion of Constantine

Diocletian appointed one named Maxentias as co-emperor. Further, for convenience of administration, at two parts of the empire, two others were appointed as emperors. Constentine was the son of one of those two emperors, Constentius and Queen, Helene. In 306, after the death of his father, in his place, Constantine became the emperor. Maxentias and Constantine were engaged in war against each other, for the absolute power of Roman Empire. In 312, the armies of the two clashed at a place called Milvian Bridge, near Rome. On the previous night of the battle, Constantine saw the sign of a cross in the sky. A voice was heard, saying, "with this sign you will win". Constantine fought with the sign of cross on the flags and weapons and defeated the enemy. This incident led to the conversion of Constantine.

Prior to the conversion of Constantine, Christianity had no statutory recognition in the Roman Empire. So far, to become Christian was an invitation to persecution tribulations and hatred. When Christianity became the religion of the emperor, Christians received recognition and top places. A lot of gentiles accepted Christianity. The emperor exempted the clergy from taxes

and army service. In 321, Constantine issued a proclamation declaring Sunday as holiday. In his proclamation, the courts of justice were also instructed not to open and work on Sundays. In 326, with the permision of the emperor, his mother Queen Helene reached Jerusalem and recovered the Lord's cross. She founded churches at the Lord's tomb, and Mount Olives, from where the Lord, had ascended into heaven.

Synod of Nicea (A.D. 325)

It was Constantine, who convened the first universal synod of the Church, at Nicea. The Synod was convened to deliberate upon the heresy of Arius and to proclaim the apostolic faith. Arius, a scholar and a good orator, was a priest in Alexandria. "God alone is eternal, as the Son was born after the Father, He is not eternal, God alone is uncreated, Son is the creation of the Father, so is not equal in substance to the Father, there was a time when the son was not existing". Arius taught about Jesus Christ, in this manner. Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, summoned Arius and spoke to him. Still Arius did not change in his doctrine. Alexander convened a synod of about hundred Church fathers of Egypt and North Africa. They excommunicated Arius and his followers from the Church, since his doctrine was heretical. Arius did not remain quite. He and his followers worked enthusiastically to spread his doctrine. A section of the people were attracted to this doctrine. The new doctrine became the subject of talk at different parts of the Roman empire. Constantine realized that, if the Christian Church stood in two factions and fought with each other, it would affect the stability of the empire.

The emperor decided to discuss Arius' doctrine and take an appropriate decision to restore unity in the Church as well as in the empire. For this purpose, in A.D 325, he convened a synod at Nicea. (Pressent Turkey). All the heads of Churches of the empire were invited to the Synod.

318 Church fathers attended the Synod. The Priests and the Deacons who accompanied them also participated in the delib-

erations. The emperor came into the Synod and addressed the fathers. Hosios, the emperor's friend and the Bishop of Cordova (Spain), presided. A Bishop from Arius' side, read out a declaration in the Synod, which contained their doctrine. The Synod found that it was against the faith taught by the Bible and the fathers. Deliberations were held to recognize the faith handed down by the Apostles as a Creed. Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, read out the creed of the Jerusalem church and after discussions the Synod accepted it. Deacon Athanasius who came from Alexandria as an aid to the Bishop Alexander, had a very important role in the discussions. It was Athanasius who inspired the fathers to include the expression, 'equal in substance to the Father', in the Creed. These words emphatically make it clear that the Father and the Son are equal in all respects.

The Synod accepted the excommunication of Arius and his followers - Though Arius' was exiled, his followers continued to create problems to the Church, for some years. The present Jehovah's witnesses or Russelites are the followers of Arius doctrine.

Memory Verse : "Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3)

Questions

(1) What is the importance of the conversion of emperor Constantine, in the history of the Church?
(2) Explain the circumstances of convening the Synod of Nicea.
(3) Who are the present heretics, who follow Arius' doctrine?

LESSON-21

TWO GREAT SYNODS.

The followers of Arius were active here and there even after the Synod of Nicea. They taught certain heresies regarding the Son and the Holy Spirit. This caused confusion and discord in the Church. Synods had to be held again. To affirm the apostolic faith, two Universal Synods were held, one at Constantinople in 381 and the other at Ephesus in 431. (Both the places are in the present Turkey).

Synod of Constantinople (381)

The Second Universal Synod was held at Constantinople. There was representation of the Church as a whole. The Synods which took decisions regarding the faith and practices of the church as a whole and had universal representation are called universal synods. The assemblies of fathers of the Church of a particular region, convened to take decisions regarding matters concerning the Church of that region are called regional Synods.

In A.D 381, on the invitation of emperor Theodosius, 150 fathers assembled at Constantinople. At the beginning of the Synod, Milithius , the Bishop of Antioch presided. But because of his unexpected demise, St. Gregory of Nazianous presided the Synod considered the heresies of Macedonius and Apolinerius.

Heresy of Macedonius

Followers of Arius were teaching that the three persons in the Trinity are different in substance. They argued that the Son

and the Holy Spirit are not equal to the Father. In the Synod of Nicea, the Arius' faction had not raised the heresy regarding the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Nicene Creed ends with the single statement "we also believe in the Holy Spirit". With the help of Arius' faction, Macedonius became the Bishop of Constantinople. He taught that, the "Holy Spirit is not equal to the Father, but is only a power created by the Father." So it became necessary to proclaim Church's faith regarding the Holy Spirit. It was the Synod of Constantinople that approved and incorporated the qualifications of the Holy Spirit, like, 'the life giving Lord of all' , etc., in the third paragraph of the Creed. Our Creed is known as Nicene - Constantinople Creed, since it was composed according to the decisions of those two Synods.

The second heresy considered in the Synod of Constantinople was that regarding the Son. Apolinarius, the Bishop of Laodicea , tried to explain the relationship between the human nature and the divine nature of the Son. Man has body, soul and spirit. In the incarnation the Son took body and soul from the human, but in Him there was no human spirit. The Son of God took the place of the Spirit.

According to this, Christ's human nature is not complete. The Synod declared this doctrine wrong and re-affirmed the Nicene declaration regarding the Son.

Synod of Ephesus (A.D. 431)

The third Universal Synod was held at Ephesus, in A.D 431. Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople made certain heretical statements regarding Jesus Christ. He tried to explain the union of humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ. In the man Jesus, born of the Virgin, divinity came and abided. In Christ divinity and humanness remain as two entities. Mary had delivered the man Jesus, not the only begotten Son of God. Hence it is not right to call Mary the Mother of God, but should be called the Mother of Christ. This was what he taught. The Church fathers realized

that this explanation would lead to consider Jesus and the Son of God as two realities.

In accordance with the invitation of the Emperor Theodosius Second , about two hundred fathers assembled at Ephesus in A.D. 431. Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria presided over the Synod. The fathers examined Nestorius' letters and found, they contained heresy. They cursed his doctrine and declared loyalty to the Nicene faith. It was Cyril who played the main role in making firm the Nicene faith and to remove heresies from the church. That is why he is called in the fifth Thubden, (DIPTYCHS, the great intercession) as "St. Cyril, that exalted and veritable tower of knowledge".

Memory Verse : "But even if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed". (Galatians 1:8).

Questions

(1) What is meant by Universal Synod? Which are the Universal Synods, our Church recognizes ?

(2) Find out from the Creed, the qualifications used for Holy Spirit, at the Synod of Constantinople.

(3) What were the important decisions taken in the Synod of Constantinople?

(4) What was the heresy of Apolinerius?

UNIT 5

LESSON-22

FASTING AND PRAYER

When we pray with concentration, our tongue and mind participate in unity. Our body participates in prayer through fasting. People spend lot of time for eating and merry making. Utilizing that time also, to be in communion with God is fasting.

Jesus Christ used to depart to lonely places, daily, and pray for long time. After the baptism in Jordan He departed to the wilderness and fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights. Fasting is the occasion for spiritual preparation and gaining divine powers.

In the book Didache (Teaching of the Twelve), written at the beginning of the second century, says that all Christians should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. We fast on Friday, as the Lord was crucified on that day. Wednesday we set apart as a day of fasting, as it was on that day, the Lord for the first time, told His disciples regarding His suffering.

Our Church has five canonical fasts:

(1) The great lent. It is the preparation for our Lord's death on the cross and His resurrection.

(2) Fast of the Apostles (June 16-29) or Fast for 13 days. On 29th June is the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul.

(3) Sunoyo Fast for fifteen days'. (August 1 - 15). This is the preparation to celebrate the Assumption (Departure) of the Mother of God on 15th August.

(4) Eldo Fast, or 25 day's fast. (December 1 - 25). This is the preparation for the Nativity of Our Lord.

(5) Three days' fast or Ninaveh Fast. This is observed 18 days prior to the begining of the great Lent.

Four out of five Fasts are observed as preparation for important feasts. Feasts are not only Celebrations but are also occasions for spiritual preparation and gaining power.

Days of Fast are the time to repent about our sins and to plead to God for forgiveness. It is because of this, that we see exhortations for repentance in the prayers of these seasons.

Fasting is the occasion for prayer with concentration and self disciplining. We discipline our body and mind through fasting and prayer. In lent we take special care to protect our mind from the temptations of the evil one. In this way our body and mind are prepared for prayer. Just as food is necessary for the preservation and growth of our body, fasting also is necessary for the full-fledged growth of a man. Man is not only the body but the mind and soul also. Fasting helps to grow spiritually, by controlling emotions and physical desires. When we satisfy our carnal desires only, we are ignoring the factors of mind and soul, and we become sick-ridden. Normally, fasting does not harm the body, but it helps the health of the body and mind.

Except by prayer and fasting, it is not possible to gain victory over Satan, says the Lord. (St. Mathew 17:21). What Paul says deserves special attention in this context, "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires", (Galatians 5:24) and "But I discipline my body and bring it in to subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27). The Lord who taught us to fast, with His own example, had also said about His disciplines, " Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast". (Mathew 9:15)

Side by side with fasting and prayer, there should also be the acts of love and mercy. In the Jewish Church and in the early Christian Church, it was the practice, to give the poor, what was saved through fasting. God's grace spreads more in us, when we do such deeds. In the absence of such acts, we are shutting our-

selves against God's grace. " Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke."

"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out, when you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh"? (Isaiah 58:67)

"When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood". (Isaiah 1;15)

The Lord refuses the fasting, which is for the exhibition of piety or for praises. "When you fast do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance, For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting", says the Lord. (Mathew 6:16)

Fasting should be an occasion to submit ourselves with humility and repentance, before the Father who is in the secret place.

Memory Verse : "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Mathew 9:15)

Questions

(1) Which are the five canonical Fasts of the Church?
(2) Explain, which are the different factors of real fasting?
(3) Why do we observe Wednesdays and Fridays as fasting days?

LESSON-23

THE GREAT LENT

The great Lent or the fifty day's lent is observed as a preparation to receive the blessings of the Lord's death on the cross and His resurrection. The tradition of fasting for one or two days prior to the feast of resurrection, was prevalent in the church from the time of the apostles. Later on, following the example of the Lord, who fasted for forty days, the length of the lent was increased. Saturdays and Sundays are not fasting days, since, Sunday is the day for the celebration of the resurrection and Saturday is the day for the preparation of it. To have forty actual fasting days, like our Lord did, the great lent was extended to fifty days.

The Nicene Synod decided that the period of fasting, prior to the resurrection should be forty days. The Synod of Laodicea, held in A.D. 300, instructed that all the faithful should observe the Great lent. During the fourth century, it was on the Easter Sunday, baptism was given to those who were newly admitted to the Church. They were baptized only after the instruction of faith for a period extending to one year or more. Great lent was the time for their final training. During the lent, the chiefs of the Church used to teach them faith. They also used to fast and take part in the hourly prayers.

Now also, the great lent is the time for prayers, fasting and to teach the faith of the Church. The purpose of lent is to repent and to reconcile with God. Besides this, lent is the time to make right with others also. Therefore on Monday, when the Great lent begins, we conduct the service of Shubukono or the service

of reconciliation. At the end of the service, all give peace to one another.

We pray, ' forgive our debts and sins as we have forgiven our debtors'. During lent, we pray to God to forgive our wrongs. If our lent is to become fruitful, we should also forgive others and reconcile with them. Beginning the Great lent, with the Shubukono Service is meant for this.

You might have seen that in the middle of the Great lent, that is, on the 25th day of the lent, a cross is raised at the centre of the Church. This means that the Lords death on the cross is near and the Church is preparing for that, As the cross is considered as the sign of the presence of the Lord, it is decorated with red cloth.

During the great lent those who are able, should fast up to the evening and those who are unable for it, should fast at least up to noon. Church has arranged special prayers for the great lent. These prayers exhort us to repent and to turn towards God. As a part of repentance, we kneel down and touch our forehead to the ground, during the prayer of the lent. There is a practice of kneeling and bending down to the ground forty times after the noon prayer. (Bow down)

The change that occurs in our life is what gives meaning to the Great lent. The Church instructs that all its members should confess and obtain absolution of sins and receive Holy Communion on all Sundays of the lent.

Memory Verse : "However this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting". (Mathew 17:21)

Questions

(1) What is the importance of the service of Shubukono?
(2) What is the meaning of raising the cross at the center of the Church, on the middle of the lent?
(3) Trace the origin of the Great lent.

UNIT 6

HISTORY OF THE MALANKARA CHURCH

LESSON-24

MAR THOMA METROPOLITANS

The Roman overlordship was imposed upon the Malankara Church by the Synod of Diamper of A.D 1599. The Romans took special care to see that the relationship between the Malankara Church and the Persian Church did not continue. By the vow of the Koonan Cross (bent cross) of 1653, the majority of the Malankara Nasranies disowned the Roman domination. After this, Malankara Church was led by Bishops called Mar Thomas.

Mar Thoma First (1653-1670)

In 1653, after the vow of Koonan Cross the Malankara Nasranies assembled at the Alangadu Church and elected the Arch deacon of Pakalomattam, as the head of the Church. He assumed responsibility with the designation Mar Thoma First. To assist him in administration the Alangadu assembly also elected four priests.

Mar Thoma First was consecrated as the prelate of the Church, by laying the hands of twelve priests, on his head. Mar Thoma First and Malankara Nasranies sent letters to the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Babylon, requesting them to send Bishops, to regularize canonically, his designation of Metropolitan. Accordingly, Mar Gregorios, the Bishop of Jerusalem, arrived in Malankara in 1665 and consecrated Mar Thoma First canonically. After staying for six years in Malankara, Mar Gregorios expired in 1671 and interned in the Paravoor Church.

It was the time when the Portugese established their supremacy in Cochin; and they made several attempts to kill Mar Thoma First. Once when Mar Thoma First was staying in the

Mulanthuruthi Church, the Portugese reached there with the help of prince Godavarma of Cochin and the Nair army, and surrounded the Church. But the Metropolitan and his aid Ittythomman Kathanar escaped. Two bearded Nasaranies, who came to the Church to worship, gave their dress to the Bishop and the Kathanar (Priest) and made them to escape. The Nasaranies wore the dress of the Clergy and remained in the Church. The Portugese and the soldiers of Godavarma inflicted them severe bodily injuries.

As instructed by the Portugese Bishop Joseph Sebestani, the Soldiers took Mar Thomas'crosier, (Pastoral staff), Vestments, palanquin, books and the holy oil etc., and destroyed them.

Mar Thoma First was a noble father, who led the Malankara Church without falling, once again, in to Roman subjugation. He expired in 1670. His mortal remains were interned in the Cheriya Pally (Small Church) of Ankamali.

Mar Thoma Second (1670 -1686)

During Mar Thoma First's life time itself, his brother's son was chosen for the position of Bishop. Mar Thoma First along with Mar Gregorios, ordained him with the designation, Mar Thoma Second. In 1686, he expired and interned in the Niranam Church. During his dispensation, in 1685, Bishops Mar Baselius Yaldo, and Mar Ivanios, arrived at Talassery, by ship. Fearing the enemies they traveled by foot, through terrains, and by the time they reached Kothamangalam, Mar Baselios became sick. On the thirteenth day, he expired and was interned in the Kothamangalam Cheriya Pally. Mar Ivanios served in Malankara till his death in 1694.

Mar Thoma Third (1686 - 1688)

Mar Thoma Second died all on a sudden , without ordaining his successor. So Mar Ivanios ordained a person from the Pakalomattom family, as Mar Thoma Third. He expired in 1688 and his body was interned in the Kadambanadu Church.

Mar Thoma Fourth (1688 - 1728)

Mar Thoma Third also died without being able to ordain his successor. So Mar Ivanios himself consecrated Mar Thoma Fourth. During his time, Mar Ivanios expired and his body was interned in the Mulanthuruthi Church.

At the time of the dispensation of Mar Thoma fourth, in 1708, Mar Gabriel, a Nestorian Bishop arrived in Malankara. The Bishop who came from abroad, was welcomed with reverence, in some of the Churches. When he tried to spread the Nestorian faith, Mar Thoma fourth opposed it.

Mar Thoma Fourth, after ordaining his brother's son as Mar Thoma Fifth, left this world in 1728. he was interned in the Kandanadu Church.

Mar Thoma Fifth (1728 -1765)

Mar Thoma Fourth had ordained Mar Thoma Fifth. Since one Bishop alone consecrated Mar Thoma Fifth, some people argued that his consecration was not valid. Mar Thoma Fifth requested the Antiochian Patriarch through a letter, to send a scholarly Bishop. The letter was sent through a Deacon named Anthonius, who had come to Cochin along with merchants. A group of five, including Mar Baselius Shakralla, the Catholicos of Musal, Mar Gregorios, Ramban Yuhanon and two others, who were sent by the patriarch, reached Malankara in 1751. They had traveled in Dutch ship. They argued that the position of Mar Thoma Fifth was not valid and so he should be consecrated again. But Mar Thoma did not heed to this.

In the mean time, in 1752 Mar Baselius ordained Ramban Yuhanon as Bishop with the designation Mar Ivanios. Mar Baselius had made an agreement with Mar Thoma Fifth, in 1751. It was conceded in the agreement that Mar Thoma Fifth was a duly consecrated Bishop and without his consent nobody would be ordained in Malankara. Marthoma Fifth expired in 1765 and interned in the Niranam Church.

Questions

(1) What are the matters we can remember with pride about Marthoma First ?

(2) What manner of service, the Malankara Church received from foreign Bishops ?

LESSON-25

MAR THOMA METROPOLITANS (CONTINUED)

Mar Thoma Sixth or Valiya Mar Dionysius (1765 - 1808)

In 1761, Mar Thoma Fifth Consecrated his successor Mar Thoma Six, at the Niranam Church. He took up the administration of the Church after the death of Mar Thoma Fifth. To prevent the foreign Bishops, Mar Gregorios and Mar Ivanios from indulging in parallel administration, he got reconciled with them. Accordingly, in 1770, the foreign Bishops had ordained him once again, at the Niranam Church, with the designation Dionysius. It might be to avoid disunity in the Church that he submitted himself to this.

Birth of Thozhiyoor Diocese (A.D. 1772)

Bishop Mar Gregorios, being tired due to advanced age, was staying at Kayamkulam. His companion Ramban Geevarghese Kattumangat, took Gregorios to Cochin on the pretext of getting medical treatment. In 1772 Mar Gregorios ordained the Ramban as Bishop with the designation Coorilos, at the Mattanchery Church. It was without the knowledge nor consent of Mar Thoma Sixth. He along with Mar Ivanios, convened a meeting at the Kandanadu Church. As per the decision of the meeting, they petitioned to the Governments of Travancore and Cochin, not to recognize Coorilos as Bishop. Since he was not able to stay in both the states, he went to Thozhiyoor in Malabar, which was under the dominion of the British. He built a Church there and

stayed. This is how the Thozhiyoor Diocese or Independent Malabar Syrian Church was originated.

Tipu Sultan's invasion of Travancore and Cochin was an important political event occurred at the time of Mar Thoma Sixth. In 1789, Tipu Sultan set fire to the churches of Arthat, Ankamali and Paravoor. He ransacked the houses and forcebly converted many to Islam. Tipu's army reached upto Alwaye. Many fled to Travancore for safety. He was forced to return as he learnt about the preparations of the British to attack Mysore. In 1796, Mar Thoma Sixth ordained Mar Thoma Seventh.

Visit of Dr. Claudius Buchanen (1806)

The visit of Dr. Buchanen, a prominent priest of the Anglican Church, to the Malankara was an important event of that time. As directed by the British Government, Buchanen came to study about the faith and practices of the ancient Malankara Syrian Church and to collect its ancient books and records. He visited several churches, like those of Mavelikara, Puthencavu , Chengannur, Kallisserry, Kandanadu, Kunnamkulam etc., and held discussions with the clergy.

Dr. Buchanen visited Mar Thoma Sixth, more than once. Buchanen was very much impressed by the learning and the devotion of the metropolitan. They discussed the matter of translating the Bible into Malayalam and reached into an understanding. Mar Thoma Sixth, handed over to Buchanen, a manuscript copy of the Bible, about thousand years old. Now this manuscript copy is preserved in the University of Cambridge in England.

Buchanen had got printed the Malayalam translation of the Gospels translated by Ramban Philipose of Kayamkulam at Bombay and distributed in Malankara. Similarly, the Syriac New -Testament was got printed in England and a few copies of them were sent to the Churches of Malankara. Buchanen has described his visit, in his book 'Christian Researches'. It is through this

book of Buchanen that the western countries came to know about the Malankara Church.

Vattippanam

In those days, Travancore was a state under the British rule. Though there was a king, the administration was carried on by a British representative, known as the British Resident. The First Resident to Travancore, Colonel Mecaulay was a friend of Mar Thoma Sixth. Mar Thoma Sixth decided to deposit 1000 Poovarahan, (1000 Gold Pagoda, Rs.10,500) in the British Treasury, through Mecaulay, at the rate of eight percent yearly interest. This is known as Vattippanam. 'Vattippanam' means the Fixed Deposit given for interest. Mecaulay arranged the payment of its interest every year through the Treasury of Travancore.

In 1908, Mar Thoma Sixth (Valiya Mar Diodysius) expired at Niranam. He was interned in the Puthencavu Church, which was built as desired by him.

Mar Thoma Seventh (1808-1809)

Before his death, Mar Thoma Sixth had ordained his brother's Son, Ramban Mathan, as his successor. During the time of Mar Thoma Sixth, decision was taken to deposit the 'Vattippanam' in the Government Treasury. But it was Mar Thoma Seventh, who deposited the money raised for this purpose, in the Government Treasury. He had also drawn its interest. In 1809 Mar Thoma Seventh expired at Kandanadu and entombed in the Kolenchery Church.

Mar Thoma Eighth (1809-1816)

Mar Thoma Seventh became critically ill, all on a sudden. The Priests and the faithful, who were with him, decided to ordain a successor. Thoma Kathanar, the heir of the Pakalomattam family by adoption, was made to put on the vestments and the hands of the Sick Bishop were made to lay on his head, and ordained him as Mar Thoma Eighth. There arose differences of opinion regarding the ordination. Later, he ordained Iype

Kathanar, his father's brother as Mar Thoma Ninth. Mar Thoma Eighth expired in 1816 at Niranam and was interned in the Puthencavu Church.

Mar Thoma Ninth (1816)

Mar Thoma Ninth was ordained by Mar Thoma Eighth. Mar Thoma Eighth's ordination was disapproved by a section of people and they refused to accept him, as he got the laying on of hands at the death bed of his predecessor. On this ground they did not accept Mar Thoma Ninth too. Being peace loving, he stayed in the Kadamattam Church, without dispensing administration, but spending his time in prayer. Mar Thoma Ninth was the last Bishop of the Pakalomattom family.

Questions

(1) What are the matters worth mentioning about Mar Thoma Sixth?
(2) How was Thozhiyoor Church originated?
(3) What is 'Vattippanam'?

UNIT 7

PRAYER

MORNING PRAYER, - PSALM 51

Have mercy on me O God, According to Thy steadfast love. According to Thine abundant mercy wipe out my transgressions.

Wash me completely from my iniquity, cleanse me thoroughly from my sin. For I know my transgressions, my sin is always before me to see.

Against Thee, Lord, against Thee have I sinned. I have done what is evil in Thy sight. So Thou art right when Thou condemnest me Thy judgement of me is blameless.

See, I was born in sinfulness. From the time my mother conceived me I am a sinner. Look, Thou demandest truthfulness on the inside. Then teach me wisdom in the depth of my heart.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, let me become whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness. Let these broken bones rejoice in Thee.

Do not look upon my sins. Wipe out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God Set a new and steadfast spirit inside me.

Do not throw me out from Thy presence. Do not take away Thy Holy Spirit from me. Give back to me the joy of Thy salvation. Keep me straight with a willing spirit.

Only then can I teach evil men Thy ways. Then sinners will come back to Thee. Deliver me from the death of vengeance, O God, God of my salvation, My tongue will sing aloud of Thy saving act.

O Lord, open Thou my lips And my mouth shall sing forth Thy praise. For it is not in sacrifies that Thou takest delight. If I were to offer a burnt offering that would not please Thee.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; A broken heart, penitent, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Do good to Thy people in Thy good pleasure. Build again the walls of Jerusalem, Thy Church. So wilt Thou be pleased with the right sacrifices. Burnt offerings, bulls offered on Thine altar.

Glory be to The Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit from ages unto ages of ages—Amen.

MORNING PRAISE

How good is it to give thanks to Thee, O Lord, and to sing praise to Thine exalted Name; to declare Thy loving kindness at the break of the day, and Thy faithfulness during the night. O Lord, hearken to our voice at the dawn of the day; and in the morning, let us be found ready by Thee. O Lord, absolve and pardon all our sins. O Holy one, over-shadow Thy right hand upon us, and heal all our infirmities for the sake, of Thy eternal Name.

Amen

PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO ARE FAR

O, God, who is Omni present, merciful and kind, we pray to you for all, who have gone afar from our homes, families, (homeland) and those who request for our prayers. Provide them all, protection from the vexations of the enemies who are secret or open , and make their labours fruitful. Let your merciful hands be upon them day and night and sanctify them by their bodies and spirits. Let them be blemishless in your presence. Make them to live in your help, glorious light and glory and by their peaceful return make us and them glad. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN DISTRESS AND MISERY

O, Lord, grant your help to all those who are in distress, in this world, due to difficulties and poverty. O, Lord, full of Love, who sees all types of deprivations, injustices, difficulties and miseries, have compassion on your servants, who are your handiwork. O, Merciful Lord, look upon them with kindness those who are poor, oppressed and tired due to hard labour. Make our hearts tender to view with sympathy, those who are suffering miseries, and because of the love towards you, kindly enable those who are in sorrows and difficulties to enjoy your heavenly peace, Amen.

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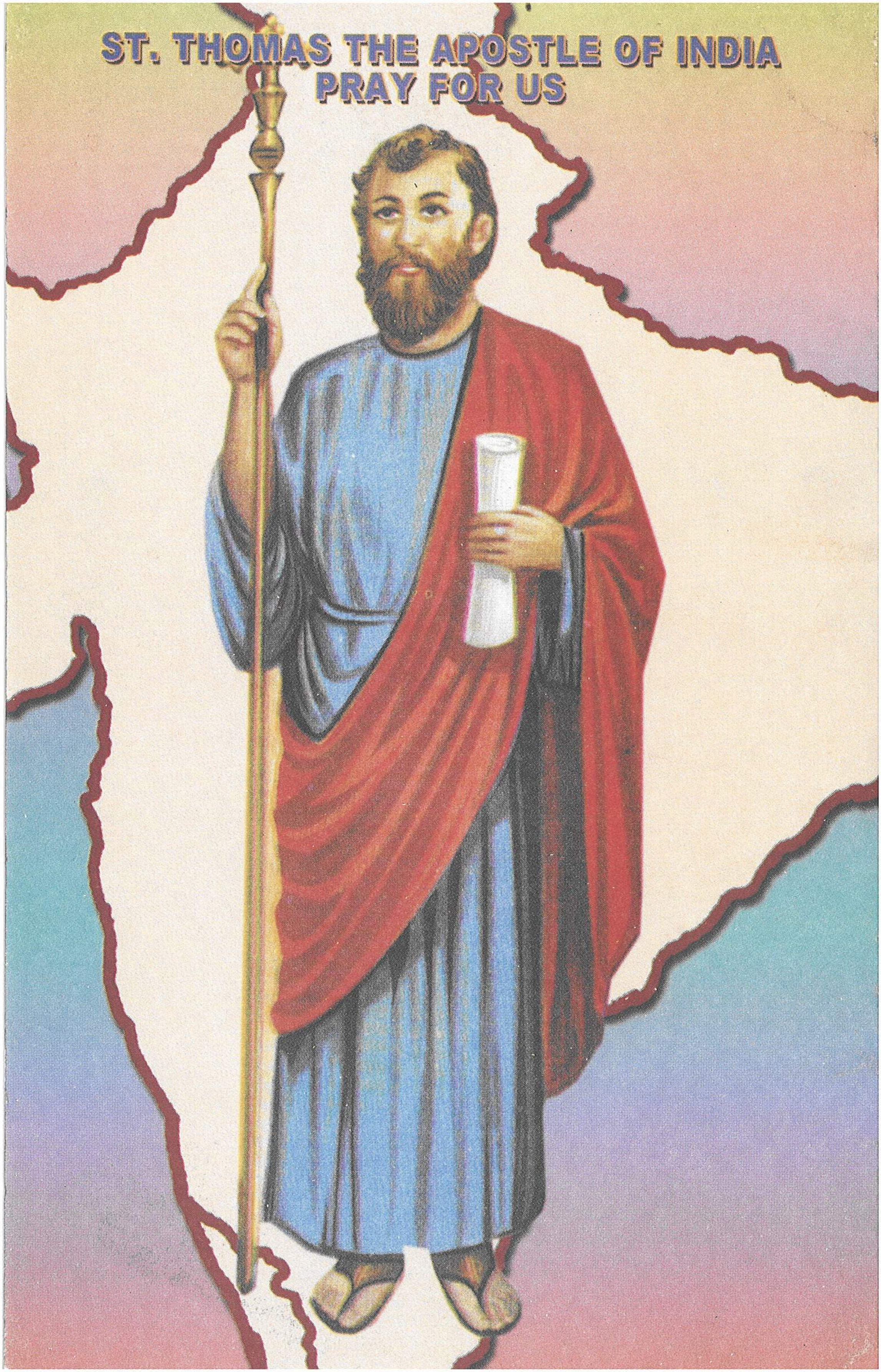
ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE OF INDIA
PRAY FOR US