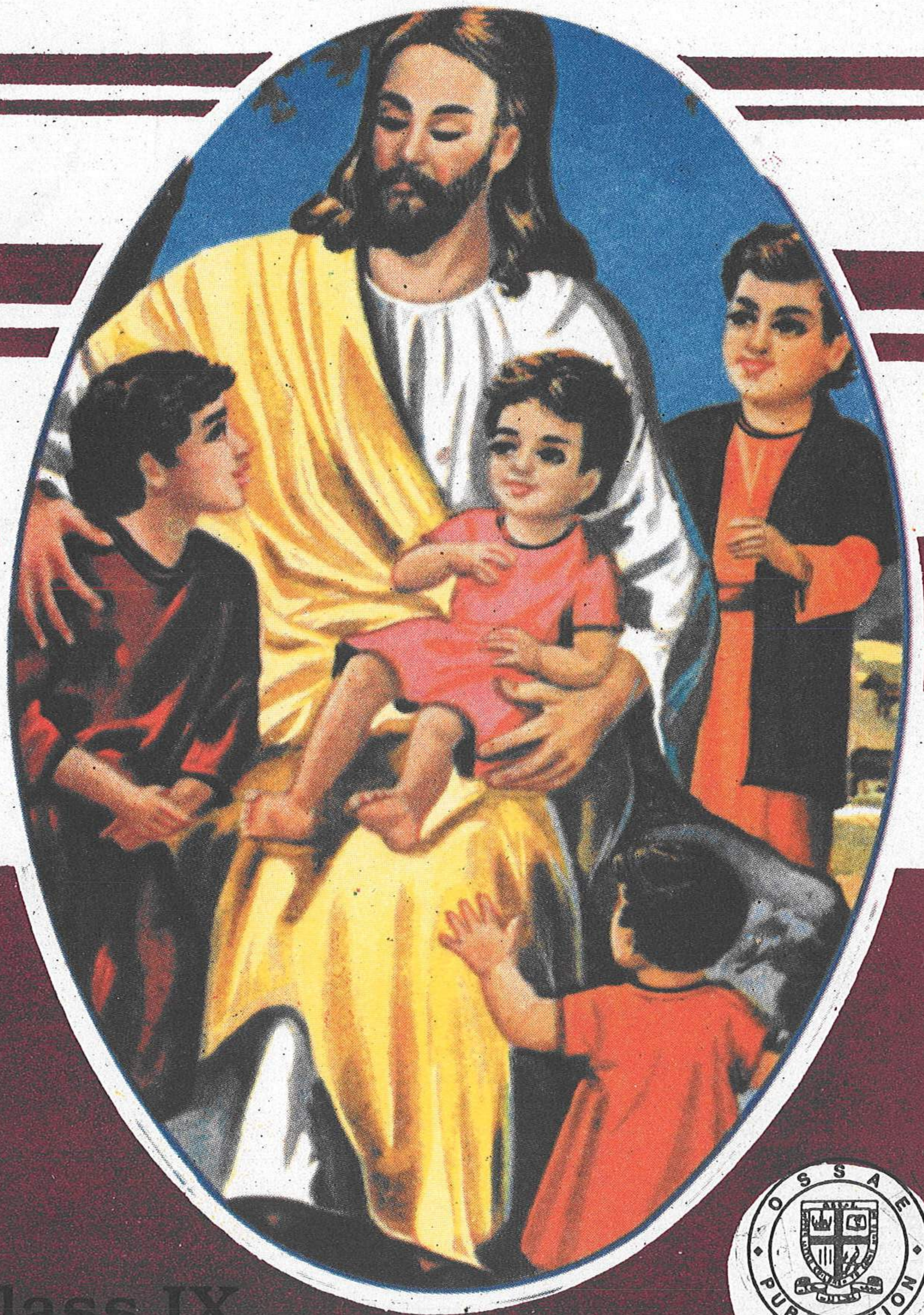


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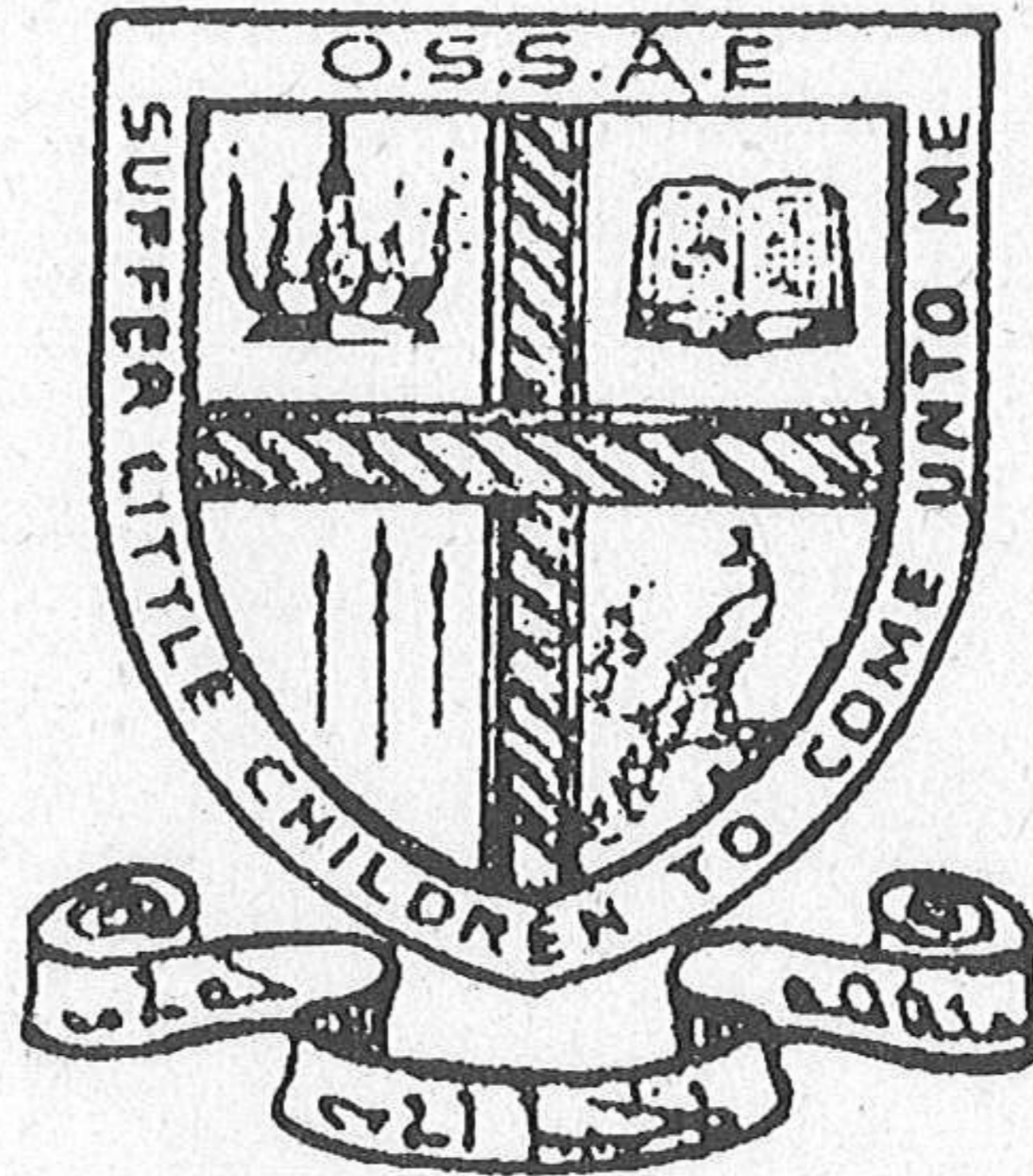
SUNDAY SCHOOL



Class IX



Orthodox Syrian Sunday School Association of the East

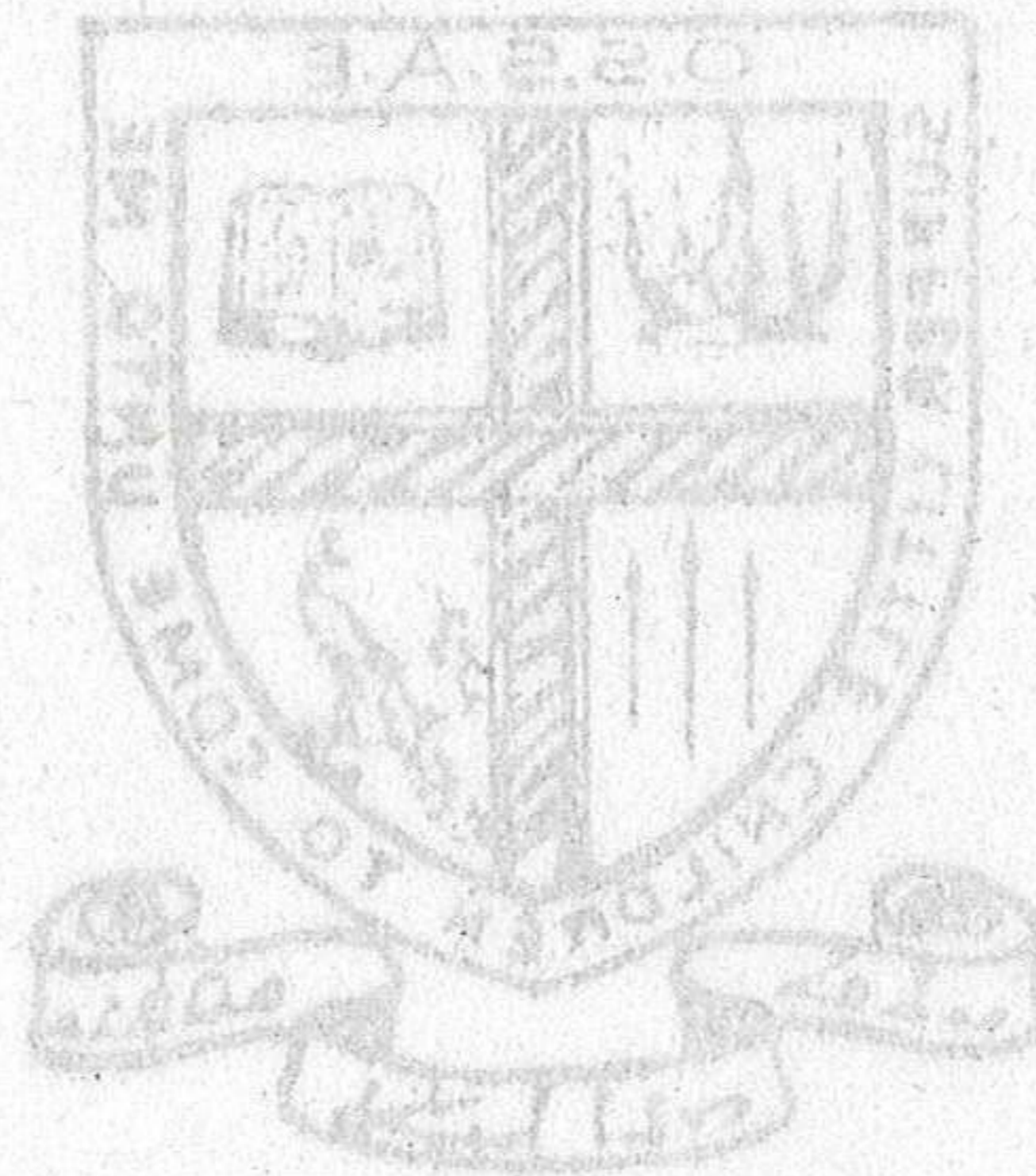


TEXT FOR CLASS IX

SUNDAY SCHOOL CENTRAL OFFICE
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TEXT FOR CLASS IX

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PREFACE

This English publication is the text-book for class IX of the Sunday School Association of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

The five Oriental Orthodox Churches (Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, Indian & Ethiopian) found it necessary to form a common curriculum for the use of their Sunday Schools. The heads of these churches appointed a committee for this purpose with H.G. Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church as President and Rev. Fr. Joseph Vendrapilly as Secretary.

The Committee introduced a curriculum for classes from I to XII Based on this curriculum detailed Text Books have been published to all classes except II, III and IX. The Sunday School Association has published early text books for classes II and III. Now the Text Book for class IX is ready.

Hope this will satisfy a long felt need of our Sunday School students outside Kerala.

Suggestions and corrections, if any, will be welcomed.

OSSAE Cental Office
Devalokam, Kottayam
1st February 1995

Fr. K.V. Thomas
Publication Officer

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UNIT I THE SCRIPTURES

Lesson 1

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is the record of the revelation of God to man, through the prophets and Jesus Christ.

The Bible that we have today, is composed of sixty-six books written by about forty persons of different languages and countries, written within a period of about 1600 years. The Old Testament was first written in Hebrew language and the first writer was Moses. During his time, there was no paper and the writing was mainly on the bricks made of clay. After writing on the wet and soft clay it was dried up in the sunlight. Ancient records were made in stone also. Later there was the system of writing on the scrolls made of leather. During the days of Christ such scrolls were available. (Psalms 40:7; Lk. 4:20) The scrolls of the prophecy of Isaiah, in Hebrew language, is the only known ancient manuscript of Old Testament.

In 1947 the very important discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls was made in Palestine. They are supposed to be written about two hundred years before Christ. It is now kept by the Jews in America. In the days of Christ there was only the Hebrew Old Testament in the Bible. The Bible gets its name from a Greek word Biblia which means, 'books'. The Bible is the first book.

A few years after Christ the books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles and others, in Greek. The first written books of the New Testament were some letters of St. Paul. They were all manuscripts because there was no printing at that time. They were all written in scrolls made of Papyrus. Papyrus is a kind of reed growing in the delta of Nile River in

Egypt. After removing the bark, the strips of the stem are pasted together and a sheet is made. A scroll is made by pasting together sheets of ten inches length and five inches breadth. Sometimes such sheets are bound together and made in the form of a book. Such manuscripts made in papyrus are called 'Codex'. This was very costly and only rich people could afford to buy it. None of those manuscripts are left behind today. Three manuscripts of fourth century, containing major portion of the Old Testament and New Testament are now available. 'Codex Sinaiticus' and 'Codex Alexandrinus' are in the British Museum, and 'Codex Vaticanus' is in Vatican Museum in Rome. These are written in capital letters in Greek without any punctuations.

Today we get the Bible in our own language as a result of the continuous and sacrificial labour of many people. The Old Testament was first written in Hebrew. By 280 B.C. the Hebrew Old Testament and the Apocrypha books were translated into Greek. The New Testament was written in Greek except the Gospel of St. Mathew. By the second century A.D., New Testament books were translated into Syriac. Next translation was to Latin. Bishop Jerome, secretary of the Pope made a revised edition in latin. His translation is the famous Latin 'Vulgate.' This is the authorised Bible of the Roman Catholics and it was the recognised Bible till the Reformation.

It was in the fourteenth century that the complete English Bible was made.

The 'King James Version' was made in 1611, under the leadership of King James I of England. The Malayalam Bible that we use today is published by the Bible Society and that translation is based on King James Version.

A portion of the Bible was translated into Malayalam under the leadership of Valia Mar Dionysius Metropolitan (Mar Thoma VI) and got printed by a man named Thimna Pillai at Bombay in 1811. It was only the four gospels. The Malayalam Bible was printed later on under the leadership of a C.M.S. missionary Rev. Benjamin Baily, in a wooden press at Kottayam.

In the Bible, there are sixty-six books, thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. In addition to this there are seven books under the name Apocrypha books. The word Apocrypha means 'hidden.' The Jews did not approve these books as scriptures. Hence they were not used by them. Roman Catholic Church decided to add Apocrypha books with the Bible, in the Council of Trent. These books are accepted by our church also, as part of the Bible.

Books which are recognized by the church are known as Canonical books. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). St. Paul was speaking this referring to the Old Testament. This saying is true of the New Testament also as we believe that the New Testament writers were also inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the circular letters issued by Athanasius of Alexandria, in A.D. 365, it is stated that the number of books in the New Testament is twenty-seven. In a list made by the western churches in the provincial council at Carthage in A.D. 397 and 419, there are twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Jesus Christ gave the authority to his disciples to teach all that he had commanded. (Mat. 28:19-20). To-day we know that the teachings and commandments of Christ are found in the Bible. So we consider the Bible as scriptures and respect it.

Memorisation:

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart".

Questions:

1. What is meant by Codex. What are its peculiarities?
2. What is the Bible?
3. Why do we consider the Bible as the Scripture?

Lesson 2

THE USE OF THE BIBLE

In the Book of Isaiah, The Bible is called "The book of the Lord." Jesus Christ has called it "The Scriptures;" (Mk. 12:24). The Bible is the book that reveals what God had commanded, through the prophets and Jesus Christ. These writings instruct us unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). All the scriptures are inspired by God. (2 Tim. 3:16).

A French leader Voltaire declared that there will not be any copy of the Bible in the world after hundred years henceforth. But the house in which Voltaire lived is now the central office of the Bible Society in France. The Bible is the most widely circulated of all the books in the world. Full Bible or portion of it, is published in more than one thousand five hundred languages. Even in India, the whole Bible is published in 32 languages and partially in more than hundred languages. The most popular and the best selling book in the world is the Bible. The reason is that its content is God's words and that it gives comfort to so many. King David has stated "The word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalms 119:105).

The place of the Bible, in our lives

1. Read it regularly. (1 Timothios 4:13)
2. Consider the scripture as the foundation of our faith. (Acts 17:2)

3. Rejoice in God's words. (Psalms 119:162)
4. We should be doers of the word and not hearers only. (James 1:22)

We have to read and study the Bible meditatively as God is talking to us through the Bible and we have to obey Him.

The Bible is not a textbook of science. Its main purpose is to reveal God's will to man and lead him to God. Some discoveries in science have proved that many statements in the Bible are scientifically true.

The following are some examples:

1. In Job 26:7 it is said
"He stretches out the north over the void, and hangs the Earth upon nothing."

It has been found out recently by the help of telescope that there is a place in the north, void and without even a star. Again the latest scientific discovery has proved that the Earth is hanging in a void.

2. In Proverbs 8:27 it is said,
"When he drew a circle on the face of the deep"
Now it is found out that the shape of the Earth is round.

3. 'Behold even the Moon is not bright' (Job 25:5)

Only recently scientists have come to know the fact that the Moon has no light of its own.

4. In Job 26:7, it is stated that He spreads the north region over the void.

Now it has been found out through the telescope that there is a void region without even a single star in the North.

5. Psalm 135, verses 6 and 7 describes how the clouds are formed from the water and how clouds carried away by winds which result in rainfall.
6. In old Testament itself there is reference about two hundred

and fifty plants and flowers. All the explanations are proved to be correct by the Botanists.

7. For a long time, scientists had believed that the falcon finds out its prey by the smell. But in the Bible Job 28:7, it is stated that the falcon finds its prey by eyesight. It is no clearly found out that the eyes of falcon are more powerful than even a telescope. From all these examples we have to understand that, many scientific statements made in the Bible are true. Even then we are not supposed to read the Bible or to understand the scientific things, but to know the will of God.

Memorisation:

Matt. 4:4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Question:

1. What is revealed in the Bible?
2. The Bible is the most popular book. Why?
3. What should be our relation to the Bible?

Lesson 3

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE

In Philippians (4:8-9) St. Paul says what we should accept and what we should do. "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you."

In Galatians, St. Paul says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8).

This means St. Paul and the disciples have taught us the truth. Jesus Christ Himself says "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Matt. 28:19-20)

We get the teachings of Jesus Christ, St. Paul and the disciples mainly through the Bible. The basis of all teachings is what Christ had taught. Apostles taught what they had heard from Christ. The New Testament was written, at least twenty years after the formation of the Church. Jesus Christ had not entrusted anybody to write a book. But the word "teaching" includes writing of books also. The church grew only in the

faith of the word of God, the promises of God. When the apostles were alive, spoken words were enough. But after their death, people depended on written words. That is how the written books become significant. As long as we know that the words are the revelations from God, there is no difference between spoken words and written words. Written New Testament was formed only after the formation of the church. The Bible has a very important place because its contents are God's revelations. Its messages are authentic as it is the revelation from God. When we read the gospels during the Holy Qurbana, we accept it as the living word of God. In the Holy Qurbana, after the reading of the gospel at the time when the people sing a hymn the priest says a prayer silently praising Christ for giving God's words.

If somebody introduces a teaching in the church we search whether it is related to the teaching of Christ by referring to the Bible. At the time when there were people who have heard directly from Christ, reference to the book was not necessary. But today it is not so. The church is divided into different groups. If we depend on the spoken words from others, we will get many contradictory ideas. It was the work of the Holy Spirit that God's word happened to be written down and was collected as an authoritative book, so that the truth may be kept forever.

In the Bible, which we use today, there are sixty-six books. Even though it was written by different people in different periods, it has got the position of one book. If we examine the whole Old Testament, we can see the expectation of a coming redeemer. In the first four books of the New Testament there is the description of Jesus Christ the redeemer. In the books from the Acts of the Apostles we can see the influence of the personality and teachings of Jesus in history. The Bible was not written in order, by formation of a committee as we make books today. Writings of different people at different places and at different periods were collected by testing whether they were in accor-

dance with the spoken words. The author of the epistle to Romans is St. Paul. Roman Church consider it as a scripture from the time they got the letter of St. Paul. Similarly the Apostles, the representatives of Christ, gave to the church the words spoken by Christ, which were written later.

Canon of the Bible

When there were different writings claimed to be handed down through reliable traditions it became necessary to select the true writings. Such books collected after selection was called Canonical books. The selection of the Books of the New Testament was first done in the Eastern regional council held in A.D. 360 at Laodicca. Again such a selection was done in the Western regional councils held in 397 and 419 in Carthage. General councils, held before the Roman Catholic Council at Trent, had not defined the Canon of the Bible. The Greek word 'Canon' means measuring rod, 'Rules or Criteria.' But today the word canonical books means the books included in the official list.

Church is the witness and custodian of the scriptures. But church is not the author or the producer. All other books of the church may be modified completely or partially by the church. But the church has no right to modify by adding or reducing the contents of the Bible. But it can improve the translation of the Bible by comparing the original writings. The reason is that the contents of the Bible is the word of God As it is pointed out in Hebrew 1:1-2, in the Old Testament God spoke in many ways at several occasions. But in the New Testament there is what Jesus Christ had directly spoken to us. So we cannot place the Old Testament and New Testament on the same level.

The Bible and Tradition

In the church there are many traditions based on the teachings of the Bible. The customs and practices of the church have developed like that. The church will accept the truths and

customs, even if they are not in the Bible. But they shall not be against the teachings of the Bible. They should agree with the Bible. If any of the customs or practices are found to be against the truths of the Bible, church used to abandon them. Child baptism, the prayer for the intercession of the saints, the prayer for the departed, the rituals of the holy sacraments, all these things are not mentioned clearly in the Bible. But they are existing in the church because they are not against the teachings of the Bible. They are Biblical and traditional. There is not Christian denomination without any customs and practices taken from tradition.

The Church and the Bible

Our church respect the Bible and give an important position in the church. There is no sacrament or service without any reading of the Bible. In the church, near the Holy altar there is a special stand for keeping the Bible. Before reading the Bible the priest and his assistants prepare the congregation ready to listen. Our church has not taken any effective step to translate the whole Bible into Malayalam and to make it available in all our homes. Even though Rev. Konattu Mathen Malpan had translated the New Testament from syriac to Malayalam it has no publicity so far. We co-operate with the work of the Bible Society for the spread of the Word of God. We must be more enthusiastic in spreading the gospel and the Bible.

Memorisation:

Heb. 1:1 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.'

Questions:

1. The Bible teachings have authenticity. Why?
2. Who has given the spoken and written word of God to the church?
3. What do you mean by Canonical books?
4. What is the place of the Bible in the church?

UNIT II

GOD'S REVELATION

Lesson 4

OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament (covenant) was given by Jehova to Israelites at Mount Sinai. His promise is that 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples.' [Exo. 19:5]. According to the word of Jehova Moses told all these words to the people. 'All the people answered together and said that, they will do all that the Lord has spoken to them' [Exo. 19:8]. The Lord declared a law. The people promised that they will obey it. The period before the giving of the law was the period in which people lived according to their own conscience. The Gentiles who have not received the law, have their conscience as the law. (Rom. 2:14).

BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

I. The Pentateuch

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

II The Historical Books

6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. I Samuel
10. II Samuel
11. I Kings
12. II Kings
13. I Chronicles
14. II Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther

III The Poetical Books

18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon

IV The Prophetical Books

23. Isaiah
24. Jeremiah
25. Lamentations
26. Ezekiel
27. Daniel
28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum

- 35. Habakkuk
- 36. Zephania
- 37. Haggai
- 38. Zechariah
- 39. Malachi

As decided in the Council at Trent in 1546 seven more books-Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I & II of Maccabees-were added to the Bible of the Roman Catholics. Some more portions were added to the book of Daniel and to the book of Esther.

Old Testament Period

In general, the Old Testament period is the period up to the establishment of the New Testament, by Jesus Christ.

Old Testament Revelation

During the Old Testament period, God spoke to the people through prophets. It is said that they are 1) Men of God [Deut. 33:1]. 2) Chosen instruments [Hag. 2:23] and God's messengers [Num. 16:28].

Prophets are those who understand the commandments of God, and inform them to the people [Amos 7:14-15]. True prophets will understand the ideas of God and divert the people from their wrong paths and deeds of evil. 'Because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God, [2 Peter 1:21]. Prophets spoke to the people with the introduction, 'Thus says the Lord.' The chief among the prophets, who spoke to people on behalf of God was Moses. In the Old Testament there was no other person greater than Moses. So we speak about Moses as 'The first among the prophets.' The people of Israel got the ten commandments and the other laws through Moses and Moses is the person who united the people of Israel and brought them to submission to God.

The People who did Prophetic Service during the Old Testament Period

1. Aaron	Ex. 7:1
2. Abraham	Gen. 20:7
3. Agabus	Acts 21:10
4. Ahijah	I King 11:29
5. Amos	Amos 1:3
6. Balaam	Num. 22:5
7. Daneil	Matt. 24:15
8. David	Matt. 13:25
9. Eldad	Num. 11:26
10. Elijah	I King. 19:16
11. Elisha	I King. 19:16
12. Ezekiel	Ezek. 1:3
13. Gad	I Sam. 22:5
14. Habakkuk	Hab. 1:1
15. Haggai	Heb. 5:1
16. Hananiah	Jer. 28:17
17. Hosea	Hos. 1:1
18. Iddo	II Chron. 13:22
19. Isaiah	II Kings 19:2
20. Jehu	I King 16:7
21. Jeremiah	Jer. 1:15
22. Joel	Joel 1:1
23. John the Baptist	Lk. 7:28
24. Joshua	I King 16:24
25. Jonah	II King 14:25
26. Malahi	Mal. 1:1
27. Medad	Num. 11:26
28. Micah	Mal. 1:1
29. Micaiah	I King 22:8
30. Moses	Deut. 34:10
31. Nahum	Nahum 1:1

32. Nathan	II Sam 7:2
33. Obadiah	Obad I
34. Oded	II Chron. 28:9
35. Samuel	I Sam 3:20
36. Shemaiah	II Chron. 12:5
37. Zechariah	Lk. 1:67
38. Zechariah	Zech. 1:1
39. Zephaniah	Zeph. 1:1

Important Prophetesses

1. Miriam	Ex. 15:20
2. Deborah	Judg. 4:4
3. Huldah	II King 22:14
4. Noadiah	Neh. 6:14
5. Anna	Lk. 2:36
6. Daughters of Philip	Acts 21:9

It is given in the Creed that the Holy Spirit spoke to us through Prophets and the Apostles. In Hebrew 1:1 St. Paul says that God spoke through the prophets. As the prophets told in many and various ways, the revelation of the Old Testament is incomplete and vague. The Old Testament revelation was the preparation for the incarnation and for leading people to it. We get the perfection of God's revelation in the New Testament.

Memorisation-Philipians 4:9

“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Questions

1. What is meant by The Old Testament?
2. What is the role of Moses in the Old Testament revelation?
3. By whom did God speak to men during the Old Testament time?

Lesson 5

PROPHETS

1. Isaiah (B.C. 740-700)

Isaiah the son of Amos is known as the greatest of the prophets of Israel. He has given the message of redemption and his writings are of a very high standard. Isaiah chapter VI verses 1 to 7 tells about the vision of Isaiah, his humility, his confession, and about the purification he received. In answer to the question of the Lord, 'Who will go for us,' Isaiah said 'Here I am, send me.' He dedicated himself to God to be His instrument. He prophesied during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahab and Hezekiah. He gave the hope of the coming redeemer, Messiah.

2. Jeremiah (B.C. 650-586)

Jeremiah, the son Hilkiah is also one of the major prophets. The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah. Out of his humility he wanted to evade, but the Lord encouraged him and entrusted him to convert the minds of the people. God promised that He would be with the prophet at the time of protest and persecution. Jeremiah advised the people, that it was foolish to make alliance with the heathens to escape from the danger that came as a result of their faithlessness, that they should depend only on God and not on other kings. He exhorted that the result of their wicked life would be horrible, that the temple of God would be destroyed because of their faithlessness and immorality and that all should depend on the

mercy of God. But the people refused the advice of the prophet. The Books of Jeremiah and The Lamentations belong to him. Jeremiah is known as a lamenting prophet weeping about the injustice of the people and the persecutions he had to face. Jeremiah foresees a new covenant which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

3. Amos (B.C. 760-750)

Amos was a shepherd and a native of Tekoa, a place about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. He was also engaged as a dresser of sycamore. The Lord called Amos at a time when people of Israel had fallen down in their religious life. (Amos 7:15). According to the call Amos travelled several miles to north and reached Bethel.

Amos spoke with great courage against kings, priests, lords and rich men. The central idea of his speech was that if the people did not give up their violence and injustice and turn to the true God, everybody including the king and the slave would be destroyed.

Amos is known as the spokesman of social justice. He prophesied during the reign of Yerobayam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judea.

4. Hosea (B.C. 750-735)

Hosea was a native of Israel and the son of Beerli. As Amos was the prophet of justice Hosea was the prophet of love and mercy. According to him Israel left the true God and offered sacrifice to Baal on mountain tops. It was adulterous to give up the Lord and worship other gods. But the love of God did not permit him to divorce his bride, Israel. Hosea taught the people about the love and mercy of God. He gave assurance that God is always willing to accept them provided they would confess and return to him. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah.

Memorisation: (Ezek. 3:18)

“If I say to the wicked ‘You shall surely die and you give him no warning nor speak to warn the wicked from their wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity but his blood, I will require at you hand.’”

Questions:

I Give the name of the prophet who is connected with the following statements:

1. He gave the hope about the redeeming Messiah.
2. The prophet of love and mercy.
3. The prophet of Justice.
4. The prophet who spoke about the new covenant which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

II Why is Jeremiah called the lamenting prophet?

Lesson 6

NEW TESTAMENT

We have learnt about the laws given by God to the people of Israel through Moses, on Mount Sinai. God entered into a covenant with man out of his own will and grace. Man has no right to change it or weaken it. Man may accept it or reject it. Jeremiah (31:31-34) says that God will make a new covenant. The result of that new covenant is that God will not remember our sins and He will forgive our iniquities. The people had promised that they will obey all the commandments of God (Exodus 19:8). But St. Paul says that no man is justified by the works of the law (Galatians 21:6). Men are justified by God's grace through faith. "And by that God's will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." (Heb. 10:10). This is the New Covenant.

Jesus told Nicodemus, the man who came to him by night, that a man should be, 'born anew', or 'born again'. The terms 'Born anew' and the 'Kingdom of God' are difficult to understand. So Jesus told a familiar example to the Jews so that they can understand the meaning. 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up' (John 3:14). Those who were bitten by the serpent got life by looking on the brazen serpent. Similarly those who believe in Christ will have eternal life. It was not the result of merely looking at the serpent, that they were given life. But it was due to complete faith and obedience to God's condition. Similarly those

who believe in Him will be given eternal life. "And this is what He has promised us, eternal life" (I John 2:25).

The conviction that we have got promise of eternal life and that we have been justified are the basic elements of Christian life. St. Paul says "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience, many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). "No human being will be justified in His sight by the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:20). They are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of law (Rom. 3:28). Those who have faith in Lord Jesus Christ and considered just and righteous by God. David refers to such a blessed man. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalms 32:1-2). "Therefore since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Man need not be afraid of the coming judgement because we have promise of the eternal life and justification for those who have faith. Fear is away and we can be happy. The angels who told about the birth of Christ said, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). Birth of Christ is a good news to those who are afraid of death and judgement. Jesus is the mediator in the New Testament. It is God's grace that made this covenant, but the death of Christ and his resurrection is the centre of it. 'By his words you have been healed' (I Peter 2:24). St. Paul says "If Christ has not risen from the dead your faith is in vain" (I Cori. 15:17).

God sent the Son into the world to die on the cross so that the world might be saved through him and gain eternal life and thus established the New Testament covenant. That is the only way for the salvation of man.

St. Paul asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation: (Hebrew 2:3). Prophets are those who gave the people the message they got from God. Founders of various religions taught that man must live righteous and Godly life. But Jesus told them to have faith in Him, to follow Him and to learn from Him. He promised salvation and eternal life to those who have faith in Him. More than a teacher Jesus is the Saviour of the sinner. (I Timothy 1:15, Acts 4:12) "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself." This is the promise given by Him. So we will wait with hope for His second coming as He has promised. "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven" (Heb. 12:25).

BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Historical Books

- | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|
| 1. Mathew | } | Gospels |
| 2. Mark | | |
| 3. Luke | | |
| 4. John | | |
| 5. The Acts | | |

Instructive Books Letters of Paul

6. Romans
7. 1 Corinthians
8. 2 Corinthians
9. Galatians
10. Ephesians
11. Philippians
12. Colossians
13. 1 Thessalonians

14. 2 Thessalonians

15. 1 Timothy

16. 2 Timothy

17. Titus

18. Philemon

19. Hebrews

B Universal Letters

20. James

21. 1 Peter

22. 2 Peter

23. 1 John

24. 2 John

25. 3 John

26. Jude

Prophetic Book

27. Revelation

Memorisation: Jer. 31:33

“This is the covenant which I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Questions

1. What is meant by New Testament?
2. What is the difference between the teaching of the prophets and teaching of Jesus?
3. What are the promises given by Jesus to those who believe?

UNIT III

PARABLES OF JESUS

Lesson 7

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(Mat. 13:3-9, Mk. 4:2-20, Lk. 8:4-15)

The parable of the sower is given in verses 3-9 of St. Mathew 13. Jesus Himself gives the explanation (v. 19 to 23). We have learnt this parable in the earlier classes. Through this parable Jesus taught that in the field (the world) the seed (God's words) may not produce the same yield. The quantity of the yield often depends on the soil.

God's word is sown among the people in this world. When a sower sows the seeds, some may fall by the way side, some on the rocks or among the thorns. Similarly the people who hear the words of God are of four kinds.

1. Those who do not study or think about the words they have heard. Satan may take away the words from them. These words will not be fruitful in them.

2. Those who accept the word with pleasure on hearing may not be fruitful because they are destroyed in the face of stress or strain.

3. Those who accept the words happily may make them useless when they are concerned with the worries of the world

and desire for wealth. Those who listen to the word, understand it and live according to it, produce fruit. They may produce the yield up to thirty, sixty or hundred fold.

4. All do not attain growth in the same level. By the results we can find out to which group we belong. For the fruitful Christian life, Bible reading and attending Sunday School classes are not enough. We should understand the word of God and live according to it. "Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it" (Heb. 2:1).

Memorisation: (Gal. 5:22-23)

"But the fruit of Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control."

Questions

1. What is the lesson taught by Jesus through the parable of the sower?
2. How do the words, which we hear become useless?

Lesson 8

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

(Lk. 15:11-33)

There are three most important parables of Jesus in Chapter 15 of the Gospel of St. Luke: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. The first parable is about the sheep, lost from the flock and the loving shepherd who brings the sheep back on his shoulders. The second parable tells about the lost coin and the owner who finds it out.

In the parable of the prodigal son, there is the picture of the son who lost everything. He returns weak and tired and the loving father embraces his son and receives him with honour, forgiving him.

The prodigal son left his home, lived in his own selfish ways and suffered as a result of his wicked life. He stands for humanity as a whole. By the end of the first parable Jesus says "There will be joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents." This is explained in this parable. When the lost son returns all rejoice at his home coming. He is given the best robe, ring in his finger, shoes on his feet. He is honoured with a grand feast and there is great rejoicing. But the eldest son is not happy over this. He is angry because the son who lived in wayward ways is given more honour than the son who obeys his father and lives with him. The elder son says that his father has done injustice. But father is only expressing his great love for his lost son who repents and come back. Our heavenly Father, like this father,

will show great love towards the sinner who repents and this idea is made clear in this parable.

Although we are sinners and lead a bad life, and if we return to God in repentance He will forgive us and provide us with happiness, peace and salvation. Then we need not worry about what to eat and what to wear. We have to obey Him, follow Him and be like the heavenly Father. This is the life in God. We have got some responsibilities when we are accepted as His children. Our responsibilities are to believe in Christ, to follow Him, to learn from Him and to grow to perfection like Him. It is not advisable for the sons of the loving Father to go after the world and its pleasures.

Memorisation:

John 6:37. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out."

Questions:

1. What is the lesson taught through the parable of the prodigal son?
2. What is the attitude of God towards the sinner who repents?
3. What are the responsibilities of the man who is accepted as the son of God.

Lesson 9

HIDDEN-TREASURE, VALUABLE PEARL

(Mat. 13:44, Lk. 12:31-34)

Out of several parables showing the greatness of the Kingdom of Heaven, two short parables are given here. One is that of a man who found a treasure hidden in a field. He sold all that he had and bought that field. So a man who knows the greatness of the Kingdom of Heaven, will consider it more valuable than all his possessions. During the Holy Qurana, there is a prayer in which we speak of Jesus as the one who gives us the inheritance to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Once Jesus had told His disciples to rejoice not because the devils have surrendered to them but because their names are written in Heaven. Like the man who was full of joy on seeing the field with the hidden treasure we should be full of joy thinking about the Kingdom of Heaven. He had no difficulty in selling away all that he had, because he knew that the field with the hidden treasure was more precious. So it is worthwhile to lose every worldly wealth to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. If we take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven even if we have nothing else we will be the blessed.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like an invaluable pearl. The merchant who was in search of the pearl, when he found it out, was ready to buy it, at any cost. We also must be ready to pay any price, to suffer any sacrifice for the Kingdom of Heaven. Complete surrender is inevitable for attaining the Kingdom of

God. In the history of Christianity we read about those who gave priority to God and His Kingdom. Their sole aim in life was the eternal Kingdom, which Jesus had prepared for them. That was why they were ready to sacrifice everything.

Which is more valuable to you, the pleasures of this mortal world or the heavenly bliss of eternal life prepared by God for you?

Memorisation:

(Song of Solomon 5:10) 'My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.'

Questions

1. What is the lesson from the parable of the hidden treasure and the valuable pearl?
2. What are the qualities of the man who finds eternal life desirable?

Lesson 10

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

(Mt. 25: 14-30, Lk. 19:11-26)

This parable is presented in two different ways in the Gospel of St. Mathew and the Gospel of St. Luke. But the message in both is the same. Both the parables show our responsibilities even when our abilities differ.

The man who received five talents made five talents more. The man who had two talents earned two more. But the man who was given one talent hid it in the ground. When the Master came they returned the talents. Then the master told the first two servants, "Good and faithful servant,.....enter into the joy of thy master." But he scolded the third servant saying "You wicked and slothful servant....." Then the master told that he would be cast out into the outer darkness.

In the other parable, the man who received one pound traded with it and got ten more pounds. Another man came to the nobleman and reported that he had earned another five pounds. But another servant came only with one pound which he had received. He did not trade with it.

The nobleman took that one pound from him and gave it to the man who had earned ten more pounds.

God has given talents to each one of us. We have to use them properly. Otherwise we will be punished. We will get punishment not only for our sins and transgression but also for not doing what we are expected to do. This is the lesson we have to

learn from this parable. Our life is a trust given by God and we are stewards of it. We have to use profitably the talents and the opportunities given to us by God. We must use our talents properly not only for ourselves but for the benefit of our family, our parish, our church and the society at large to the utmost.

Memorisation:

(James 4:17) "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

Questions:

1. What is the lesson we learn from the parable of the talents?
2. How should we use our talents?

Lesson 11

FINAL SELECTION

GOOD SEED, NET THROWN INTO THE SEA

(Mathew 13:24-30, 47-50)

Both these parables show the state of the church in this world.

A man sowed the good seed. But when the plants grew up, the weeds also appeared. If one tries to gather the weeds at that time, the wheat also may be rooted out. So the man decided to let both grow together until the harvest. But in the end, he will tell the reapers to gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned. So when the wheat is gathered in the barn, the weed will not be included, but it will be burnt.

This is what is going to happen at the final judgement. Like the farmer who separates the wheat and the weed at the time of harvest and collects the wheat in his barn, Christ at His second coming will separate the good and the evil. Those who wait for Him and those who died in His faith, will be gathered together in glory. They will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

The same idea is exposed in the parable of the net thrown into the sea. All the fish gathered in the net will not be taken. Only the good ones are gathered and the others are thrown out. There is a final selection. Those who believe in the gospel are included in the church. But only the true believers, who obey Him, follow Him and live faithfully, will be ultimately selected. They will be always with Christ. Others will be thrown out. So

it means that all those who are in the church may not be finally selected. We are always to bear in mind this final judgement. So we should live carefully so that we may not be rejected at the final selection.

Memorisation 2 Cor. 6:2

“Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation.”

Questions:

1. Why did the master not permit to remove the weeds earlier?
2. What is going to take place, at the second coming of Christ?

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UNIT IV

THE CHURCH-THE BODY OF CHRIST

Lesson 12

STRENGTHENING OF THE CHURCH

(Acts 2:1-4, 41-47)

Jesus Christ had selected and organised a group to spread the Gospel throughout the world. He had promised to send the Holy Spirit, the counsellor, to be with them and guide them. After the ascension of Jesus, according to His direction, about one hundred and twenty people, including the eleven disciples and St. Mary had been praying together in the hall of Mark in Jerusalem. They selected Mathias in the place of Judas who had betrayed his master.

When the day of the Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. It was on a Sunday the tenth day after the ascension of Christ. Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them (utterance).

Those who had come from various countries for the Pentecost festival in Jerusalem Temple heard this sound and came

together. They were wondered and said, "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty words of God." Some of them were amazed. Some mocked at the disciples saying that they were filled with new wine.

Peter who saw the different attitudes of the people explained what had happened (Acts 2:14-36), Peter declared that Christ who was crucified, rose from the dead and ascended. He having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit has poured out Him as they saw and heard. The people who heard this asked Peter what they should do. He asked them to repent and get baptized. About three thousand people repented, got baptized. About three thousand people repented, got baptized and joined them.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was the coming of the Holy Spirit into the church. The strong wind, the sound, tongues of fire and speaking in tongues were its signs. The result was wonderful (1) The small group of believers became powerful (2) Peter who was a coward became bold and witnessed Christ (3) It led to the conversion of three thousand people (4) A new group and a new social order resulted out of it.

We are weak but we become strong only when the Holy Spirit gives us strength. When we are with Jesus, He strengthens us through the Holy Spirit.

Memorisation: Romans 8:9

'But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God really dwells in you.' 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.'

Questions:

1. Describe how the early church got strengthened.
2. What were the signs of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost day?
3. What were the results of the coming of the Holy Spirit?

Lesson 13

THE CHURCH-THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Eph. 1:23, 2:18-22, Col. 1:24)

Jesus took His body from the Virgin Mary and revealed himself to this world through that body. He suffered also in that body. But it was necessary that after His ascension His mission should continue. So He organised the church to be His body in this world, to continue his work. Many people followed Him.

Soul had been persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ. While he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the believers, a heavenly light flashed about him. He fell to the ground and heard the voice, "Soul! Why do you persecute me?" He replied, "Who are you Lord?" Soul got the answer, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:3-5) When the church, the followers of Christ was persecuted, Jesus Himself was persecuted. This shows that the church is His body.

St. Paul says "Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake and in my flesh, I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the church." (Col. 1:24)

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body though many are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12) Jews or Greeks, slaves or free men are all baptised into one body. If any member of the body suffers, all suffer together. So no member should create pain or dishonour to any other member of the body.

Each organ in the body has got its duty to be performed.

It should be content with its duty and never be envious of other organs. All should be doing their duties according to the orders of Christ, the head; whatever we do should be for Christ. (1 Cor. 12:20-28)

The church, the body of Christ is a temple. "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16) We are one household of God. Christ himself is the corner stone. This is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets. The whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Eph. 2:18-22) Each stone has got its own place. Christ is the main builder and he places each man in his position. We consider St. Paul as an architect of the church, because he had worked hard for the church. The Lord has placed people in different positions to look after the building of the church. Each should complete the work entrusted to him faithfully.

Memorisation:

"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." (Jn. 20-21)

Questions

1. What was the purpose of organising the church, the body of Christ?
2. The church, is a temple. How is it built up?

in group we should become perfect as the bride of Christ. It is His promise that he will come again and take us as His bride.

Memorisation: Psalm 45:10-11

"Hear, O, daughter consider and incline your ear; Forget your people and your father's house. And the King will desire your beauty, since he is your Lord, how to him."

Lesson 14

THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

St Paul uses the phrases "the body of Christ," "the temple of Christ" or "the bride of Christ" to express the relationship between Christ and the Church. "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her, one husband." (2 Cor. 11-2) "Christ is the head of the church, His body and Himself its saviour. Moreover the church is the bride of Christ." (Eph. 5:22-23)

We can see the glory given to the Bride here (Eph. 5:26-27). "that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water, with the word that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish." So it is clear that the bride should stand without spot or wrinkle but with splendour. That is why he sanctified her and cleansed her by his sacrifice on the Cross.

Christ, the bridegroom, is so much interested in us that he is ready to accept us as his bride. So we should accept him and should lead a holy life. As members of the church each one of us is the bride of Christ. The bride should act only in accordance with the likes and the dislikes of the bridegroom. The bride should love all whom the bridegroom loves and should be loyal and faithful to Him.

Our bridegroom has gone to set a home for us. He will come back in glory as a King. We should be holy so that we can stand uncondemned in His second coming. As individuals and

in group we should become perfect as the bride of Christ. It is His promise that he will come again and take us as His bride.

Memorisation: Psalm 45:10-11

“Hear, O, daughter consider and incline your ear, Forget your people and your father’s house, And the King will desire your beauty, Since he is your Lord, bow to him.”

Questions:

1. What are our responsibilities as the bride of Christ?
2. What is our hope as the bride of Christ?

UNIT 5

OUR BODY-GOD'S TEMPLE

Lesson 15

OUR BODY IS FOR GOD

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Cor. 3:16-17, Romans 6:8-23)

Our body is the temple of God and God's spirit dwells in us. If God's spirit does not dwell in us, then evil spirit will enter. Jesus had shed His precious blood for us on Calvary. We are bought at the cost of his blood. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that He can dwell in us. We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to the person who bought us with a price. So it is our responsibility that we should glorify God not only in spirit but also in our body.

“We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin reign in our mortal bodies to make us obey its passions. Do not yield your members to sin at instruments of wickedness. But yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:11-13). We are either slaves of God or slaves of sin which leads to death. Before accepting Christ we were slaves of sin. But now we belong to righteousness. Our body is easily overcome by evil, so if we are not very careful we may yield to it. Hence we have to surrender our organs to righteousness.

We are the children of God and so our body must be instruments for fulfilling righteousness. We should always remember that our body is the temple of God. If anyone destroys God's temple God will destroy him. So by all means, we must be careful about our bodies. If we lay our hands on another person it is really attacking God's temple. So we have to consider that all human beings are temples of God.

Memorisation:

“.....present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Rom. 12:1)

Questions:

How are we to consider our body, as children of God?

Our body is the temple of God and God's spirit dwells in us. If God's spirit does not dwell in us, then evil spirit will enter. Jesus had shed His precious blood for us on Calvary. We are bought at the cost of His blood. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that He can dwell in us. We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to the person who bought us with a price. So it is our responsibility that we should glorify God not only in spirit but also in our body.

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Lesson 16

LOVE-AGAPE AND EROS

(1 Corinthians 7:1-5; 6:12-18)

Corinthians wrote to St. Paul to clear some doubts they had about the relationship between men and women.

St. Paul says "It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of temptation to immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:1-2) It is quite natural that there will be some attraction between man and women. This mutual attraction is for fulfillment of the ultimate goal of procreation. So it dangerous if this expression of love is not properly controlled. So by saying 'not to touch a woman' St. Paul means 'not to enter into sexual relationship' outside marriage. This idea is found in Genesis 20:6 and Proverbs 6:29.

Sexual relationship is a bodily necessity for grown up men and women. Marriage is the only means for this St. Paul says "Every man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband. A man should fulfil his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfil her duty as a wife and each should satisfy the other" needs. The wife is not the master of her own body. In the same way the husband is not the master of his own body but the wife is. (1 Cor. 7:2-4) It is a grave sin to violate this right. The violation will result in unfaithfulness, quarrels and even separation. It may lead to mental disease or some-

times suicide. "Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? The immoral man sins against his own body." (1 Cor. 6:15) We must make a special note of the words of Christ. "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:28).

The Greek word 'eros' and 'agape' stand for love. The love that is involved in the sexual relation between man and woman, is known as 'eros'. Agape is the love that is to be obtained from God and to be developed in us and that includes self-sacrifice, mercy and forgiveness.

Memorisation: 1 Cor. 10:31

"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Questions:

1. Has God prohibited married life?
2. What is the answer given by Paul to the question raised by the Corinthians?
3. Differentiate between 'Agape' and 'Eros'.

Lesson 17

FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE

(Galathians 5:13-15)

When we consider about the freedom of man, we have to find out whether he is completely free or not. It is true that everyone has his freedom as a citizen, but he is not entirely free because he has to obey the rules of his country and he must be considerate of others. Freedom and discipline go hand in hand. St. Paul says that we should not use our freedom as our opportunity for the flesh. Through love we must be servants to one another. Our needs and freedom should not clash with the needs and freedom of our fellowmen. We should love our neighbours as ourselves. We should not devour one another.

True love will make us disciplined. According to St. Paul the foremost fruit of the Spirit is love. Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and selfcontrol go along with love (Gal. 5:22-23). Men and women, especially young people, must pay special attention to a disciplined life. We should listen to the advice of St. Paul, "Since you are God's people, it is not right that any questions of immorality or indecency or greed should even be mentioned among you: (Eph. 5:3).

St. Paul says "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires." (Gal. 5:24) Many thoughts of the flesh are creating problems in our life. We have to control the works of the flesh such as gluttony, evil eye and desire for illegitimate relationships.

St. Paul has given a list of the works of the flesh. "The works of the flesh are immorality, impurity, licentiousness idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like." (Gal. 5:19-21) We are called to live holy and just, lives keeping ourselves away from the works of the flesh.

Memorisation: John 8:31-32

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples you will know the truth and the truth disciples; you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."

Class work:

Ask the students to make a note after a discussion on the need of discipline.

Questions

1. "Men are not free-" Why?
2. What is the fruit of the Spirit?
3. What are the works of the flesh?

UNIT VI

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Lesson 18

A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. St. Paul explains this. He gives a list of the faithful departed from the Old Testament. The faithful departed from the New Testament time onwards also belong to the same group. They led a righteous life according to God's will and completed their race on this earth. We are bound to continue our race, following their example.

Where are the departed souls?

What is our hope about them?

Jesus Christ told the criminal crucified with him on the right side. "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise (Lk. 23:43). The poor man Lazarus after his death was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. (Lk. 16:22) St. Paul says, "We are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:8) From these passages we know that the souls of the departed are with Christ, in paradise. It is beyond time and space.

Our hope is that the dead will rise up. Christ had declared "For this is the will of my father, that everyone who sees the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise

him up at the last day" (John 6:40). "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the archangel's call and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess 4:16). It is our hope that we shall always be with the Lord after death. "If for this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). Our life on earth should be a preparation to be with Christ even after our death.

Memorial of the departed

1. St. Paul says "Remember your former leaders who spoke to you the word of God" (Heb. 13:7).
2. St. Paul remembers and prays for Onesiphorus, who was departed, "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day" (II Timothy 1:18) Here St. Paul means, "Lord, have mercy on the departed Onesiphorus."

Different views about the departed souls in the Old Testament

- A. The departed are silent in the sheol without deserving memorial or reward. The wicked also go to sheol.
1. "I will go down to sheol to my son mourning" says Jacob weeping for his departed son" (Gen. 37:35).
 2. In Psalm 6:5 we read "For in death there is no remembrance of thee. In sheol who shall give thee praise."
 3. Job says that he was looking for sheol as his house. (Job. 17:13)
 4. "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing and they have no more reward, but the memory of them is lost." (Eccl. 9:5)

If we read only these four passages, we may think that the departed are in sheol, without remembrance and reward. But that is not the truth.

B. The departed will rise and live

- e.g. 1. "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise." (Is. 26:19)

2. "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2)
3. "I will ransom them from the power of sheol, I will redeem them from death." (Hos. 13:14)

These three passages give us hope about the departed.

What has Christ taught about the condition of the souls of the departed?

1. "For when they rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." (Mk. 12:25)
2. "Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me though he dies, yet shall he live." (John. 11:25)
3. From the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Lk. 16, we find that some are taken to Abraham's bosom after death, while some others are taken to hades where they are in great pain. Only the wicked are taken to the hades. They can understand things and they can communicate. Again there is a deep pit between heaven and hades, and so they cannot go from one place to the other. (Lk. 16:19-31)

St. Paul's teaching about the departed

1. II Cor. 5:8-9 "We are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home, or away we make it our aim to please him."
2. My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better. (Phil. 1:23)
3. So that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thess. 3:13)
4. St. Paul had considered everything as a loss for the sake of Christ and counted them as refuse because he had the hope that he may attain resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:11-12)

We believe that the soul of those who departed in Christ are in paradise and they are hopeful about the resurrection. They are hopeful that on the second coming of Christ they will join with Christ and enjoy eternal happiness. This belief is based on the teaching of Christ and His disciples. Those who are departed in Christ are the 'cloud of witnesses.'

Memorisation:

"Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1)

Questions

1. What is our hope about the faithful departed?
2. The remembrance of the departed is biblical. Explain.
3. It is not correct to come to a conclusion about the condition after death based on any particular verse from the Bible. Why?

UNIT VII

THE DIVIDED CHURCH

Lesson 19

AFTER THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

The question of who Jesus Christ is assumed great importance in the Church from the beginning. During the 4th and 5th centuries it led to controversies and the Church in the Roman Empire of ancient times sought to find a solution to them through councils. Thus in the 5th century the two councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451 were held.

a) The Councils and Church Division

By the 5th century there had evolved three theological traditions in the Church, each with its own interpretation of Christ's person. They were the Alexandrine as distinct from the Antiochene, and the Western as different from both. In spite of the divergence in language that each tradition had employed, the leading men in the Church who adhered to one or another of them, supported by the state, were keen to establish their own teaching as exclusively the faith of the Church. Thus Ephesus was dominated by Cyril of Alexandria who saw to the condemnation of Nestorius on the ground that he represented the Antiochene tradition. This triumph of Alexandria was however short-lived.

Soon after the adjournment of the Ephesine Council, its opponents organised themselves against it, supported by Rome, and worked for the downfall of the Alexandrine tradition. That was the time when Eutyches, an old monk of the Alexandrine adherence, happened to play his role. A person who deserved only to be ignored was made much of by the combined forces of the Antiochene and Western partisans in order to strike the Alexandrines, and a council was convened by the emperors in favour of Rome. This council which met at Chalcedon in 451 deposed Dioscorus of Alexandria and adopted a definition of the faith in essential agreement with the Western tradition. The definition made out that Christ was one person made known in two natures. Though the council was accepted by Rome and Constantinople, it was rejected by the Alexandrine side had from the days of the great Athanasius worked out a theology of Christ's person which affirmed His unity. After the time of Athanasius the remarkable theologian of the Church of Alexandria, Cyril took up the task. Feeling that theology which the school of Antioch represented by Nestorius was weak on the subject of Christ's unity, he developed a tradition on the foundation of the Alexandrine fathers. He thought that Christ was fully God and fully man and that He should be conferred as "one incarnate nature of God the Son." The Antiochenes saw in the "one nature" formula a denial of Christ's humanity and insisted that Christ was "two natures" united in one person. The definition of Chalcedon and the theological exposition of the Western Church gave the impression that they did not go beyond the Antiochene emphasis.

Even before the division resulting from the Council of Chalcedon was effected, during the second half of the 5th century, the ancient Church of Persia which had no participation in any of the councils of Roman Empire passed resolutions questioning the legitimacy of the condemnation of Nestorius by

Ephesus and rejected that decision. That church continues to honour Nestorius and the theologians of the Antiochene school as saints and Church fathers. The 5th century councils thus caused divisions in the Church which continue ever since.

These ancient divisions have attracted the attention of Churches and theological experts in modern times. Studies of the issues on the strength of available documentary evidence in original languages which they have undertaken have shown that the divisions were the result of misunderstanding of the actual emphasis of each side by the others, and that this situation can and should be transcended by all Church traditions.

b) Division between Rome and Constantinople

Though Rome and Constantinople joined in defeating Alexandria during the Christological controversy, there were frictions between them on other issues. These came to be expressed more fully since then. Misunderstanding between the two sides grew over the issues like the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, the use of the unleavened bread in the Holy Qurbana, celibacy of the clergy and so on which the West introduced unilaterally. In the end the two sides separated from each other in 1054.

At this point again many on both sides now are willing to take a second look at the issues, that divide their Churches.

C) Division in the 16th Century

During the Middle Ages the Church of Rome had grown wealthy and powerful, with the result that a great deal of corruption became a fact in its life. Though a number of efforts made to reform the Church sought to change things, the situation continued practically the same. In the face of this state of affairs Martin Luther, a priest of the Church of Rome in Germany started movement in the 16th century. It gained ground in different forms in many parts of Europe and Britain. These movements came to be called in general Protestantism. In principle it protests against a number of ideas which the Church of Rome cherished.

The Protestant Churches are not united among themselves in church life, doctrine and various other aspects. But they reject doctrine of Roman papacy and primacy. The Archbishop of Canterbury is looked upon as the head of the Anglican Commission, but the Anglicans have no universal head. They have only the three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

Taken as a whole, the Roman Church is one and united. The other Western Churches are not united in the same way. The Eastern Churches are disunited on the question of the person and nature of Christ. The Byzantine Church, known as the Eastern Orthodox Church form the major part of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Today a group of the Western Churches is the Roman Church, very strong and spread all over the world. They stand in first place according to population. Another group which belongs to different independent churches but commonly known as Protestants, stands in third place according to population. The second place goes to eastern Orthodox Churches which is a branch of the Eastern Group. As a whole they are under the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and directly under many independent Patriarchs. The Oriental Orthodox Churches in Ethiopia, Armenia, Alexandria, India and Syria together stand in the fourth place, Thoziyoor & Nestor Churches also belong to eastern group. But the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, though they are Protestants in faith and doctrines, also be considered as member of Eastern group.

In Christian love, let us forget all the differences and pray that churches should be one.

Memorisation:

Matt. 5:9. Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called sons of God.

Questions:

1. What were the main causes of division in the Church?
2. What should be our viewpoint about the different churches?

Lesson 20

EASTERN CHURCHES

A. The Orthodox Church which accepts seven councils including the Chalcedon

The most important of the Eastern Churches is the worldwide church known under the name Greek Orthodox or Eastern Orthodox. This church having a disagreement with the church of Rome in A.D. 1054 continued under their own Patriarch, the Patriarch of Constantinople who had assumed the title Ecumenical Patriarch. But today it is divided into several independent churches-the Church of Alexandria, the Church of Antioch and the Church of Jerusalem. There is about 26 lakhs of people in the churches of Russia, Rumania, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus Czechoslovakia, Poland, Albania and Sinai. There is about eight crores eighty-eight lakhs and ten thousand people. Even though all these churches are separate from the Roman Church, we have no Eucharistic relation with them as they accept the Chalcedonian and some other councils causing differences in the faith of the original pre-Chalcedonian church.

Greek Orthodox Church is making dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1964 there was a talk between Pope Paul VI and Athanagorus the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. As a result the mutual condemnation of 1054 was withdrawn. For a long period there has been talks with the Anglican Church also for better unity.

B. Oriental Orthodox Churches which accept only the first three common councils

1. The Ethiopian Church

Out of the five oriental churches, the one which got freedom in the last is the Ethiopian Church. They got a Patriarch only in 1959. Most probably the Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8:27 might have spread the gospel in Ethiopia. From the fourth century this church was under the Alexandrian Church and so they were known as 'monophysites.' For their faith there is so much difference from that of ours. This church grew very much under the rule of Emperor Haile Selasi. There are about one and a half lakhs of priests and about one crore and twenty lakhs of people in this church.

2. The Armenian Church

It is believed that the Armenian Church was established by apostles St. Thaddaeus and St. Bertholomew. By A.D. 301, Christianity grew as the most important religion of Armenia. In the fifth century, the Prime Bishop accepted the Alexandrian faith. This church has got two catholicoses. It has about 56 lakhs of people spread all over the places like Soviet Armenia, in Russian states, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, America, Canada, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Cyprus, Greece and Kuwait. Under the Supreme Catholicos there are two Patriarchs one in Jerusalem and the other in Constantinople.

The Armenian Church is in very close relationship with our church and it had undergone very great persecution in 1963. The Supreme Catholicos of Armenia H.G. Vascan visited Kerala and stayed as a guest of our Catholicos H. Holiness Baselios Geevarghese II. In 1976 His Holiness Mar Thoma Mathews I visited that country and stayed as a guest of Vascon Catholicos.

3. The Coptic Church

The headquarters of the Coptic Church is Alexandria in Egypt. The tradition says that St. Mark established the Coptic Church.

From fourth century onwards universally accepted theologians were in this church. St. Athanasius and St. Coorilos are the most important of them. The supreme head of the Coptic Church was under the name, 'The Pope of Alexandria Mentanopolice and Ethiopia.' The Patriarch is elected by the people. In 24 dioceses there are about thirty-five lakhs people. They also accept only the first three ecumenical councils. Monasteries were first formed in this church and St. Antony lead a monastic life in Egypt. Coptic Church has got Eucharistic communion with us.

4. Malankara Orthodox church

(As there is separate lesson for this, the same is not elaborated here)

5. Syrian Orthodox Church

The church under the Patriarch of Antioch is known as Syrian Orthodox Church. As in the Church of Alexandria Antiochian Church also had not accepted the Council of Chalcedon of 451.

Monophysites or the true believers continued to exist only because of the selfless service and activities of one Jacob Burdhana, an ardent saint of the sixth century. If he had not actively fought out, the people would have gone under Chalcedonian group. 'Jacobite' was the nickname given to the people who fought for true faith under the leadership of Jacob. In retort, the true believers nicknamed the Chalcedonians as "Melkites" which means the followers of the Roman King who persecuted the Monophysites.

The greatest theological scholar of Syrian Orthodox Church at this time was Patriarch Mar Severius of Antioch. But the greatest architect who maintained the faith in the Church in the 6th century was Jacob Burdhana (542-573). Burdhana means 'a man who wears rags.' He became a Bishop from Patriarch of Alexandria who was in prison without the knowledge of his enemies; the Chalcedonians and he travelled in syria, Armenia

Cappadocea, Lybia, Abyssinia and reorganised the people in those places into a strong church.

Headquarters of Patriarch of Syrian Orthodox Church is now in Damascus in Syria. This Church has got eleven dioceses and about two lakhs of people spread in places like Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and America. In Kerala also there are a group of people known under the name "Jacobites," who accept the Patriarch of this Church as their supreme head.

The Malankara Church had been in relationship with this Church since 17th century.

On different occasions Patriarchs, Bishops and people of the Church in Syria had deflected and accepted the Roman Catholic faith. They had formed a church in Syria whose headquarters is in Beirut. There is about a lakh of people in that group.

The order of priority in the Oriental Orthodox Church group according to their population is Ethiopia, Armenia, Alexandria, Malankara and Syria.

C. Nestorian Church

The official name of this church is 'The Eastern Church.' But it is known under different names such as Eastern Syrian Church, Chaldian Church, Asserian Church, Persian Church, Babylonian Church and Edesian Church. This church became independent in A.D. 424 and its headquarters is in Estesiphone in Persia. The delegates from this church were not invited to the council in 431 A.D. So the decision of the council is not applicable to them. They believed, that the teachings of Nestore was right and so they accepted it. In A.D. 498 the Catholicos of Persia accepted the name as Patriarch.

From the 6th century missionaries of Nestore had been spreading the gospel in India, Arabia and China. But from 14th century this church declined in 1552 a group from this church accepted the Roman Catholic faith and became the Catholic

Chaldian Church. In many places the Nestorians joined with other churches. At present there is about a lakh of people in this church in places like Iran, Iraq, Syria, America and India.

They accept only the first two common councils. In 431 A.D. Council of Ephesus took the decision that St. Mary as 'Mother of Jesus.' Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church treat the Nestorians as heretics.

Memorisation Gal. 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Questions:

1. Write a note on Eastern Churches.
2. What are the churches which have Eucharistic unity with Malankara Church?

Lesson 21

CHURCHES ARE COMING NEARER

We have great hope about the future because there is interest in churches today to bring out the fulfilments of the prayer made by our Lord, "Holy Father keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me that they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:11)

In translation and spreading of Gospel many churches co-operated with the British Bible Society formed in 1804. YMCA was started in England in 1844. YMCA was established in America in 1872 and World Christian Student Movement was started in 1895. All these movements helped in the closer relation between different churches.

The Missionary movements of the various churches organised a World Christian Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1810. Following that the World Missionary Council and the World Council of Life and Work were formed. In the Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1937, there were 414 delegates representing 122 churches. (A delegation under the leadership of H.H. Geevarghese II Catholicos represented the Malankara Church). As a result of this conference the World council of Churches (W.C.C.) was formed. The first conference of the World Council of Churches was held in Amsterdam in August 1948. The third conference of W.C.C. was held in Delhi in 1961. As a result of the activities of the W.C.C. the churches understood each other, became closer, conducted intercessions for the establishment of the unity of churches, co-operated and worked together in social service activities. Our

church, Marthomite Church and Church of South India are members of W.C.C. Almost all Christian Churches except Roman Catholic Church are members of this council. One of the vice-presidents of W.C.C. is Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios of the Orthodox Church. Delegates of the Roman Catholic Church also use to attend the council meetings as observers.

In the same pattern, there is another council in India which represents the various churches in India. This is known as National Christian Council (N.C.C.). The President of this council in 1986 was Geevarghese Mar Osthathios of our church. In the Second Vatican Council from 1962-1965 members were invited from almost all the churches as observers. The Maharons or non co-operation between Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church were withdrawn in 1969.

Church of South India is a united form of Methodist, Anglican, many congregational churches and Presbyterian Church, formed in 1947. Again attempts are being made for the union of Church of South India, Church of North India and Marthomite Church.

Talks are going on to see how far co-operation is possible between our church, Marthomite Church and Lutheran Church. In the same way talks have taken place between representatives of our church and Roman Catholic Church. However we must pray for a better co-operation between the churches that are now divided.

Memorisation Jn. 17:21

“That they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.””

Questions

1. Write note on W.C.C. What are its achievements?
2. What is meant by N.C.C.?
3. Prepare a prayer for the unity of different churches.

Lesson 22

PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED AND INTERCESSION OF SAINTS

I) Prayer for the departed

When we understand the real condition of the souls of the departed, we will realize the need of praying for them and the benefit of seeking their intercession.

The souls of the departed are alive and active. They are not in silence. Ps. 115:17, 18 is misunderstood by those Protestants who don't pray for the departed. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore" (Ps. 115:17, 18). The right interpretation of this passage, is as follows: "Those who are spiritually dead, do not praise the Lord." Otherwise, we cannot say "We will bless the Lord for evermore." Then we can say only "We will praise the Lord till we die." It is true that there are some passages in the Old Testament, where the souls of the departed are described as to be in a state of inaction. But the whole New Testament corrects this and proves that the souls of the departed are active.

The souls of the departed are not only active, they are beyond time and space. Hence their powers are beyond our understanding. That is why Moses and Eliyah were able to appear before our Lord, at the time of His transfiguration (St. Lk. 9:30-31) and talk about our Lord's coming death.

The departed are with our Lord in a special way. St. Paul says "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." (Philipians 1:23) "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (II Cor. 5:6)

The souls of the departed are worshipping God day and night. "After this I beheld and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." (Rev. 7:9) "Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them." (Rev. 7:15)

They are watching over us, though we cannot see them. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about, with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin, which doth so beset us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1) Let us also see what our Lord says about the angels "I say likewise, joy shall be in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (St. Lk. 15:7) This means that the souls of the departed also, can see the repentance of the sinners and rejoice. This implies that we must be all the more vigilant in our lives, as the souls will rejoice when we do good, and grieve when we sin.

The souls of the departed also are in need of the help of the Holy Spirit, in their prayer. Hence it is our duty to pray for them. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercede for us with sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26).

The souls of the departed would please God, if they were pleasing Him here on earth.

“We are confident. I say and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” We are of good courage, and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (II Cor. 5:8-9) To do things acceptable to God, the souls need God’s grace and it is our duty to pray God, that He may give them the necessary grace as no one can do anything, apart from God (St. Jn. 15:5).

The souls can repent, unless they are so hardened that they cannot repent at all. Our Lord preached to the souls of the departed, who were sinners. “In which he went and preached to the spirits in person, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few that is eight persons, were saved through water (I Pet. 3:19-20). We have to pray God that the souls may be given the necessary grace to repent and to receive forgiveness of sins.

The souls are also exposed to temptations. If one set of angels fell through sin, the souls of the departed also may be tempted. Hence we have to pray for them (I Pet. 5:8).

The souls are growing to perfection. “Then shall the righteous shine forth, as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father” (St. Matt. 13:43). For this, God’s grace is necessary and it is our duty to pray for them.

Since there is the danger of getting so hardened in sin, that we cannot repent at all, we must be always vigilant. Abraham told the soul of the rich man as follows, “And besides this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” (St. Lk. 16:16). “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.” (St. Mk. 3:29)

3. Intercession of Saints

We seek the intercession of others, living and departed, whether saints or ordinary believers. According to the writings of St. Paul, all Christians are saints, or rather they are called to be saints. Somehow canonisation of saints has come into the church later on. Here the question is whether seeking the prayers of the departed souls, whether saints or ordinary believers, is Biblical or not.

The argument that Christ is the only mediator between God and men, cannot be levelled against the intercession of saints. It is true that Christ is the only mediator. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. 2:5). But the intercession of saints is not against or apart from Christ's mediation. Otherwise, we cannot even pray for each other.

Another argument levelled against the intercession of saints, is that the souls are in silence. The basis of their argument is the wrong interpretation of Ps. 115:17-18 and some other passages in the Old Testament. But the New Testament which corrects the Old Testament, wherever necessary, says that souls of the departed are active and that they are aware of the happenings of this world. (Heb. 12:1, St. Lk. 9:30-31, St. Lk. 15:7)

The prayers of the righteous are effective, whether they are living on earth or they are in the other world. "Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (St. James 5:16). The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

Faith on the part of the saints and those who seek their intercession, are also essential. The disciples were not able to heal the epileptic boy, because of the lack of faith (St. Matt. 17:20). Our Lord was not able to work miracles in His native place, due to their unbelief." (St. Mk. 6:5-6)

Seeking the intercession of saints does not mean that it is enough. We have to pray God directly and in addition to it, we seek the intercession of saints. If people neglect their own direct prayer to God and if they don't mend their ways, they are to be corrected. Prophet Isaiah says "When you make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood" (Is. 1:15). At the same time our Lord gives us the assurance that if we live in conformity with the will of God, our prayers will be answered. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (St. Jn. 15:7). St. John also says the same, in his epistle. "Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because, we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." And we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases Him (I John. 3:22).

Memorisation:

Heb. 13 "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life and imitate their faith."

Questions

1. Why do we pray for the departed?
2. The prayer for the departed is according to the scripture. Explain.
3. As Jesus is the only mediator, is invocation of saints right?

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE OF INDIA
PRAY FOR US

